



## Banned and Challenged Books In Texas Public Schools 2002-2003

A Report of the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas

*"Restriction of free thought and free speech is the most dangerous of all subversions. It is the one un-American act that could most easily defeat us"*

Justice William O. Douglas

*"Censorship reflects a society's lack of confidence in itself. It is the hallmark of an authoritarian regime..."*

Justice Potter Stewart, dissenting  
Ginsberg v. United States (383 U.S. 463)

*"...And when we do that, shut off the dialogue, we do violence to the First Amendment and to the children of this generation and the next generation"*

John Henry Faulk

This is the seventh consecutive annual report on censorship in Texas public schools by the ACLU of Texas. For the third consecutive year, the Texas Library Association joins the ACLU in sponsoring the report. The information in the report is based on data furnished by the over 1200 Independent School Districts and Charter Schools in Texas. The body of the report, which is indexed by book title, lists the book's author, the district or charter school in which the book was challenged, the city in which the district is located (if different from the name of the district), the setting (library or curriculum), the reason for the challenge, the result of the challenge, and any additional remarks made by the person furnishing the report (these remarks are unedited). Indexes by author and by school district are also included, as are separate lists of banned and restricted books. Bound copies of the full report may be obtained by contacting the ACLU of Texas. The cost (\$5) covers the cost of printing and mailing.

### Highlights

In last year's report, the Harry Potter books were challenged in 21 different school districts. This year, challenges were reported in only 4 districts. In Blooming Grove ISD and in Tatum ISD, all Potter books were challenged. In Houston ISD, **Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone** was challenged because of the Parents religious beliefs. In La Feria ISD, where the use of

#### Well-known challenged titles

**Bless Me, Ultima** (Van Vleck ISD)  
**Brave New World** (South Texas ISD – Mercedes)  
**The Chocolate War** (Dime Box ISD)  
**The Fountainhead** (Dublin ISD)  
**The Grapes of Wrath** (Smyer ISD)  
**House of the Spirits** (Leander ISD)  
**Invisible Man** (Van Vleck ISD)  
**A Separate Peace** (Hampshire-Fannett ISD – Hampshire)  
**Stranger in a Strange Land** (South Texas ISD- Mercedes)  
**Uncle Tom's Cabin** (White Settlement ISD)  
**Zen and Art of Motorcycle Maintenance** (Hutto ISD).

**Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban** in class was challenged. As is the case with most books used in curricula, the objecting student was allowed to read another book instead. In no case were the Harry Potter books banned or restricted from general use.

Again this year, a number of books written by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor about the adventures of “Alice” – a fictional character coping with many of the problems young girls experience “growing up”, were most often challenged. “Alice” books were banned in North East ISD (San Antonio), Humble ISD, and Linden-Kildare ISD (Linden). In Pleasant Grove ISD, **Achingly Alice** was restricted to students with signed parental permission. In Columbia-Brazoria ISD (West Columbia) and McKinney ISD a decision as to the disposition of one or more “Alice” books has not yet been made.

### Another Way to Ban a Book

In the Bay City ISD, **Inner City Mother Goose** (a collection of modified Mother Goose rhymes) was reported as “Banned”, when a “Mother refused to return the book to school and kept it...also refused to meet with the principal to discuss situation.” Officials report that the book has not been replaced in the library.

In the White Settlement ISD (Brewer Middle School), **The Teenage Boy’s Survival Guide: The Real Deal on Girls, Growing Up, and Other Guy Stuff**, the middle school librarian reported that “...a parent objected to the content...[and] took the book to the principal. He has kept the book without comment or explanation, not returning it to the library. The book was not required to undergo the district’s policy regarding challenges...” In White Settlement’s Brewer HS, where **Uncle Tom’s Cabin** was used in class, a “...teacher was directed not to use the novel [by the principal] ...without following the district’s policy regarding challenges to materials.”

In the Crawford ISD, home to the “western White House”, **Stuck in Neutral**, by Terry Trueman was banned, and **Somebody Else’s Kids**, by Torey L. Hayden was restricted.

The Brookeland ISD reported that **all Stephen King books** were banned in all district schools. The challenge was brought by a parent, and “...also brought to the attention of the Board of Trustees.” This challenge was listed as one entry in our main report or our summary tables, since it was not specific as to title and because of the large number of Stephen King titles in existence.

### Statistical Summary

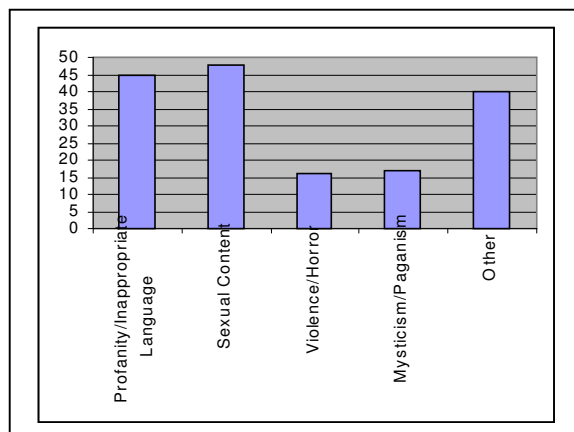
There were 134 challenges reported in 71 different school districts. Reasons for book challenges were sorted into several categories (shown in the chart below.) When reported, the reasons for challenge given by the reporting entity were used, and many reported “Other” as the reason for challenge. Some explanations given in this category were “racial remarks”, “prejudice”, “suicide”, “use of the word bitch”, “challenge to authority”, “discusses incest”, “illustration involved nudity”, and “detailed account of an affair in marriage”. Many books were challenged for more than one reason.

The most often banned books during this year were **Alice on the Outside**, by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, and **Forever**, by Judy Blume.

The most often banned author was Phyllis Reynolds Naylor.

The McKinney ISD had the most challenged books (11) and the most banned books (5).

Tables appending this summary list banned Books, restricted books, and books with a



decision still pending.

A book was reported as banned only when it was physically removed from the library and so reported by the district officials. Some books reported as restricted were made inaccessible to all students – available for “professional use only” - and some were made unavailable to specific students or categories of students – grades 4-6, for example.

### **How the Report was Compiled**

Using a database made available to the public by the Texas Education Agency, requests for information were mailed to all Independent School Districts and Charter Schools in Texas. The request for information about banned and challenged books was made under the authority of the Texas Public Information Act, Texas Government Code Ch. 552 (commonly known as the open records act). State law requires that public entities make available records requested within 10 business days.

In order to facilitate the process of providing requested information, a specific list of requests was included in the mailing, and a form was provided which, if completed, provided all necessary data. Schools could also opt to fill out an on-line form and submit information electronically. It is emphasized that the forms and on-line option were provided only for the convenience of the reporting entities.

### **Texas Library Association Resources**

The following statement was furnished by the TLA for inclusion in this report:

*“The Texas Library Association holds that the freedom to read is a corollary of the constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press. Freedom of choice in selecting materials is a necessary safeguard to the freedom to read and must be protected against extra-legal attempts by self-appointed censors to control that process. Citizens have the right of free inquiry, and democracy itself rests on an open dialogue and demands that freedom of the press in all forms of public communication be defended and preserved.*

*The Association, through its Intellectual Freedom Committee, supports access to information by responding to librarians facing book challenges, offering model policies and procedures, tracking reports of book challenges from its members, and supporting policies and legislative action that respect access to information. Members of TLA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee are also available to consult with librarians facing intellectual freedom challenges. For additional information on these resources, go to: <http://www.txla.org/pubs/ifhbk.html>.”*

Currently, there is no statewide mandated standard for responding to challenges to books and other materials used in Texas public school libraries and curricula. Many school districts have rigorous formal processes for this purpose, but many deal with complaints on a local, informal basis. **The adoption of such a process based on TLA recommended procedures for all public schools is strongly endorsed.**

### **Acknowledgements**

School Librarians and administrators, for the most part, were supportive in contributing to this report, and are due thanks from students and others in the communities they serve as well as from the volunteers who worked on this report. Often pressured by individuals and special interest groups to restrict access to books according to their personal belief systems, school officials largely do an excellent job in preserving broad access to library materials.

The data in the report was obtained and the report itself compiled by a group of volunteers, and was funded and supported by the ACLU of Texas.

The following volunteers worked on the report:

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## Banned Books (36 Books, 38 Instances)

### **Achingly Alice**

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

### **Airframe**

Michael Crichton

### **Alice in Lace**

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

### **Alice on the Outside** (2 instances)

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

### **The Beet Fields**

Gary Paulsen

### **Born Too Short: The Confessions of an Eight Grade Basket Case**

Dan Elish

### **Buried Onions**

Gary Soto

### **The Cold One**

Christopher Pike

### **Die Softly: Die Softly**

Christopher Pike

### **Empress of the World**

Sarah Ryan

### **Forever** (2 instances)

Judy Blume

### **Gerald's Game**

Stephen King

### **Ghost Girl**

Torey Hayden

### **Ghost of a Chance**

Laura Peyton Roberts

### **The Grooming of Alice**

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

### **The Impact Zone**

Ray Maloney

### **Inner City Mother Goose**

Eve Merriam

### **Jazmin's Notebook**

Nikki Grimes

### **Knock a Star: A Child's Introduction to Poetry, 1982 Edition**

X. J. Kennedy

### **Looking After Lily**

Cindy Bonner

### **Mars Crossing**

Geoffrey A. Landis

### **Meet the Werewolf**

Georgess McHargue

### **The Ones That Walked Away From Omelas**

Ursula K. LeGuin

### **Outrageously Alice**

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

### **The Philharmonic Gets Dressed**

Karla Kuskin

### **A Prayer for Owen Meany**

John Irving

### **Smack**

Melvin Burgess

### **Song of Soloman**

Toni Morrison

### **Stuck in Neutral**

Terry Trueman

### **Take Away Three**

Tana Reiff

### **The Teenage Boy's Survival Guide**

Jeremy Daldry

### **Tell a Lie and Your Butt Will Grow**

Dan Greenburg

### **Then Again, Maybe I Won't**

Judy Blume

### **Weird on the Outside**

Shelley Stoehr

### **Winterdance**

Gary Paulsen

### **All Stephen King Books**

Stephen King

**Restricted Books**  
(20 Instances)

**Achingly Alice**

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

**Las Brujas (The Witches)**

Roald Dahl

**Cave Under the City**

Harry Mazer

**The Cay**

Theodore Taylor

**The China Garden**

Liz Berry

**Detour for Emmy**

Marilyn Reynolds

**Draw Me a Star**

Eric Carle

**Goosebumps and R. L. Stine Series**

R. L. Stine

**How to Eat Fried Worms**

Thomas Rockwell

**I Have to Go**

Robert Munsch

**Jacob I Have Loved**

Katherine Paterson

**Kissing Doorknobs**

Terry Spencer Hesser

**A Little Bit Dead**

Chap Reaver

**Neverwhere**

Neil Gaiman

**Saint George and the Dragon**

Geraldine McCaughrean

**Somebody Else's Kids**

Torey L. Hayden

**Stotan**

Chris Crutcher

**True Believer**

Virginia Euwer Wolff

**Two Moons in August**

Martha Brooks

**Uncle Tom's Cabin**

Harriet Beecher Stowe

**Books With Decision Pending**  
(14 Instances, 13 Books)

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>School District</b>
<b>Adventures of Super Diaper Baby</b>	Dav Pilkey	Abilene ISD
<b>House of the Spirits</b>	Isabelle Allende	Leander ISD
<b>Wonder</b>	Rachel Vail	Corsicana ISD
<b>More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark</b>	Alvin E. Schwartz	Arlington ISD
<b>Children, Violence, and Murder</b>	Richard Worth	Wharton ISD
<b>It</b>	Stephen King	East Central ISD
<b>The Bad Beginning: A Series of Unfortunate Events</b>	Lemony Snicket	Cypress-Fairbanks ISD
<b>Bridge to Teribitha</b>	Katherine Peterson	Cypress-Fairbanks ISD
<b>It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health</b>	Robie H. Harris	Cypress-Fairbanks ISD
<b>Early Sunday Morning: The Pearl Harbor Diary of Amber Billows, Hawaii 1941 (Dear America Series)</b>	Barry Deneberg	Garland ISD
<b>Alice on the Outside</b>	Phyllis Reynolds Naylor	McKinney ISD
<b>Body of Christopher Creed</b>	Carol Plum-Ucci	McKinney ISD
<b>Alice on the Outside</b>	Phyllis Reynolds Naylor	Columbia-Brazoria ISD
<b>All But Alice</b>	Phyllis Reynolds Naylor	Columbia-Brazoria ISD