

# Free People

**Challenged and Banned Books in  
Texas Public Schools, 2010-2011**

# Read Freely

# 15<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL

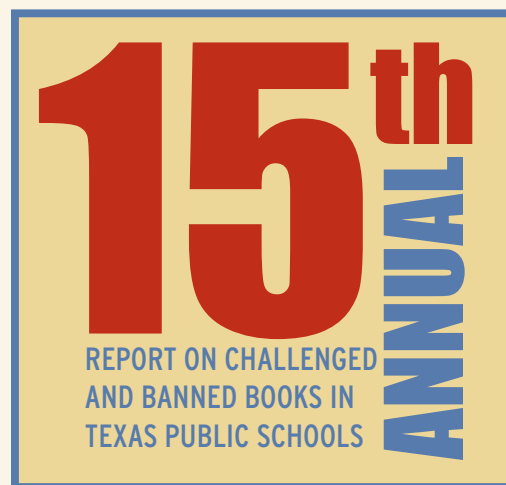
REPORT in CELEBRATION  
of NATIONAL BANNED  
BOOKS WEEK

**SEPTEMBER 24 - OCTOBER 1, 2011**



# Free People

# Read Freely



## **2010-2011 SCHOOL YEAR**

Includes exclusive  
interviews with  
Young Adult authors,  
Francesca Lia Block and  
Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

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## REFLECTIONS

From Terri Burke  
ACLU of Texas Executive Director



### WELCOME TO THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION OF THE ACLU OF TEXAS “BANNED BOOKS REPORT.”

Since the late 1990s, our Texas team has kept watch on what our school districts are doing when it comes to making the classics—and new book releases—available to young adults. Are they stepping up to the challenges and choosing to support freedoms of expression, ideas and speech on behalf of all young readers? Or, are the ISDs choosing to remove a book from the shelf, denying parents and students the opportunity to decide for themselves whether to access?

Our annual tracking of challenged and banned books in Texas, (in fact, the only banned books report provided by an ACLU state affiliate) serves not only to shine a spotlight on the book-banning that takes place around the state, but to celebrate those school districts that choose to retain challenged books. For example, Round Rock ISD, with the most challenged books (six) among all school districts reporting, retained 100 percent of those books. All six books remain on school library shelves.

The good news is that, according to the 750 school district reports received for this past school year, banning has gone down from 20 to 17 books. The bad news: book banning is still going on in Texas. In this report, we share the thoughts and writing background of two bestselling Young Adult (YA) authors, Francesca Lia Block and Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, both of whom had books banned in Texas school libraries. These women noted they write “the truth” from their hearts and minds; and, as parents, respect that other parents have the right to guide their own children’s paths through the literary world—not one parent or school district speaking for all young adult readers.

We welcome you to join our efforts to promote freedom of speech, and Banned Books Week, Sept. 24 - Oct. 1, 2011, in your community. ACLU of Texas has just rolled out its online “Banned Books Toolkit” at [www.bannedbookstx.org](http://www.bannedbookstx.org). Check it out for ideas on how you can hold a “Banned Books Reading,” become a watchdog in your school district or work with your local media in bringing more awareness to what is happening with books in your backyard.

In liberty,

Terri Burke  
Executive Director



## FOREWORD

By Dotty Griffith  
Public Education Director

According to Clay Smith, Literary Director, Texas Book Festival, YA, or “Young Adult” is the hottest genre going in the publishing world. This category includes the Harry Potter series, Judy Blume’s work, the Captain Underpants series and many novels full of more vampires, dark angels and zombies than you can shake a stick at (or a clove of garlic?). When it comes to challenges and, unfortunately, banning books in school libraries, the YA genre is most frequently targeted, taking the lead among the books reported.

Most of these books target ages 13 to late teens, but as with the Stephanie Myers “Twilight” series, readers well into their late 30s are hooked on the vampire saga. YA books very often include subject matter that deals with sexual awakenings of a pre-teen; the discovery that one is a gay teen or has a best friend who is a lesbian; or fiction that is peppered with graphic language. Many of these YA books use language exactly as a young person might describe a particular true-life situation, such as talking with a parent about intercourse.

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, one of the two YA authors featured in this report, has been creating her “Alice” stories since 1985. Spanning her years from age eight through college (and even a scene when Alice is in her 60s), Naylor has pulled Alice’s experiences from her own as a youth, as well as those from Naylor’s grandchildren’s more current lives.

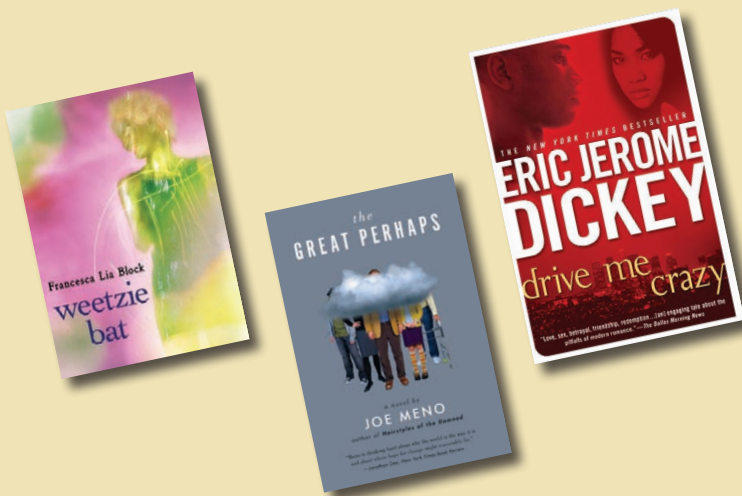
But, some parents are not comfortable with their 12-year-old reading about a discussion of sex. The ACLU of Texas, and Naylor, absolutely respect parents’ right to choose not to have their children read “Alice on the Outside.” However, in the case of one particular Texas school, they took a parent’s complaint about Naylor’s book much further and banned it from the library. This is not only happening in Texas, but according to Naylor, something she faces from incensed parents in cities like Tucson and online through her blog.

At this year’s Texas Book Festival (Oct. 22-23) in Austin, the ACLU of Texas will join the first ever “American Publishers’ Banned Books” panel to discuss more about what is going on with the banning of YA and other genres, as well as what you can do to participate in the rising grassroots efforts against this freedom of access to literary classics and the latest, most talked-about books. Join us in this important discussion. (Go to [www.texasbookfestival.org](http://www.texasbookfestival.org) for more information on the “Banned Books” panel.)

## AN OVERVIEW OF CENSORSHIP IN TEXAS

*"Banned Books Week (BBW) is an annual event celebrating the freedom to read and the importance of the First Amendment .... Intellectual freedom—the freedom to access information and express ideas, even if the information and ideas might be considered unorthodox or unpopular—provides the foundation for Banned Books Week."*

— AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION ([WWW.ALA.ORG](http://WWW.ALA.ORG))



*"If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind....But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race... "*

— ON LIBERTY, JOHN STUART MILL

The Texas Book Festival (TBF), one of our state's most celebrated and well-attended literary events to benefit Texas libraries, invites authors from all genres and from all parts of the world to share their works with the public. Clay Smith, Literary Director, noted the TBF's philosophy when it comes to what is expected of the authors.

"We have a very stringent selection process, but once a book goes through that process, the writer is welcomed and featured. After that, we never tell them what to say. Any festival worth anything would never tell a writer what to say," said Smith.

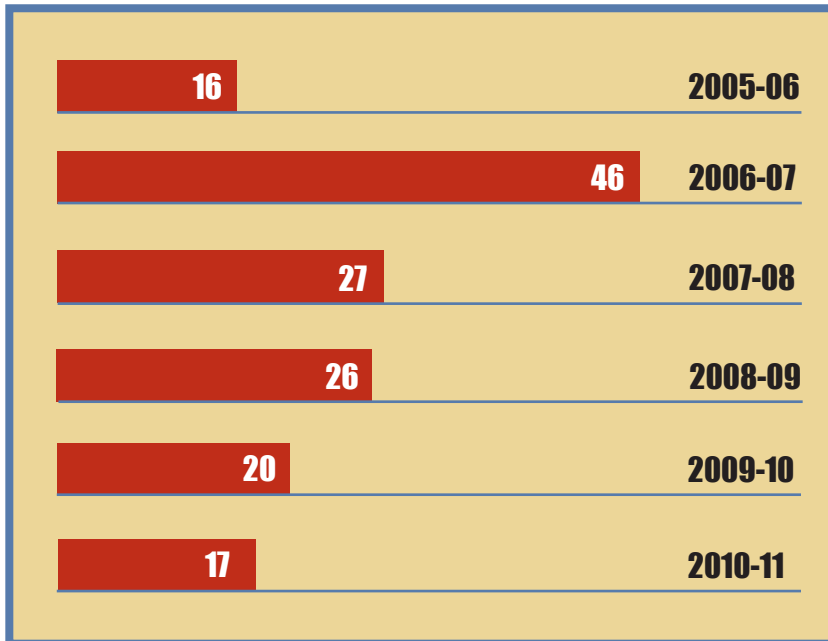
The ACLU of Texas supports the TBF's position about an author's freedom of speech, and passionately upholds that banning books from our schools' classrooms or libraries threatens our First Amendment right to freedom of expression, speech and ideas. The 15th Annual Banned Books Report, 2010-2011, highlights the plethora of authors—most notably YA authors—whose books have been challenged, restricted and banned from 750 Texas ISDs. Subject matters that riled parents or teachers included teen sex, AIDS, gay/lesbian relationships, drug use, cursing, scary castles, zombies, vampires, and, even photos of naked persons from Merriam-Webster's Visual Dictionary.

This year's report, which accounts for about 63 percent of the total number of ISDs, demonstrates there is some good news on the banning front. The number of books being banned has gone down each year since we first started this report. Only 17 books were banned in the 2010-2011 school year.

However, books are still being banned. And, that raises a number of issues.

## BANNED BOOKS

Number of books banned per school year

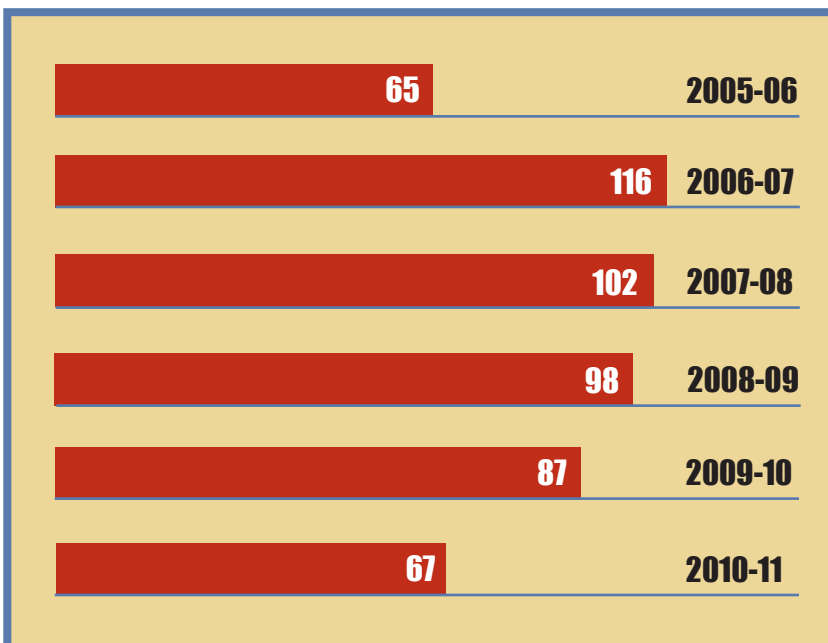


Of the 750 school districts that responded to our Open Records Request, 67 books were challenged and 17 banned. Many of the challenged books, which might not have been intended for an elementary reader in the first place, such as Phyllis Reynolds Naylor's *Alice on the Outside*, or Francesca Lia Block's *Weetzie Bat*, found their way to library shelves or classrooms of younger readers. Some schools indicated they "restricted" these books from the elementary schools, either moving to a higher grade level or restricting only for the child whose parents protested its use. Some chose to ban the challenged books all together.

In the case of Naylor's *Dangerously Alice* and other "Alice as a teen" books, her heroine always has frank, open and loving conversations with her father about the facts of life and other "real life" situations. Naylor said she writes from the experiences of her grandchildren and other young readers who come to her blog. Sometimes these books are even restricted at the middle school levels, as in the case of Beaumont ISD's solution.

## CHALLENGED BOOKS

Number of books challenged per school year

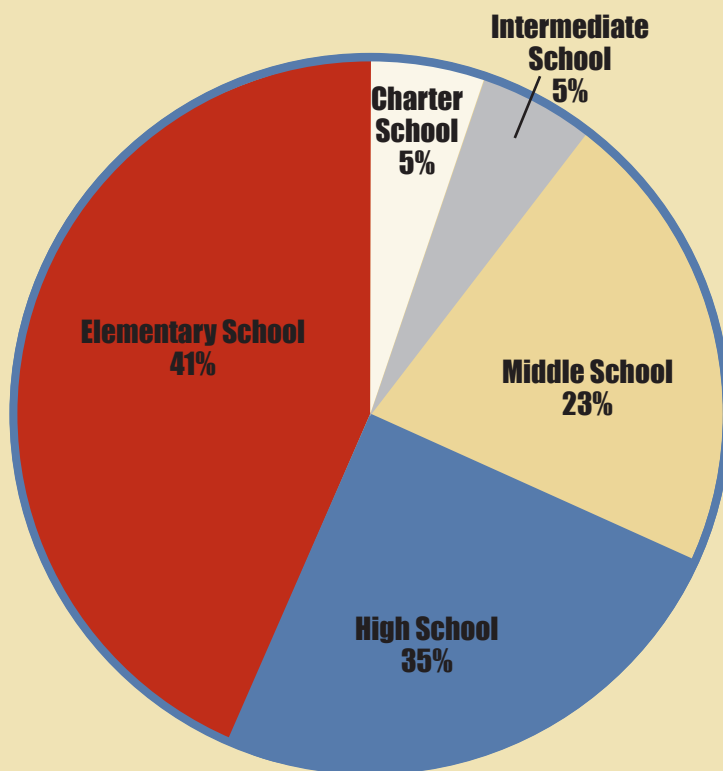


In some situations, the books might have contained information that helps prepare a young person for the future. In other instances, perhaps the banning of a particular book might be avoided through advance review of the age-appropriateness of the book before it is ordered for the elementary or middle school libraries.

## WHERE BOOKS WERE BANNED

*"Seguin ISD took the lead in banning: three of the four books challenged were removed from the elementary library shelves."*

### BANNED BOOKS BY AGE RANGE



Multiple ISD school grades reported for same book

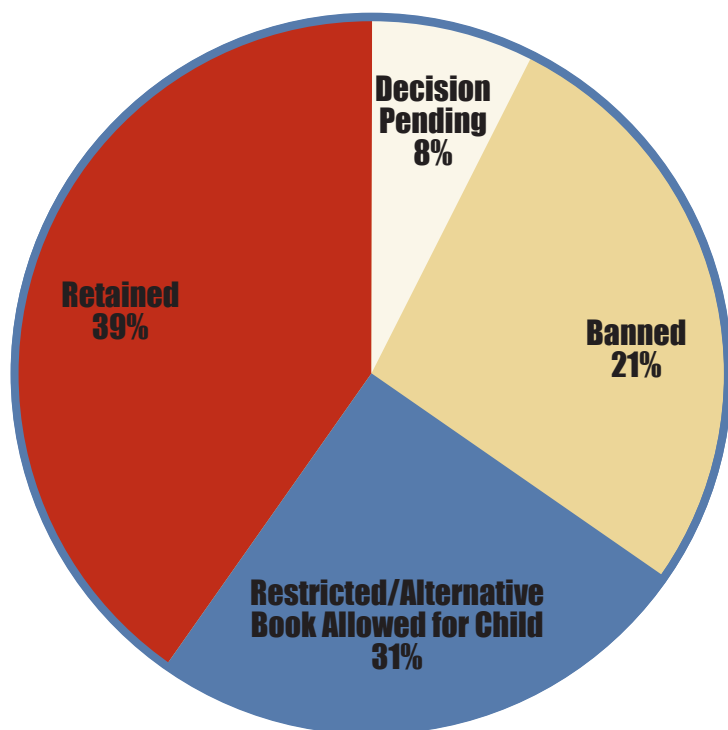
Round Rock ISD led the way with the most challenges in the 2010-2011 school year, but retained all six books at their schools. These challenges came from the elementary and middle school grade levels. Cypress-Fairbanks ISD came in second with five book challenges and banned two of Eric Jerome Dickey's novels, *Drive Me Crazy* and *Dying for Revenge*, at all their high schools.

Burleson and Seguin ISD tied for third place in challenges with four books each. Of those books challenged, Burleson banned one at the middle school level. Seguin ISD took the lead in banning: three of the four books challenged were removed from elementary library shelves.

The remaining school districts averaged one to two challenged books, representing a diverse geographic area of the state from the Rio Grande Valley to North Texas. Elementary schools had the most banning activity for a wide range of reasons, including: violence or horror, profanity, sexual content or nudity, and offensive to religious/political beliefs.



## OUTCOME OF CHALLENGES



Multiple ISD school grades reported for same book

*"A really good writer who gets into the young adult mind and talks with them - helps them with suicidal tendencies, for example - is more effective than any other medium. We think writers need to be given carte blanche freedom to write about all of life. It's good and bad days. They are talking about issues."*

**- CLAY SMITH, LITERARY DIRECTOR, TEXAS**

**BOOK FESTIVAL**

With the growth and popularity of Young Adult (YA) books, which deal with frank teen discussions and/or situations involving sex, homosexuality, drugs, gangs, suicide, as well as the fantasy-horror worlds of vampires, dark angels and zombies. Most challenged authors on the 2010-2011 lists, therefore, were YA writers. Many of these YA books, challenged at the elementary school level, found a home at the middle, junior or high school library. In other cases, such as *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold, some books were retained on the elementary shelves.

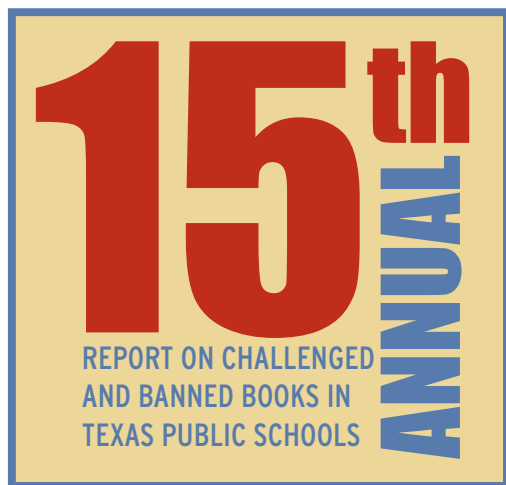
Classics like *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, and *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes, still appear on the lists of challenged books in Texas, but these occurrences are far fewer than in years past.

Total tallies for the 750 ISDs that reported this year showed "Retained" leading the way in outcome results. We hope to see this trend again in the 2011-2012 report and congratulate the ISDs that take matters of intellectual freedom and a student's right to read seriously.

## WHY BOOKS WERE CHALLENGED

*“Don’t join the book burners. Do not think you are going to conceal thoughts by concealing evidence that they ever existed.”*

– DWIGHT E. EISENHOWER



Among the 67 books challenged in the 750 ISDs that reported for the 2010-2011 year, numerous reasons were provided as to why the challenges were made:

- Politically/socially/racially offensive
- Offensive to religious beliefs
- Drugs and alcohol
- Violence and horror
- Profanity/poor language
- Sex or nudity

Most often, a single book was challenged for a multitude of reasons, such as *Dangerously Alice* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, for “sexual content or nudity,” as well as “offensive to religious sensitivities.” Naylor and other YA authors, Francesca Lia Block and Eric Jerome Dickey lead the list of most banned books. (See “List of Challenged Books.”)

One of the most interesting challenges came from North East ISD’s Cibolo Green Elementary School, where an individual challenged *Merriam-Webster’s Visual Dictionary* due to “sexual content or nudity.” Although the ISD’s report did not indicate if this came from a parent, the dictionary was removed from general circulation and placed in a restricted area.

*Flowers for Algernon* was retained by Kerr Middle School in Burleson ISD, after being challenged for “sexual content or nudity.” One non-book challenged for “drugs or alcohol” and “offensive to religious beliefs” was a video entitled “Visit into the Daily Lives of Muslim Teenagers” (SVE Media)—prompted Carroll ISD’s Eubanks Intermediate School to provide an alternate book choice for students.

One parent at Fiest Elementary School in the Cypress-Fairbanks ISD objected to the word “sperm” in the book, *Egg to Chick* by Millicent E. Selman. The book was retained. However, when the same school district received a challenge for “profanity” and “sexual content or nudity” in two of Eric Jerome Dickey’s novels, both books were banned from all three of the school district’s high schools.

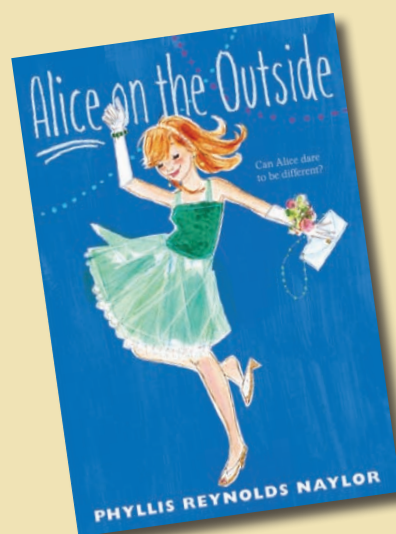
When Hunstville ISD banned Sean Cliver’s *Disposable: A History of Skateboard Art* from its high school, it was for many registered complaints: “profanity; sexual content or nudity; violence or horror; politically, racially or socially offensive; drugs or alcohol.” Parents in Killeen ISD objected to their elementary school children having access to the *Captain Underpants* series, which included words, such as “fart” and “burp.” All books, while retained for the time being, are being reviewed and the final decision is pending.

Although Lovejoy ISD decided to retain *War Comes to Willy Freeman*, after receiving numerous reasons for the challenge, some parents at the elementary school have requested forms to appeal the school district’s decision. Union Hill ISD noted it had restricted Libba Bray’s *Going Bovine* because “some profanity is expected in YA books ... this one went over the top with its use.”

Reasons for why a book is challenged are as diverse as the State of Texas’ communities.

*“Every burned book enlightens the world.”*

**- RALPH WALDO EMERSON**



*“The books that the world calls immoral are the books that show the world its own shame.”*

**- OSCAR WILDE**

## DUE PROCESS BEFORE PULLING A BOOK

### THE PROCESS TO BAN A BOOK BEGINS WHEN A PARENT OR GUARDIAN MAKES A COMPLAINT.

Books are almost always challenged by a parent or, every so often, by a teacher.

When a book is challenged, a school might ban it, sometimes permanently. Fortunately, most ISDs report they have retained the challenged books or have restricted the book's use to a certain age or class level or restricted it only for the child whose parents complained.

One might presume the more outrageous a book, the more likely it is to get banned. But the process schools use to respond to parental or community complaints usually determines the outcome of a challenge more than the contents of the book. For example, in Round Rock ISD, a book entitled *Dead High Yearbook*, challenged for its "profanity, violence or horror" by a parent, was retained in the Cedar Valley Middle School's library. While in the Huntsville ISD, *Disposable: A History of Skateboard Art* was banned from Huntsville High School for its reported "profanity, sexual content or nudity and violence or horror."

There are generally three ways for school districts to evaluate books:

- By the librarian or principal
- By the school board
- By a review committee

In the 2010-2011 report, an estimated half of the districts reported that when a book is challenged, it's reviewed by the "administration only," or "librarian only." This means the decision to ban a book can be made by a single person. Those who believe that parents have the right to decide what their children read, but shouldn't be able to dictate what other people's children may or may not read, should be alarmed by this.

Often, a parent or teacher will note that a book is simply not "age appropriate," without providing details as to what exactly is offensive. This is contrary to the fundamental right of parents to guide their children's upbringing.

The balance of districts used a process, which allows a school board review or review committee, generally comprised of the principal or superintendent, school librarian, teachers, parents (and, hopefully, students). The goal of all ISDs should be a process that involves all of these players, not a single parent, superintendent, teacher or librarian speaking for all.

## TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION RESOURCES

*"The goal, when one is developing a policy for a library, is to make sure different viewpoints are considered—not just for one segment of community, but for all populations. Texas school districts have autonomy in setting guidelines for their school libraries. Policies should be inclusive of materials and delineate an objective process for selection and (when necessary) reconsideration. The role of librarians and educators is to follow established policies.*

*When a challenge goes through the TLA-recommended process, more than likely it is retained and not banned. That result speaks to the professional skill brought into the selection process. There is a perfect book for every child."*

**GLORIA MERAZ,**

**DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, TLA**

The Texas Library Association believes that the freedom to read is a corollary of the First Amendment's guarantees of a free press. The Association's Intellectual Freedom Committee helps protect this right by responding to librarians facing book challenges, offering model policies and procedures, tracking reports of book challenges by its members, and supporting policies and laws that preserve and protect access to information. The Committee also makes itself available as a resource to librarians facing intellectual freedom challenges.

Freedom to read means individuals should have the freedom to choose among reading materials, and open access to a diversity of resources. It means that these rights should be protected against attempts at broad-based censorship of reading materials or control the process.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Texas Library Association  
3355 Bee Caves Road  
Suite 401  
Austin, TX 78746-6763  
Office: 512.328.1518  
Fax: 512.328.8852  
Website: [www.txla.org](http://www.txla.org)

## LIST OF BANNED BOOKS

### BOOKS REMOVED FROM LIBRARY SHELVES OR CLASS READING LISTS

**STEVE ALTEN**

*The Trench*

**FRANCESCA LIA BLOCK**

*Echo*

*Weetzie Bat*

**SEAN CLIVER**

*Disposable: A History of Skateboard Art*

**CAROLYN COMAN**

*Bee & Jacky*

**CAROLINE COONEY**

*The Terrorist*

**ERIC JEROME DICKEY**

*Drive Me Crazy*

*Dying for Revenge*

**LYNNE EWING**

*Into the Cold Fire*

**CHRIS LYNCH**

*The Slot Machine*

**CAROLYN MARKLER**

*Tangled*

**JOE MENO**

*The Great Perhaps*

**LAUREN MYRACLE**

*Kissing Kate*

**PHYLLIS REYNOLDS NAYLOR**

*Alice on the Outside*

**SARAH PARVIS**

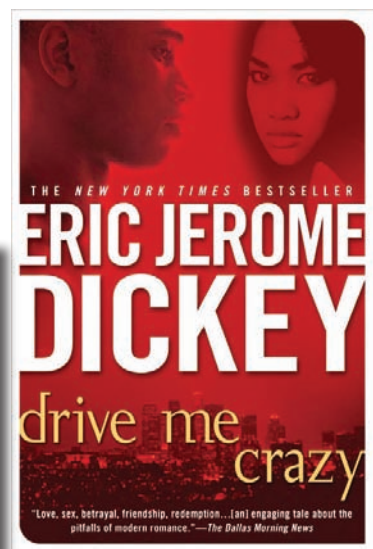
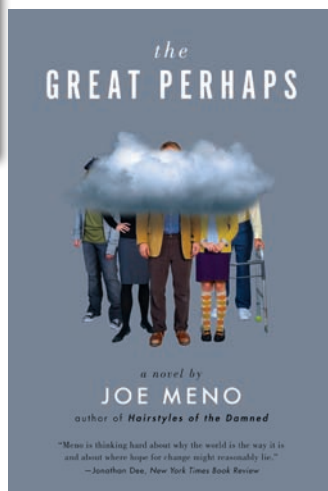
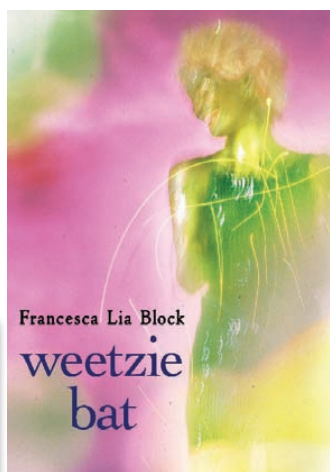
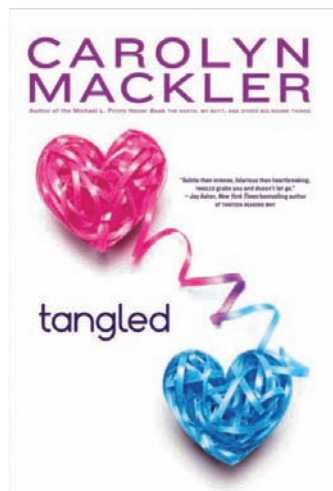
*Creepy Castles*

**MIKE REISS**

*The Boy Who Looked Like Lincoln*

**ANDY RILEY**

*Book of Bunny Suicides*



## LIST OF RESTRICTED BOOKS

RESTRICTED TO READERS BASED ON AGE, READING LEVEL, PARENTAL PERMISSION, ETC.

**HARRY G. ALLARD, JR.**

*The Stupids Die*

*Merriam-Webster's Visual Dictionary*

**LIBBA BRAY**

*Going Bovine*

**PHYLLIS REYNOLDS NAYLOR**

*Dangerously Alice*

**MARC BROWN**

*Buster's Sugartime*

**SONYA SONES**

*What My Mother Doesn't Know*

**MATT CHRISTOPHER**

*Tight End*

**R. L. STINE**

*Stay Out of the Basement*

**G. CLIVE**

*Gangs*

**SVE MEDIA**

*Visit into the Daily Lives of Muslim Teenagers (Video/Book)*

**SUZANNE COLLINS**

*Hunger Games*

**BARBARA TAYLOR**

*Everything You Need To Know  
About AIDS*

**NATASHA FRIEND**

*Lush*

**RICHARD UHLIG**

*Boy Minus Girl*

**ALISON CRAGIN HERZIG AND**

**JANE LAWRENCE MALI**

*The Ten-Speed Babysitter*

**JUDITH VIGNA**

*My Sister Takes Drugs*

**ALDOUS HUXLEY**

*Brave New World*

**LARRY WATSON**

*Montana 1948*

**A.M. JENKINS**

*Repossessed*

**SCOTT ZECSE**

*The Captured*

**SUBCOMMANDANTE MARCOS**

*The Story of Colors*



## ALL CHALLENGED BOOKS: BY SCHOOL DISTRICT

### AMARILLO ISD

**School:** Olsen Park Elementary

**Book:** *Birthday Present*, Cynthia Rylant

**Reason Cited:** Sexual Content or Nudity

**Action Taken:** Retained

**Note:** Initiated by teacher; objected to line drawing of naked baby girl

**School:** Olsen Park Elementary

**Book:** *My Sister Takes Drugs*, Judith Vigna

**Reason Cited:** Drugs or alcohol

**Action Taken:** Restricted

**Note:** Challenge initiated by parent; objected to content not appropriate to elementary students.

Restricted to curriculum area, by counselor with students

### BEAUMONT ISD

**School:** All district schools

**Book:** *Dangerously Alice*, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity; Offensive to religious sensitivities

**Action Taken:** Restricted

**Notes:** Banned (elementary); Restricted (middle school); and, Retained (high school)

### BORGER ISD

**Schools:** Borger Intermediate & Middle

**Book:** *Tangled*, Carolyn Markler

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Banned

**Note:** Principals, librarians, parents and teachers challenged

### BREMOND ISD

**School:** Bremond Elementary

**Book:** *Tight End*, Matt Christopher

**Reason Cited:** Other/"Too old for third-grader"

**Action:** Restricted

### BURLESON ISD

**School:** Hughes Middle School

**Book:** *One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies*, Sonya Sones

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Retained

**School:** Kerr Middle School

**Book:** *Book of Bunny Suicides*, Andy Riley

**Reason Cited:** Violence or horror; Politically/racially/socially offensive

**Action Taken:** Banned

**School:** Kerr Middle School

**Book:** *Flowers for Algernon*, Daniel Keyes

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Retained

**School:** Kerr Middle School

**Book:** *Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins

**Reason Cited:** Parent did not specify

**Action Taken:** Restricted

**Note:** Alternate book allowed (curriculum)

### CARROLL ISD

**School:** Eubanks Intermediate

**Video:** *Visit into the Daily Lives of Muslim Teenagers*, SVE Media

**Reason Cited:** Offensive to religious beliefs; drugs or alcohol

**Action Taken:** Restricted—alternate book allowed (video)

**Note:** Content changed or deleted

### CHICO ISD

**School:** Chico High School

**Book:** *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity; offensive to religious beliefs

**Action Taken:** Restricted

**Note:** Alternative book allowed (curriculum only)

### COPPERAS COVE ISD

**School:** Clements/Parsons Elementary School

**Book:** *Creepy Castles*, Sarah Parvis

**Reason Cited:** Violence or horror

**Action Taken:** Banned

**Note:** Older students better able to cope

### CRAWFORD ISD

**School:** Crawford Elementary School

**Book:** *Lush*, Natasha Friend

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Restricted

**Note:** Moved from the elementary to high school library

### CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS ISD

**School:** Cy Lakes/Cy Springs/Cy Woods High Schools

**Book:** *Drive Me Crazy*, Eric Jerome Dickey

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Banned

**Note:** Verbal, not written, parent complaint; reading/reviewing other titles by Dickey

**School:** Same as above

**Book:** *Dying for Revenge*, Eric Jerome Dickey

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity

**Action:** Banned

**Note:** Same as above



**School:** Langham Creek High School  
**Book:** *Blue is for Nightmares*, Laurie Faria Stolarz  
**Reason Cited:** Violence or horror  
**Action Taken:** Decision pending  
**Note:** Classroom library title; parent verbal challenge

**School:** Fiest Elementary  
**Book:** *Egg to Chick*, Millicent E. Selman  
**Reason Cited:** Other (word “sperm”)  
**Action Taken:** Retained

**School:** Goodson Middle School  
**Book:** *Companions of the Night*, Vivian Vande Velde  
**Reason Cited:** Violence or horror  
**Action Taken:** Retained

#### EARLY ISD

**School:** Early Primary School  
**Book:** *Buster’s Sugartime*, Marc Brown  
**Reason Cited:** Offensive to religious sensitivities; politically, racially, or socially offensive  
**Action Taken:** Restricted  
**Note:** Available upon request

#### EASTLAND ISD

**School:** Goliad Elementary  
**Book:** *Alice on the Outside*, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor  
**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity  
**Action Taken:** Banned

#### FERRIS ISD

**School:** High Schools  
**Book:** *Crank*, Ellen Hopkins  
**Reason Cited:** Profanity  
**Action Taken:** Retained

**School:** Intermediate Schools  
**Book:** *Chiggers*, Hope Larsen  
**Reason Cited:** Profanity  
**Action Taken:** Retained

#### FORT WORTH ISD

**School:** Middle Schools  
**Book:** *Am I Blue? Coming Out of the Silence*, Marion Dane Bauer (ed.)  
**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity  
**Action Taken:** Retained

#### GOOSE CREEK CISD

**School:** Goose Creek Memorial High School  
**Book:** *The Great Perhaps*, Joe Meno  
**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity; drugs or alcohol  
**Action Taken:** Banned

#### HUNTSVILLE ISD

**School:** Huntsville High School  
**Book:** *Disposable: A History of Skateboard Art*, Sean Cliver  
**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity; violence or horror; politically, racially, or socially offensive; drugs or alcohol  
**Action Taken:** Banned

#### IRVING ISD

**School:** Bowie Middle School  
**Book:** *Return of the Bunny Suicides*, Andy Riley  
**Reason Cited:** Violence or horror  
**Action Taken:** Retained

**School:** John Haley Elementary  
**Book:** *The Lovely Bones*, Alice Sebold  
**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity  
**Action Taken:** Retained

#### KERRVILLE ISD

**School:** Hal Peterson Middle School  
**Book:** *The Captured*, Scott Zecsh  
**Reason Cited:** Violence or horror  
**Action Taken:** Restricted  
**Note:** Alternate book allowed (curriculum only); Content changed or deleted

#### KILLEEN ISD

**School:** Brookhaven Elementary School  
**Book:** *Captain Underpants*, Dav Pilkey  
**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity; offensive to religious sensitivities; use of vulgar terms (fart, burp)  
**Action Taken:** Pending  
**Note:** School discussed with parent book as part of series—other Captain Underpants books may be challenged. Currently available for checkout.

#### KIRBYVILLE CISD

**School:** Kirbyville Jr. High School  
**Book:** *Stay Out of the Basement*, R. L. Stine  
**Reason Cited:** Violence or horror  
**Action Taken:** Restricted  
**Note:** Only student of parent who challenged is restricted; no others are restricted.

#### LA JOYA ISD

**School:** Chavez Middle School  
**Book:** *What My Mother Doesn’t Know*, Sonya Sones  
**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity  
**Action Taken:** Restricted

### LA PORTE ISD

**School:** Jennie Reid Elementary

**Book:** *The Trouble with Babies*, Martha Freeman

**Reason Cited:** Concerning gay couple rearing a child

**Action Taken:** Decision pending; being reviewed

### LEANDER ISD

**School:** Bagdad Elementary

**Book:** *The Story of Colors*, Subcommandante Marcos

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Restricted

**Note:** Copy of book moved to the middle school

**School:** River Place Elementary

**Book:** *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*, Gregory Maguire

**Reason Cited:** Inappropriate for elementary

**Action Taken:** Retained

### LOVEJOY ISD

**School:** Hart Elementary

**Book:** *War Comes to Willy Freeman*, James & Christopher Collier

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity; violence or horror; politically, racially, or socially offensive; drugs or alcohol

**Action Taken:** Retained

**Note:** Parent requested forms to appeal decision to the school board

### MIDWAY ISD

**School:** Midway Middle School

**Book:** *The Trench*, Steve Alten

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Banned

**Note:** Doesn't promote district educational goals

### NORTH EAST ISD

**School:** Cibolo Green Elementary

**Book:** *Miriam-Webster's Visual Dictionary*

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Restricted (removed from general circulation; moved to non-circulating Reference)

### NORTHSIDE ISD

**School:** Elementary Schools

**Book:** *Through My Eyes*, Ruby Bridges

**Reason Cited:** Politically, racially or socially offensive

**Action Taken:** Retained

**School:** Elementary Schools

**Book:** *Let's Get a Pup*, Said Kate, Bob Graham

**Reason Cited:** Politically, racially or socially offensive

**Action Taken:** Retained

### ODEM-EDROY ISD

**School:** Odem Junior High

**Book:** *Repossessed*, A.M. Jenkins

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; offensive to religious sensitivities; sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Restricted

**Note:** Moved to high school

### PEARLAND ISD

**School:** Pearland Junior High West

**Book:** *Boy Minus Girl*, Richard Uhlig

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; offensive to religious sensitivities; drugs or alcohol; sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Restricted

**Note:** Banned 7-8th grade; sent to high school

### PERRYTON ISD

**School:** Williams Intermediate

**Book:** *The Stupids Die*, Harry G. Allard, Jr.

**Reason Cited:** Disrespectful/name-calling/bad manners

**Action Taken:** Restricted

### PHARR-SAN JUAN-ALAMO ISD

**School:** Palmer Elementary

**Book:** *The Boy Who Looked Like Lincoln*, Mike Reiss

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity; illustration and vocabulary offensive

**Action Taken:** Banned

**Note:** More than likely, book will be removed - content and age of students

### PLANO ISD

**School:** High Schools

**Book:** *Culture and Values: A Survey of the Humanities: Vol II*, Lawrence S. Cunningham and John J. Reich

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Retained

### PORT ISABEL ISD

**School:** Port Isabel Junior High

**Book:** *Fancy White Trash*, Marjetta Geerling

**Reason Cited:** Politically, racially, or socially offensive

**Action Taken:** Decision pending

### PORT NECHES-GROVES ISD

**School:** Port Neches Middle School

**Book:** *The Slot Machine*, Chris Lynch

**Reason Cited:** Profanity

**Action Taken:** Banned

### QUITMAN ISD

**School:** Junior & High Schools

**Book:** *Vegan, Virgin, Valentine*, Carolyn Mackler

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity; politically, racially, or socially offensive

**Action Taken:** Pending upon review

**School:** Junior & High Schools

**Book:** *Echo*, Francesca Lia Block

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity; other

**Action Taken:** Banned

**Note:** Challenged for sexual content; overall, a poorly written book

### RICHARDSON ISD

**School:** Berkner, JJ Pearce, Lake Highlands and Richardson High Schools

**Book:** *Montana 1948*, Larry Watson

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity; other (suicide)

**Action Taken:** Restricted

### ROUND ROCK ISD

**School:** Hopewell Middle School

**Book:** *All In*, Peter Hautman

**Reason Cited:** Profanity

**Action Taken:** Retained

**School:** Canyon Vista Middle School

**Book:** *The Outsiders*, S.E. Hinton

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; violence or horror

**Action Taken:** Retained

**Note:** Child given alternative curriculum book

**School:** Callison Elementary

**Book:** *Day of Tears*, Julius Lester

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; politically, racially or socially offensive

**Action Taken:** Retained

**School:** Cedar Valley Middle School

**Book:** *Fat Kid Rules the World*, K. L. Going

**Reason Cited:** Profanity, other

**Action Taken:** Retained

**School:** Cedar Valley Middle School

**Book:** *Dead High Yearbook*, Multiple authors

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; violence or horror

**Action Taken:** Retained

**School:** Union Hill Elementary

**Book:** *More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*, Alvin Schwartz

**Reason Cited:** Violence or horror

**Action Taken:** Retained

### SEGUIN ISD

**School:** Rodriguez Elementary

**Book:** *The Terrorist*, Caroline Cooney

**Reason Cited:** Violence or horror

**Action Taken:** Banned

**School:** Rodriguez Elementary

**Book:** *Bee & Jacky*, Carolyn Coman

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Banned

**Note:** Considered Young Adult

**School:** Rodriguez Elementary

**Book:** *Dragon Slayer's Academy*, Kate McMullan

**Reason Cited:** Offensive to religious sensitivities

**Action Taken:** Retained

**School:** Rodriguez Elementary

**Book:** *Into the Cold Fire*, Lynne Ewing

**Reason Cited:** Violence or horror

**Action Taken:** Banned

**Note:** Considered Young Adult

### SHELDON ISD

**School:** Null Middle School

**Book:** *Gangs*, Clive Gifford

**Reason Cited:** Violence or horror; other

**Action Taken:** Restricted

**Note:** Graphic gang images (child holding a gun); placed in high school

### SPRING BRANCH ISD

**School:** Stratford High School

**Book:** *Living Dead Girl*, Elizabeth Scott

**Reason Cited:** Other (pedophilia)

**Action Taken:** Retained

### THE EHRHART SCHOOL (K-8th)

**School:** Ehrhart Charter School

**Book:** *Weetzie Bat*, Francesca Lia Block

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content; other (homosexual content)

**Action Taken:** Banned

### UNION HILL ISD

**School:** Union Hill High School

**Book:** *Going Bovine*, Libba Bray

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Restricted

**Note:** Some profanity expected in YA books—this one went over the top with use

## VALLEY MILLS ISD

**School:** Valley Mills Junior High and High School

**Book:** *Kissing Kate*, Lauren Myracle

**Reason Cited:** Profanity; sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Banned

**Note:** Complaint by 8th grade parent

## WOLFE CITY ISD

**School:** Wolfe City Elementary

**Book:** *The Junkyard Dog*, Erika Tamar

**Reason Cited:** Profanity

**Action Taken:** Retained

**School:** Wolfe City Elementary

**Book:** *The Ten-Speed Babysitter*, Alison Cragin Herzig and Jane Lawrence Mali

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Restricted

**Note:** For middle school use only

**School:** Wolfe City Elementary

**Book:** *Everything You Need To Know About AIDS*, Barbara Taylor

**Reason Cited:** Sexual content or nudity

**Action Taken:** Restricted

**Note:** For high school use only

## SUMMARIES OF CHALLENGED BOOKS

### *Alice on the Outside*, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

Issues of sexuality, tolerance, and self-knowledge are dealt with candidly in this 11th book about Alice McKinley. Naylor continues to follow this engaging protagonist as she copes with the expected and unexpected ordeals of growing up.

### *All In*, Peter Hautman

Armed with a fake ID, 17-year-old Denn heads to Las Vegas to gamble. Here he also finds love with a trouble-some redhead.

### *Am I Blue? Coming Out From the Silence*

Marion Dane Bauer

This collection of 18 short stories by recognized children's and young adult authors explores the various meanings of gay/lesbian identity in the lives of teenagers.

### *Bee + Jacky*, Carolyn Coman

It's 1975 and siblings, Bee and Jacky, are 14 and 17. As the family prepares to return to the grandparents' home for a visit, the teens decided to stay home alone. While reminiscing about the time spent at their grandparents', Bee suddenly remembers haunting episodes involving her older brother.

### *Birthday Presents*, Cynthia Rylant

In a celebration of family love, simple line drawings and short prose chronicle a child's first six birthdays, pre-school through second grade.

### *Blue Is For Nightmares*, Laurie Faria Stolarz

Boarding school junior Stacey Brown has nightmares too real to ignore. They become true, as her best friend becomes the target of one seriously psycho stalker.

### *Book of Bunny Suicides*, Andy Riley

A dark cartoon collection of more than 100 bunnies, seeking the creative end to their lives.

### *Boy Minus Girl*, Richard Uhlig

Lester Ekhardt, 14, longs for Charity Conners, who just moved back to Harker City after living in St. Louis. The eighth grader tries to strike a bargain with Jesus, but it's not until Uncle Ray rolls into town that Lester sees some hope. Set in the '80s, this coming-of-age story is heavily laced with humor.

### *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley

A classic work of science fiction, the novel explores a homogenized utopian world order. Human beings are grown in incubators, the populace is kept drugged, and all aspects of society are strictly regulated.

### *Buster's Sugartime*, Marc Brown

When his father takes him to visit Vermont, Buster sends postcards to his friends back home telling them what he is learning about maple syrup and the "mud season."

### *Chiggers*, Hope Larsen

Nerdy, naive Abby returns to summer camp, excited to see Rose, the older girl who was her friend last year. Abby discovers new friendships when Rose is too busy to hang out with her.

### *Captain Underpants*, Dav Pilkey

A series of children's books about two fourth graders, George Beard and Harold Hutchins, and the superhero they accidentally create by hypnotizing their principal, Mr. Benny Krupp.

### *Companions of the Night*, Vivian Vande Velde

A romantic horror genre that is both thought-provoking and blood-curdling. Kerry becomes the unwitting accomplice of an attractive, mysterious boy on the run, only to discover that he is a vampire.

### *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*

Gregory Maguire

The chilling and mesmerizing retelling of Cinderella is full of love and hate, beauty and ugliness, cruelty and charity. The story begins in 17th-century Holland, where the two Fisher sisters and their mother have fled to escape a hostile England.

### ***Crank*, Ellen Hopkins**

Author's semi-autobiographical verse novel chronicles the turbulent and often disturbing relationship between Kristina, a character based on her own daughter, and the "monster," the highly addictive drug crystal meth, or "crank."

### ***Creepy Castles*, Sarah Parvis**

From the "Scary Places" series, this volume describes eleven castles, such as the Tower of London and Dracula's Romanian homestead. The book uncovers their frightening, yet history-based backgrounds, as well as a glossary, index and illustrated map of locations.

### ***Culture and Values: A Survey of the Humanities: Vol II***

**Lawrence S. Cunningham and John J. Reich**

The two volumes cover Western cultures along with important non-Western cultures, providing students solid, accessible introductions to art, music, philosophy, literature, and more.

### ***Dangerously Alice*, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor**

Labeled a "Goody two-shoes" by her classmates, a 16-year-old girl, Alice, struggles to define herself as she faces the pressures of fitting in at school. The story explores topics such as self-image, teen sex and bullying.

### ***Day of Tears*, Julius Lester**

Author draws on historical sources to fictionalize a real event: the biggest slave auction in American history, which took place in Savannah, Georgia, in 1859.

### ***Dead High Yearbook***

**Ivan Velez, John Rozum, Hoche Anderson, Jennifer Camper, Wilfred Santiago, Mark McVeigh and Papo Martin**

This group of grisly stories is connected by an overarching tale of two zombie yearbook editors creating their annual publication. The deaths range from gruesome to only suggestions of their demise.

### ***Disposable: A History of Skateboard Art* Sean Cliver**

More than 1,000 skateboard graphics from the last 30 years are showcased. Includes author's skateboarding history, along with other well-known artists.

### ***Dragon Slayer's Academy*, Kate McMullan**

The would-be hero, Wiglaf, lives with his large, brutish family in abject poverty. Although the smallest member of the family, he is forced to do all the labor and is picked on by others. He signs up for a local Dragon Slayers' Academy to make himself a hero.

### ***Drive Me Crazy*, Eric Jerome Dickey**

Provocative descriptions, occasional violence and adult language enliven this urban melodrama, featuring a rough, but conscientious, chauffeur, aptly named Driver.

### ***Dying for Revenge*, Eric Jerome Dickey**

A professional assassin is pursued by violent killers seeking revenge for an old dispute. Numerous violent scenes and erotic sexual encounters are related through detailed descriptions.

### ***Echo*, Francesca Lia Block**

Part myth, part dream—another book from the author who provides her fans with a dark tale of Los Angeles. During Echo's travels, she meets a broken angel, iron-pumping vampires and the fairy daughter of a rock star.

### ***Egg To Chick*, Millicent E. Selman**

How an egg cell develops—from the time it is joined by a sperm until the baby chick is hatched 21 days later—is clearly explained.

### ***Everything You Need To Know About AIDS* Barbara Taylor**

Book on the AIDS disease—its discovery, causes, transmission, treatment, and how to protect oneself from contracting the disease.

### ***Fancy White Trash*, Marjetta Geerling**

Fifteen-year-old Abby Savage navigates her world in a household, which closely resembles a soap-opera cast rather than a real family.

### ***Fat Kid Rules the World*, K.L. Going**

Troy, weighing almost 300 pounds, considers throwing himself onto a subway track, until a stranger stops him. Curt MacCrae, a charismatic punk rocker/homeless kid, shows Troy his talents and who he really is.

### ***Flowers for Algernon*, Daniel Keyes**

Mentally-challenged Charlie becomes the first human subject for an IQ-increasing brain operation. Once his IQ begins to climb, however, Charlie must confront the cruelty of his “friends” and the other stresses that come with extreme intellect.

### ***Gangs*, Clive Gifford (G. Clive)**

Variety of “voices” address issues most relevant to teenagers today and some of the issues of concern in town and cities around the world: The series aims to stimulate debate and discussion with a minimum of text and strong illustrations; for example, how young people are lured into gang life and the between gangs and violent crime on our streets.

### ***Going Bovine*, Libba Bray**

Cameron, a 16-year-old slacker with a dysfunctional family, is diagnosed with Creutzfeldt-Jacob (“mad cow” disease). His journey to become closer to his family is full of fantastical situations, such as the Dark Wizard, fire giants and a missing Dr. X.

### ***Into the Cold Fire*, Lynne Ewing**

Four best friends, who look like most girls from Los Angeles, discover their magical powers and are destined to battle against evil.

### ***Kissing Kate*, Lauren Myracle**

Since her best friend, Lissa, kissed her in an uncomfortable way, Kate has shunned her. In this first-person narrative, Lissa, hurt and confused, shares her story and feelings. New friendships help Lissa eventually confront both Kate and her own sexual identity.

### ***Let's Get A Pup, Said Kate*, Bob Graham**

After the death of her cat, Kate wants a new pet. At the local Animal Rescue Center, they adopt a smallish, frisky puppy, but later add a sweet-natured older dog to their family.

### ***Living Dead Girl*, Elizabeth Scott**

A novel about a 15-year-old girl who has spent the last five years being abused by a kidnapper named Ray. The narrator accounts how she is the second girl abducted and is brain-washed by Ray to help find other girls.

### ***Lush*, Natasha Friend**

Struggling with an alcoholic father and a mother in denial, 13-year old Samantha reaches out for help by leaving an anonymous letter in her school library. She soon begins a secret correspondence with an unknown pen pal who gives her advice and reveals some hard truths.

### ***Merriam-Webster's Visual Dictionary***

Visual dictionary incorporates more than 20,000 clear and concise terms, including 6,000 highly detailed illustrations and 17 chapters, from astronomy to sports.

### ***Montana 1948*, Larry Watson**

Fragments of memory evoked by the narrator as the novel opens create a simple but powerful tale of Montana in 1948.

### ***More Scary Stories to Tell In The Dark* Alvin Schwartz**

The frightening world of “Scary Stories,” a collection of folklorist-author’s most alarming tales of horror, dark revenge, and supernatural events of all time—complete with chilling illustrations.



***My Sister Takes Drugs*, Judith Vigna**

An illustrated children's book about a boy whose older sister has a drug problem. Book is intended for use in therapy situations or as part of a drug education/awareness program.

***One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies***

**Sonya Sones**

After losing her mother to cancer, 15-year-old Ruby is uprooted to Los Angeles to live with her estranged movie star father. Through a mixture of prose, poetry and emails to her best friend, her boyfriend, and her mother "in heaven", she expresses her innermost thoughts and feelings of isolation and grief.

***Repossessed*, A.M Jenkins**

Demon narrator "borrows" the slightly used body of a slacker teen to understand the human world.

***Return of the Bunny Suicides*, Andy Riley**

Sequel follows more than 100 bunnies as they find ever more bizarre ways to end their lives—from swimming with chomping fish to hiding under an elephant's footstool.

***Stay Out of the Basement*, R.L. Stine**

Dr. Brewer is conducting strange plant-testing in his basement and his children, Margaret and Casey are worried about him. Especially when they meet some of his plants and notice their father is becoming "weedy-and seedy."

***Tangled*, Carolyn Mackler**

A diverse group of adolescents cross paths while on vacation. All struggling with their own unique insecurities and fears, their interactions with one another bring positive changes that none could have predicted.

***The Boy Who Looked Like Lincoln*, Mike Reiss**

Picture book stars an eight-year-old who is unhappy because he looks like Abraham Lincoln. When Benjy is sent to "Camp What-cha-ma-call-it: The Camp for Kids who Look Like Things," he learns to appreciate his appearance after he meets children with even bigger problems

***The Captured: A True Story of Abduction by Indians on the Texas Frontier***

**Scott Zecsh**

In 1870, 10-year-old Adolph Korn was kidnapped by an Apache raiding party. After thriving in the rough, nomadic existence to become one of his tribe's fiercest warriors, he is returned to his parents after three years. Against the historical backdrop, it is a descriptive portrait of Texas frontier life.

***The Great Perhaps*, Joe Meno**

Jonathan and Madeline Casper are scientists at the University of Chicago, who conduct bizarre lab experiments and deal with children who run amok.

***The Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins**

In a post-apocalyptic world, 24 young adults are chosen by lottery each year to participate in a series of televised gladiator-like games in which they must fight to the death.

***The Junkyard Dog*, Erika Tamar**

Moving story about an 11-year-old and the dog she befriends. Big-hearted Katie can't stand to see a junkyard dog being starved by its owner and abused by a gang of boys. She learns to make sacrifices and overcome frustrations, in the process gaining self-confidence and trust in others.

***The Lovely Bones*, Alice Sebold**

Fourteen-year-old Susie Salmon is lured into a makeshift underground den in a cornfield and brutally raped and murdered by a man she knew as her neighbor. After her death, she watches her family from "above."



### *The Outsiders*, S.E. Hinton

According to the hero, there are two kinds of people in the world: greasers and socs. Ponyboy is a greaser and proud of it, until his friend Johnny kills a soc. The murder causes his world to crumble and teaches him that pain feels the same whether a soc or a greaser.

### *The Slot Machine*, Chris Lynch

This dark look at growing up male in America is narrated by 14-year-old Elvin Bishop who uses sarcasm and humor.

### *The Story of Colors*, Subcommandante Marcos

The world once was just black and white and gray, which bored the gods, the narrator explains. So, they went looking for bright colors and found them in the oddest places.

### *The Stupids Die*, Harry G. Allard, Jr.

The Stupid family thinks they are dead when the lights go out.

### *The Ten-Speed Babysitter*

**Alison Cragin Herzig and Jane Lawrence Mali**

When his employers jet off for a vacation, their 14-year-old male babysitter is left in charge of their toddler.

### *The Terrorist*, Caroline Cooney

An American girl living in London loses her younger brother due to a terrorist bombing and seeks revenge.

### *The Trench*, Steve Alten

Angel is being held in captivity and displayed by hero Jonas Taylor and aquarium-owner Masao Tanaka. Huge and deadly, Angel soon escapes and mayhem ensues.

### *The Trouble With Babies*, Martha Freeman

Holly, her mother, and stepfather move to house in San Francisco before her fourth grade. She gets to know her new neighbors, which include Xavier, who lives with his two fathers, and Annie, who is Jewish and Chinese.

### *Through My Eyes*, Ruby Bridges

Surrounded by federal marshals in 1960, six-year-old Ruby Bridges became the first black student ever at the all-white William Frantz Public School in New Orleans. Her memoir shares the hatred she faced and the innocence and compassion she experienced.

### *Tight End*, Matt Christopher

From a large collection of football related sports novels for young readers, this story focuses on a high school football player who begins to experience harassing phone calls shortly after his father is released from prison.

### *Vegan, Virgin, Valentine*, Carolyn Mackler

Accepted by Yale, Mara is trying to beat out her ex-boyfriend for valedictorian. Then, her same-age niece, Vivian ("V"), who is the anti-Mara, comes to visit and becomes a catalyst for Mara to examine her own behavior.

### *Visit into the Daily Lives of Muslim Teenagers*

**SVE Media, VIDEO**

### *War Comes to Willy Freeman*

**James and Christopher Collier**

Black and female, Willy Freeman witnesses her father's death at the hands of the Redcoats. She returns home to discover the British have kidnapped her mother as a prisoner. Disguised as a boy, Willy searches for her mother and finds help along the way.

### *Weetzie Bat*, Francesca Lia Block

Weetzie, early 20s, hated high school, but loves the old-time Hollywood movie stars, such as Charlie Chaplain. The bleached-blond, flattop-sporting heroine wears '50s taffeta dresses and searches for her "Secret Agent Lover Man." Her gay friend, Dirk, moves in with her and they expand their family through marriages and a baby.

### *What My Mother Doesn't Know*, Sonya Sones

Sophie is a "typical" teenager, dating Dylan. The author records Sophie's thoughts in a freewheeling verse of frank outpouring of inner longing. Lusty thoughts and hidden insecurities fill Sophie's mind.

## FRANCESCA LIA BLOCK SHARES HER LA



The woman from LA, Francesca Lia Block, writes about “Shangri-LA.” Born December 3, 1962, she has written many YA books—most famously the Weetzie Bat series. Published in 1989 by Harper Collins, *Weetzie Bat* and the other books in the Dangerous Angels series, have been translated into seven different languages and published around the world. Both fans and the media have raved about her work:

*“... Always hip without ever losing her bracing naiveté, way cool without a cynical bone in her body, she careens across a shimmering ‘80s Wonderland of futuristic diners and retro-martini lounges and exotic hot dog stands that’s half Hell-A and half Shangri-LA, where love is the most dangerous angel in a city full of them.”*

—Salon.com—Five great contemporary novels about Los Angeles

ACLU of Texas had the chance to recently visit with Block, who lives with her daughter and son in LA.

**ACLU TX: Take me back to the time you were in college and Weetzie came to life.**

Francesca Lia Block: She is sort of my alter ego, I would say—certainly some situational similarities, such as the exploration of the area and the desire to create your own family. I was driving on the freeway and saw this pink car with “Weetzie” on the license plate and the character just popped out of that. She evolved from a cartoon thing into a more complex character. And, where “Bat” came from— who knows!

**ACLU TX: You have been described as very poetic in your fiction-writing. Describe your style of writing – where does that come from?**

Block: I had a background in poetry at Berkeley and that was my first love. I loved the magical, realist writers, the dark and the light, mythology, linguistics and the pop culture, growing up in LA. It is a collage of all those experiences.

**ACLU TX: Weetzie and her friend talk about going “duck hunting.” In fact, you have a chapter devoted to that activity of finding the right “Duck” to date. Is that another LA term?**

Block: Yes, in high school, “Duck” was part of our vocabulary. It became one of our words we used to describe attractive guys.

**ACLU TX: Has the popularity of Weetzie Bat been steady since 1989? Or, is the book having resurgence after you were awarded the Phoenix Award by the Children’s Literature Association 20 years after its publication?**

Block: I also won the 2005 Margaret A. Edwards Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Library Association; but to be honest, this book has had this slow, steady readership—such a specific little story with such a wide readership.

**ACLU TX: I heard *Weetzie Bat* is being made into a movie. What is the latest on that project and who would star as your heroine?**

Block: I finally did my own screenplay, though it has been with many producers and nothing yet. An amazing young actor, Chelsea Lane, who was on "Dancing with the Stars," did a reading at a book store and she would be good. I also love Emma Watson and Mia Wasikowski.

**ACLU TX: Do you believe you were ahead of your time when you wrote about angels, ghosts, fairies, genies and other magical creatures in the 1990s?**

Block: In the beginning, my books were "out there," but, now, book topics are so extreme. I've been writing about this stuff since I was 14-years-old—dark angels, vampires, other topics. I wrote about some dark subject matter for my own enjoyment while at college. *Hanged Man* and the stories that later became *Echo* were picked up by my YA editor. I was surprised in a way, as the books contain subjects like incest. But things have moved more in that direction and you have to have something controversial.

**ACLU TX: What about *Weetzie Bat*? What age group did you write that book for in 1989?**

Block: I did not think of it as YA at the time - my publisher made the call for YA, which was a good one. It was not intended for younger teens; in fact, my 11-year-old daughter picked it up when she was 10, read a bit and then put it down when she came to the Buzz rape scene. She said to me, "This is not appropriate."

**ACLU TX: Then, what is your position on whether a book should be made available to readers of all ages, although it might not have been written for a particular age group?**

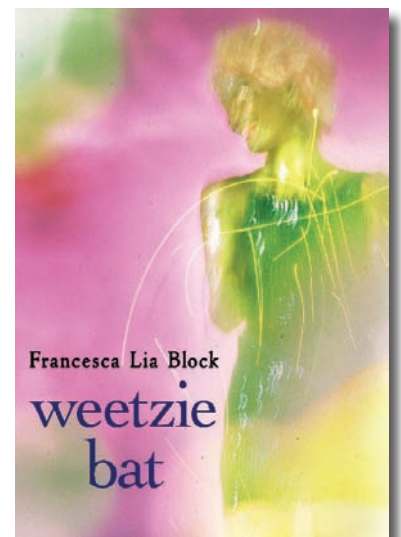
Block: I cannot dictate who will or who can read it, but parents and teachers can be helpful with that. I write the stories—that's my truth. To take off shelves and away from potential readers is not right. Are there 11- and 12-year-olds, who love and read it? YES! I also have to step back and say I cannot determine.

**ACLU TX: What else have you encountered with parents challenging your book in schools or other places?**

Block: The fifth of the *Dangerous Angels* books, "Baby Be Bop," was burned in a town! It is a tiny novel, very sweet, very simple. It caused so much upset and people were ranting on YouTube about this terribly controversial. It was very frightening with its violent acts against freedom of speech.

**ACLU TX: What's next for Francesca Lia Block?**

Block: *Pink Smog*, which features Weetzie Bat as a 13-year-old, is coming out next year. I am also working on another paranormal book and editing an anthology of short stories into an e-book. And working on a clothing line. A lot is going on!



## AUTHOR INCOPORATES PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN STORIES



Phyllis Reynolds Naylor uses special moments from her growing-up experiences in her Alice books. Writing for both children and adults, she has authored more than 135 books, including the Alice series, which Entertainment Weekly called “tender” and “wonderful.” In 1992, her novel, *Shiloh*, won the Newbery Medal. She lives with her husband, Rex, in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

ACLU of TX reached out to Ms. Naylor for a phone chat at her East coast home.

### ACLU TX: What early experiences ignited your passion for writing?

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor: My parents raised us three children in the Depression and they would read many books to us all the time—my father read Mark Twain, and my mother, “*Wind in the Willows*,” “*Alice in Wonderland*.” I really loved that and thought, if hearing stories was so much fun, then writing them must be, too!

### ACLU TX: Share some of your first writing experiences.

Naylor: When I was 16, a former teacher remembered how much I loved to make up stories and asked me to write one for her Sunday school paper. I got a check for \$4. After that, I wrote many others in high school and it was a thrill to be paid for my hobby. I pursued the bigger magazines, such as *Highlights* and *Seventeen* and was never accepted! I was embarrassed and asked for all my manuscripts to be sent back to me. They all did, except for one and I was paid \$60 from a Catholic magazine for my story. That kept me going!

### ACLU TX: You were then a full-time writer, correct?

Naylor: I was sending my stories to multiple publications at that point, typing up 20 copies at a time on my manual typewriter. I would get \$10-\$75 per story, so if you kept them circulating, you could actually make a living at it. I married right out of high school, and five years later, my husband was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. During those struggles with his illness, my writing kept us going. We eventually divorced (I had two years of college by then) and I wanted to be a clinical psychologist. I couldn't help my husband, but perhaps I could help others. After graduating with a BA, I knew I really wanted to write for a living, so I gave up plans for graduate school.

### ACLU TX: You have been writing about Alice for more than 25 years. How did that begin?

Naylor: I only wanted to write one book about Alice—didn't know it was going to be a series. The first of these, published in 1985, was *Agony of Alice*, in which she wanted a role model and begins to idolize a sixth-grade teacher. As my readers know, Alice is motherless and being raised by her father. The book received many good reviews, so I decided then to write another Alice book each year.

### ACLU TX: How did you determine your plot development over such a long period of creating Alice stories?

Naylor: I wanted Alice to grow older in each book—not be stuck in sitcom world all the time. There are three books for every year of her young life. I just submitted the 28th Alice book, *Always Alice*, in which she goes from 18- to 60-years-old! I have received letters from women in all age ranges, many of whom are now reading books to their daughters. Mothers share with daughters, as some of the books get very personal. Once I got into the series, I found that girls much younger than my heroine were reading about Alice's sexual situations, so I went back and wrote prequels, starting with Alice in third grade, to address activities of younger girls.





**ACLU TX: How have you used your childhood experiences, and others, to write about Alice's?**

Naylor: Alice's stories are very real and the more basic things in life happen to her. For example, I rarely mention movie stars or what people are wearing. In one story, Alice falls down the stairs on her first day at high school and she realizes she has wet her pants. This happened to my mother and the feeling is the same now as it was for her in 1914.

In another book, Alice, who is in elementary school, has just watched a Tarzan movie—it was the most romantic thing she had ever seen! Tarzan and Jane kiss and he grabs her with one hand, a vine with the other, and swings to shore. Alice tries to re-enact that scene with her male friend down the street—even the kiss—but, she would just giggle at that point and the kiss never came off. That all happened to me.

**ACLU TX: Your Alice books have been challenged, and sometimes, banned in schools. How do you handle those irate parents?**

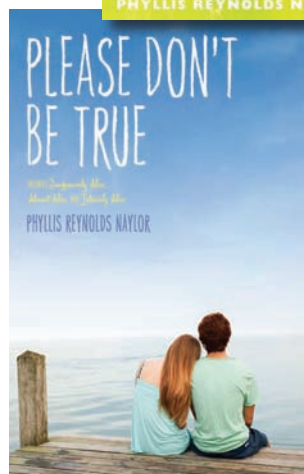
Naylor: Just recently, there was a challenge in Arizona about *Lovingly Alice*, which takes place when she is in fifth grade. A woman's eight-year-old daughter was moved up a grade and read the book. Her mother wanted it banned. Alice is at a sleepover with friends and is reading a pamphlet on menstruation that Kotex put out. The girls are curious about how, if a woman is pregnant, the "sperm gets in there." They appoint Alice to find out the truth from her father. She is very frank and always brings questions up to her father and older brother. The conversation is open and her father's answers are very loving and so basic.

I wondered after this mother got so upset, "What about all the other books in the library over an eight-year old's level? Do we reduce the collection to its lowest common denominator?"

**ACLU TX: What is your position on making your books available to all who want to read?**

Naylor: I try to address that there is such a wide variety of children reading these books. When I speak at schools, many are so experienced already at the sixth grade level—much more than I was growing up. Alice is not the "All American Girl." She is one girl in one particular family, and I am following her story as honestly as I can. It is up to parents to either read their children's books in advance or open them up to the world by letting them choose their own books. Encourage their children to come and ask anything they want without repercussions.

You can visit Phyllis online: at <http://alicemckinley.wordpress.com>.



## FIGHT BACK AGAINST CENSORSHIP!

*"They that  
can give up  
essential liberty  
to obtain a little  
TEMPORARY  
SAFETY  
deserve neither  
liberty nor  
safety."*

— BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

The ACLU of Texas has just unveiled its new online "Banned Books Week Toolkit" ([www.bannedbookstx.org](http://www.bannedbookstx.org)), full of great ideas and resources to participate in the Sept. 24 - Oct. 1, 2011 National Banned Books Week. Here's just one idea:

### HOLD A READ-IN

In a world where we're swamped with information, few things outweigh the pleasure of getting lost in a good book. We come out wiser, more compassionate and more emboldened for having dipped our imaginations, our intellects, and hearts into worlds beyond the confines of our own.

A read-in is simply an event where community members gather together to celebrate and read challenged books. You can do it at school, at a local bookstore, library, or community center. You can even hold a read-in in your home or with your book club.

We can send you posters, *Censorship Sucks* stickers and Bill of Rights bookmarks. The ACLU of Texas can even help publicize your event to our email list, so other civil libertarians in your area know about it.

For tips on planning and promoting your Read-in, go to [www.bannedbookstx.org](http://www.bannedbookstx.org).

*"The free, exploring mind of the individual human is the most valuable thing in the world."*

– JOHN STEINBECK

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ACLU of Texas  
P.O. Box 8306  
Houston, TX 77288-8306

Toll-free: 888.653.6498

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