

Exploring Banned and Challenged Books with Children: A Guide for Parents

- ⇒ Read the books yourself before reading them to/with your kids so that you can judge how appropriate each book is for your child and anticipate questions they might have.

- ⇒ Ask them questions about the book to find out how they interpret it and how much they understood. Adults and children sometimes interpret the same book differently.

- ⇒ If your child is struggling with the concept of something being banned or challenged, it may be easier to talk to them about why someone might not like the book.

- ⇒ With some books, it is clear and obvious why they were banned or challenged. With others, the book challenger's reasoning is difficult to fathom. If aren't sure when writing a review for the program, you can just say as much or guess.

- ⇒ Talking to your children about what they read helps foster reading comprehension and critical thinking skills and helps you make decisions about your children's reading.



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MINOT AIR FORCE
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THE BANNED AND CHALLENGED BOOK PROGRAM

READER'S GUIDE



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Why do we have banned and challenged book programs?

The Banned and Challenged Book Programs promote:

- ◆ Reading and literacy
- ◆ Awareness of censorship in America and across the world
- ◆ Citizenship
- ◆ Critical thinking
- ◆ Empathy
- ◆ Discussion and conversation about books

Our program is an expansion of the American Library Association's Banned Book Week celebrations.

AFI 34-101, para 16.14.4 mandates that the Library apply the principles of Intellectual Freedom in all aspects of library service.

The Library's Position:

Every individual has the right to decide what they will read or not read.

Every individual has the right to like/dislike what they read and to voice their opinions and objections.

Every parent has the right to guide and even censor their child's reading, but no parent has the right to decide what other people's children should read or should not read.

The Library serves people from a variety of backgrounds and beliefs. Everyone should be able to find books that they can relate to in the Library.

The Library tries to provide access to many different viewpoints without favoritism, as much as that is possible. Purchase requests help though we're limited to what is available from our vendors.

Things to consider:

People who try to have books banned come from both sides of the political spectrum. Some books are even targeted by both conservatives and liberals for different reasons.

A book challenger may not have read the book they want to ban. They may be reacting to inflammatory reviews, movies, etc.

Book challengers often have the best of intentions but haven't considered that others may have different viewpoints and needs. For example, Parent A wants to protect her child from being exposed to X and wants all kids/teen books on the topic banned to ensure her child doesn't read about it while Parent B wants books to help his child understand and deal with X because she was exposed to it, and Parent C wants her child to know about X so that he is better prepared when/if he is exposed to it. X can be death, drugs, rape, bullying, divorce, homophobia, racism, violence, etc.

Many banned and challenged books cause readers to think about uncomfortable issues that exist in the world or to think about issues from a different perspective which some people may find threatening.

Most kids will quit reading a book they aren't emotionally or intellectually ready for.

Different readers have different maturity levels. A book that is appropriate for a 14-year-old may be inappropriate for 9-year-old. At the same time, a book that is appropriate for one 9-year-old may be inappropriate for another 9-year-old.

Questions to ask yourself as you read:

- ◆ What was the intent of the author? If the author is dealing with a sensitive social problem like suicide, drug use, or racism, is the author trying to make the problem better or worse?
- ◆ When was the book written? How people commonly think about things and the words they use have changed over time. Is there value in learning about what people used to commonly believe and say but don't now?
- ◆ Is the book fiction or non-fiction? Is it supposed to be realistic, fantasy, or somewhere in-between?
- ◆ Do you think the author and the narrator have the same viewpoint? Is the narrator reliable (do they know enough about the events of the book to be able to judge them and are they relatively objective)? Do you share a viewpoint with either the author or the narrator?
- ◆ Why do you think the author chose to include words, scenes, themes, and/or characters that could be controversial?
- ◆ Who would the book be appropriate for? Who would it be inappropriate for?
- ◆ Might the book offend members of a racial/cultural/religious group? Who decides what is offensive? What if some members of the group are offended and others are not?