FREE PEOPLE
READ FREELY

11th Annual Report on
Banned and Challenged Books
in Texas Public Schools
2006-2007

and exclusive interview with banned book author
SUSAN PATRON
winner of the 2007 Newbery Award

National Banned Books Week 2007
September 29, 2007
INTRODUCTION

Nothing could be simpler than the truly American notion that free people read freely.

Yet every year in Texas, schools fall victim to self-appointed censors who wish to restrict the knowledge available to students. Censorship breeds ignorance. No school funding plan can improve education in our state when knowledge is withheld.

Reading books that challenge assumptions that tackle difficult or controversial subjects, or contain thoughts or language that some find objectionable does not harm students. Rather the contrary. Students learn from being exposed to new ideas. They develop an appreciation for different viewpoints. They are better able to function effectively in a diverse society, and are better able to serve our communities and our state as leaders. In other words, they grow capable of exercising the rights and freedoms all Texans are entitled to enjoy.

Each year for eleven years, the ACLU Foundation of Texas has published this annual report of books banned or challenged in Texas schools. Our report spotlights schools that ban books from library shelves or from classroom reading lists. But just as importantly, our report highlights schools that decide to retain a book despite a challenge by a parent, a student, a school official, or a member of the public.

This report is only as useful as its users. Who’s going to stand up in communities where books are banned? Who’s going to speak out when great (and lesser) works of literature are censored? The most effective local advocates are local citizens – that means you, concerned members of the community, parents, teachers, librarians, and most importantly students.

I am confident that when one Texan speaks out against censorship, other will stand with you. While the ACLU doesn’t have resources to follow through on every instance of censorship, we do want to help people stand firm against censorship in Texas schools.

Getting involved with the ACLU of Texas – as a member, generous donor, volunteer, or simply by joining our email list at www.aclutx.org – is one way to help assure that censors are not in control of school libraries and reading lists. It is also a great way to help protect civil rights and individual liberties for all Texans.

Our Banned Books Project is organized and led by volunteers. I extend the thanks of the ACLU to our volunteers and chapter leaders who have made this program successful for more than a decade. I also thank the school administrators and librarians who respond each year to the ACLU’s Open Records request. Author Susan Patron has earned our thanks both because of her willingness to be interviewed for our project (see page 30), and for her ongoing work to oppose censorship.

Yours in liberty,

Richard C. Alvarado
Interim Executive Director
American Civil Liberties Union of Texas
FREE PEOPLE READ FREELY

“The fact is that censorship always defeats its own purpose, for it creates, in the end, the kind of society that is incapable of exercising real discretion.”

Henry Steele Commager

“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 eleventh consecutive annual report on censorship in Texas public schools by the ACLU of Texas. The information in the report is based on data furnished by 1124 of the over 1200 Independent School Districts and Charter Schools in Texas (information requests were sent to all the districts and charter schools). The body of the report, which is indexed by book title, lists the book’s author, the district or charter school and specific campus in which the book was challenged, the reason for the challenge, the result of the challenge, and any additional remarks made by the person furnishing the report. A separate listing in the back of the report lists the challenged books by school district. We also include a list of books that were informally challenged, with no official record reported by the District of the challenge.

Statistical Summary and Breakdown

Book challenges appear to be on the rise in public schools after a brief dip. For the 2006-2007 school year, 67 school districts reported challenges to library books and other teaching materials, which is 5.33% of the 1256 public school districts in Texas. Forty percent of reported challenges resulted in bans. That figure compares with 25% for 2005-2006, 44% in 2004-2005, 36% in 2003-2004, and 31% in 2000-2001. While the number of bans is lower than last year’s 25%, it is more than offset by the much higher number of bans. Restrictions on books, including allowing alternates for curricular materials, is about 32%. At press time for this report, three challenges are still pending in Texas schools. The data in the report includes information reported by 1124 districts, or 89.42% of all school districts in Texas.

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 ten business days.

In order to facilitate the process of providing requested information, a specific list of requests was included, 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.

The information forms listed several choices for result of challenge: banned (removed from library or classroom use), use restricted, alternate book allowed, content changed or deleted, retained, and decision pending. Some school districts banned books from certain campuses due to concerns over grade level, but made no mention of whether the book was available at other grades. Other schools transferred the book from one campus to another. All books that were removed from libraries are categorized for purposes of this report as banned; however, if the person furnishing the report indicated that the book was available at other campuses, this information appears in the synopsis.
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 by 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/groups/committees/IF/index.html#IF_Handbook>

**Highlights and Discussion**

The total number of challenges is dramatically higher this year. Sixty-six districts reported challenges for a total of 116 items, compared to 48 districts with 65 challenges in 2005-2006, an increase of almost 40% in the number of districts reporting challenges and a significant 78% increase in total reported challenges. Forty percent of book challenges (46 items) this year resulted in outright bans on the materials. An additional 32% of material was restricted in some fashion (38 items), either by putting the material in the librarian’s office, requiring parental permission, or in the case of curricular material providing an alternative to the assignment. Exactly one fourth of the challenged materials (29 items) were reinstated without restrictions. Some of the titles reported are series (groups of related books), so the total number of individual books banned or restricted is actually higher than the numbers indicate. For example, one of the banned series (the Alice series) includes over twenty individual titles. The current number and percentage of challenges is more in line with years prior to 2005-2006, adding credibility to the idea that the 2005-2006 report was a statistical aberration, and not the beginning of a trend.

Interestingly, the most discussed and most highly awarded book of the year, Newbery Award winner The Higher Power of Lucky by Susan Patron, was only reported once as challenged in Texas. However, the book has received extensive discussion in the popular press as being censored by librarians and teachers for using the word “scrotum” in an anatomical context. In a February 18, 2007 article in the New York Times, Julie Bosman wrote: “The inclusion of the word has shocked some school librarians, who have pledged to ban the book from elementary schools, and reopened the debate over what constitutes acceptable content in children’s books.” When librarians fail to stock books that win the highest award in children’s literature, the book has no opportunity to be challenged since it was censored a priori. See the section on Challenges Without Due Process for more information about books that have been censored through non-official channels. Another reason this title may be poorly represented in this year’s report could be that since data for this report are solicited in March, and the Newbery Award is announced in late January, most schools would not have received their copies of the book in time for challenges before the reports were due.

**Most-challenged Titles and Authors**

On this year’s challenge list are some old standbys. The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is on the list, as is I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. It wouldn’t be a Banned Books report if a Judy Blume title were not on the list. Her Are you there, God? It’s me, Margaret and Then Again, Maybe I Won’t grace the list this year. Kevin Henkes’ Olive’s Ocean is this year’s most challenged book, with five school districts officially considering removing the Newbery Honor title. Cecily von Ziegesar, Dav Pilkey, and Lois Lowry each had books (or entire series) challenged in three districts. Other authors with multiple challenges include Robert Cormier, Cornelia Funke, Robie H. Harris, Lauren Myracle, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, Tana Reiff, John Steinbeck, R.L. Stine, Mildred Taylor, Alice Walker, and Paul Zindel.
Where are the most challenges?
Houston ISD led the list of challenges, with 11 books. Most districts facing challenges had only one challenge, but 22 districts faced multiple challenges this past school year. Most of the districts facing challenges came from the North Central Texas area (19 districts with challenges), though the Houston or South East Texas area was a close second (18 districts with challenges). Nevertheless, South East Texas won the “most challenges” title with a total of 52 challenges compared to 22 in the North Central Texas area.

Challenged Books by School Level
Slightly more than half of titles challenged (52%) were at the elementary school level. High school challenges were a distant second, with 32%. Elementary parents are traditionally more involved in their children’s schooling than at other levels, which might explain the higher attention parents pay to what their children read at that level. The low challenge rate at the middle school level may stem from the shorter period of time students are at those campuses, or an increasing student need for privacy in their person and school work with the onset of puberty. Another contributing cause may be that at that age students are more homogeneously grouped with those of a similar maturity level, so there is less likelihood of a parent of a young child challenging access to more mature material, as might happen in a Pre-K to grade 6 school. A few books are indicated as K-12 because the school in which the challenge takes place houses all students in the district, and students of all ages would have access to those titles.

Reasons for challenge
As in previous years, inappropriate language was the number one reason books were challenged. The inappropriate language may be profanity, or it may just be age-inappropriate. Sexual content, ranging from child sexual predators to a small boy who loses his pajamas in his dream, came in a close second. The “Other” category ran the gamut from portrayal of a police officer as a serial killer, to “too scary,” to “trashy novel.”

The Impact of Accelerated Reader
One factor that shows up on at least one challenge is “Accelerated Reader status.” Accelerated Reader is a widely-used computerized reading incentive program in which students are required or pressured to read books at a certain reading level, called the Zone of Proximal Development, or ZPD. Books that are “AR books” have a computer-administered, low-level test over certain facts about the book, to allegedly prove that the student actually read the book. Students read AR-identified books, and take the computerized test to earn “AR points” which are exchanged for tangible rewards such as pencils or candy. Some schools offer larger rewards such as special events or field trips that can be purchased with AR points. Just about any trade book can be an “AR book” if the school purchases or creates a test for that book. In many AR schools, those who select library books are urged to purchase only books for which there exist AR tests. AR has become a driving force in library collection development, and many book selectors look first to AR test availability,
then reading level, in selecting books. However, many books with mature subject matter but written at a low reading level entice older, mature students with low reading skills. When a book selector looks only to AR status and reading level in making book selections, and doesn’t read reviews or know the literature landscape well enough to know what types of books some authors write, some of these age-inappropriate, low-reading-level books may end up in collections for younger students. These mistakenly selected titles may be appropriately challenged in order to rid collections of materials that should never have been there in the first place.

A key factor in these suspect book selection practices, aside from curricular and administrative pressure to purchase only books for which there are AR tests, is the fact that many districts have replaced certified, degreed librarians with library aides. Library aides do not have qualifications in book selection or children’s literature that certified librarians receive in their training, and they might not consider reviews, awards, author history, and other factors that a certified school librarian would consider in making book purchases or reading recommendations to students. Even certified librarians may be pressured to select inappropriately. One middle school librarian wrote: “[T]he reading dept. chair and I chose the [AR] titles. We had a potfull of money and a short time-frame. It was much easier to order by sets than individually. And they wanted some college bound titles. Some of those titles could get a JH library into trouble.” When such selection is done on a school-by-school basis by a trained librarian, the librarian will deselect inappropriate materials when the books arrive and re-route them to a campus with a more sophisticated student body. An untrained aide may not know the difference.

The larger problem, though, is the lack of qualified, certified librarians available to guide students to appropriate literature. More and more districts are replacing retiring librarians with clerks, believing that all a librarian does is check out books. Districts such as Houston ISD, White Settlement ISD, Beckville ISD, Keene ISD, Southside ISD (San Antonio), and Waco ISD are examples of districts where librarian positions have been filled with aides. One regional Education Service Center (ESC) area, with 31 school districts, has only four certified librarians in schools. Texas standards for school libraries and school library staffing are advisory, not mandatory, so schools feel free to cut corners on the position, leaving reading guidance and collection development in the hands of untrained and unqualified personnel. <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/schoollibs/>

Challenges Without Due Process
Because *The Higher Power of Lucky* didn’t show up on the challenged list until late in the collection process, we decided to investigate informal bans – bans and restrictions on materials that are imposed at the building level without going through the formal reconsideration process. These types of censorship are particularly difficult to root out because there is no documentation of the process or the rationale used. An individual in a position of power (the principal who receives an objection from a parent, teacher, or simply reads about a book in a newspaper article; or a librarian who views a book that was selected according to district policy and decides after the fact that the book is inappropriate) removes or restricts access to materials based on the opinion of this one person. Such actions violate board policy in almost all cases, but are not reported through the Texas Public Information Act request process because there is no official proceeding to report.

To collect this data, we asked the librarians who were subscribed to the Texas Library Association’s TLC (Texas Library Connection) mailing list if they were aware of any informal challenges in their buildings or districts. This is an imperfect process, since the librarians are unlikely to report self-censorship. However, they may report administrative restrictions on materials. The other flaw in this data collection is that the request was not made to librarians until the second week in June, and most librarians were off-contract and therefore not monitoring this email list during that time.

Despite the obstacles, thirteen librarians reported sixteen administrative bans in the last school year. None of these administrative bans were reported through the Texas Public Information Act collection process. The reasons for the administrative censorship ranged from “locker room language” (*Friday Night Lights*), to “because author is a radical insurgent and leader of the Zapatista Party of National Liberation” (*The Story of Colors=La Historia de los Colores*). These books were simply taken from the library, or ordered sequestered, based on the opinion of one person. Because of the lack of scientific sampling, the informal bans are not included in the data from which this report was compiled, but a list of the books and the reasons for their challenge is appended to this report. Districts with administrative bans include: Bullard ISD, Collinsville ISD, Corpus Christi ISD, Dickinson ISD, Fort Bend ISD, Harlingen ISD, Leander ISD, Lewisville ISD, Liberty Hill ISD, Marion ISD, Peaster ISD, and San Antonio ISD. One respondent refused to identify the school district for fear of retaliation.
# BANNED BOOKS

Books Removed From Library Shelves or Class Reading Lists

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
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<td>Allende, Isabel</td>
<td><em>House of Spirits</em></td>
<td>Hee, Lee Yun</td>
<td><em>Demon Diary</em></td>
<td>Pilobolus and John Kane</td>
<td><em>The Human Alphabet</em></td>
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<td>Anonymous</td>
<td><em>Go Ask Alice</em></td>
<td>Henkes, Kevin</td>
<td><em>Olive’s Ocean</em></td>
<td>Reiff, Tana</td>
<td><em>So Long, Snowman</em></td>
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<td>Avi</td>
<td><em>Wolf Rider, A Tale of Terror</em></td>
<td>Howe, Norma</td>
<td><em>The Adventures of the Blue Avenger</em></td>
<td>Rodriguez, Victor</td>
<td><em>Eldorado in East Harlem</em></td>
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<td>Blume, Judy</td>
<td><em>Then Again, Maybe I Won’t</em></td>
<td>Hrdlitschka, Shelley</td>
<td><em>Dancing Naked</em></td>
<td>Rowling, J.K.</td>
<td><em>Harry Potter</em> (entire series)</td>
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<td>Chbosky, Stephen</td>
<td><em>The Perks of Being A Wallflower</em></td>
<td>LeGuin, Ursula</td>
<td><em>A Fisherman of the Inland Sea</em></td>
<td>Sendak, Maurice</td>
<td><em>In the Night Kitchen</em></td>
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<td>Codell, Esme Raji</td>
<td><em>Educating Esme</em></td>
<td>Limb, Sue</td>
<td><em>Girl 15, Charming but Insane</em></td>
<td>Steer, Dugald</td>
<td><em>Wizardology</em></td>
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<td>Cole, Brock</td>
<td><em>The Facts Speak For Themselves</em></td>
<td>Lynch, Chris</td>
<td><em>Slot Machine</em></td>
<td>Stine, R.L.</td>
<td><em>Nightmare Hour</em></td>
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<td>Duncan, Lois, editor</td>
<td><em>On the Edge: Stories at the Brink</em></td>
<td>Mac, Carrie</td>
<td><em>Charmed</em></td>
<td>Strasser, Todd</td>
<td><em>Give a Boy a Gun</em></td>
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<td>Funke, Cornelia</td>
<td><em>Inkheart</em></td>
<td>Mackler, Carolyn</td>
<td><em>The Earth, My Butt &amp; Other Big Round Things</em></td>
<td>Temple, Charles</td>
<td><em>Train</em></td>
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<td>Garden, Nancy</td>
<td><em>Endgame</em></td>
<td>Murray, Martine</td>
<td><em>The Slightly True Story of Cedar B. Hartley</em></td>
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<td>Gerstein, Mordicai</td>
<td><em>Stop Those Pants</em></td>
<td>Myracle, Lauren</td>
<td><em>The Fashion Disaster That Changed My Life</em></td>
<td>von Ziegesar, Cecily</td>
<td><em>Gossip Girl</em> (entire series)</td>
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<td>Green, John</td>
<td><em>Looking for Alaska</em></td>
<td>Paulsen, Gary</td>
<td><em>Zero to Sixty</em></td>
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<td><em>The Color Purple</em></td>
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<td>Guest, Judith</td>
<td><em>Ordinary People</em></td>
<td>Pilkey, Dav, et al</td>
<td><em>The Adventures of Super Diaper Baby</em></td>
<td>Watase, Yuu</td>
<td><em>The Art of Ceres, Celestial Legend</em></td>
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<td>Harris, Robie H.</td>
<td><em>It’s Perfectly Normal</em></td>
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<td>Zindel, Paul</td>
<td><em>Loch</em></td>
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# RESTRICTED BOOKS

Books Restricted to Readers Based on Age, Reading Level, Parental Permission, etc.

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<td>Life in the Fat Lane</td>
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<td>Blackstone, Margaret</td>
<td>Fahrenheit 451</td>
<td>Gwaltney, Doris</td>
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<td>Brashares, Ann</td>
<td>The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants</td>
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<td>A Killing Night</td>
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<td>Upstate</td>
<td>Lee, Harper</td>
<td>To Kill a Mockingbird</td>
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<td>Boy Next Door</td>
<td>Lowry, Lois</td>
<td>Anastasia, Again!</td>
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<td>Cormier, Robert</td>
<td>The Chocolate War</td>
<td>Mcneal, Laura</td>
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<td>&amp; I Am The Cheese</td>
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<td>The Black Tattoo</td>
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<td>Olsen, Sylvia</td>
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<td>When Plague Strikes: The Black Death,</td>
<td>Parnall, Peter and Justin</td>
<td>And Tango Makes Three</td>
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<td>David Frampton</td>
<td>Smallpox, AIDS</td>
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<td>Philbrick, Rodman</td>
<td>The Last Book In the Universe</td>
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<td>Poison, Susan</td>
<td>The Higher Power of Lucky</td>
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<td>PBS Producers: Rachel</td>
<td>Frontline: The Merchants of Cool (video)</td>
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<td>Pilkey, Dav, et al</td>
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<td>Rodriguez, Luis</td>
<td>Always Running</td>
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<td>Taylor, Mildred</td>
<td>Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry</td>
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<td>Walker, Alice</td>
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# RETAINED BOOKS

School Retained Book in Library or on Class Reading List Despite Challenge

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<td>Indian Springs Middle School</td>
<td>McKinney High School</td>
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<td>Barbers Hill ISD</td>
<td>Kennedale ISD</td>
<td>Nederland ISD</td>
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<td>Elementary Schools</td>
<td>Arthur Intermediate</td>
<td>Highland Park Elementary Browne, Anthony, <em>Willy's Pictures</em></td>
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<td>Gorman, Carol, <em>Dork in Disguise</em></td>
<td>Taylor, Mildred, <em>Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry</em></td>
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<td>Boerne ISD</td>
<td>Klein ISD</td>
<td>New Boston ISD</td>
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<td>Boerne Middle School North</td>
<td>Theiss Elem</td>
<td>New Boston Middle School</td>
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<td>Fraser, Celeste, <em>World Geography - Building a Global Perspective</em></td>
<td>Lowry, Lois, <em>The Giver</em></td>
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<td>Canutillo ISD</td>
<td>Leander ISD</td>
<td>North East ISD</td>
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<td>Ferris, Jean, <em>Eight Seconds</em></td>
<td>Fox Run Elementary School</td>
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<td>Bright, Michael, <em>Endangered &amp; Extinct Prehistoric Animals</em></td>
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<td>Knowles Elementary</td>
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<td>Tamaki, Hisao, <em>Star Wars: a New Hope</em> (manga version)</td>
<td>All middle schools</td>
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<td>Silverton ISD</td>
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<td>Fredericks, Mariah, <em>The True Meaning of Cleavage</em></td>
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<td>Humble ISD</td>
<td>Magnolia ISD</td>
<td>Spring Branch ISD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atascosita Middle School</td>
<td>Magnolia West High School</td>
<td>Stratford High School</td>
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<td>Coman, Carolyn, <em>What Jamie Saw</em></td>
<td>Preston, Richard, <em>The Hot Zone</em></td>
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<td>Eberhardt, Thom, <em>Rat Boys</em></td>
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<td>Tyler ISD</td>
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<td>Kissems Middle School</td>
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<td>Zindel, Paul, <em>Rats</em></td>
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**BANNED AND CHALLENGED BOOKS – By School**

**Alvin ISD**  
**School:** Manvel High School  
**Book:** *A Killing Night*, by Jonathon King  
**Reason cited:** Sexual Content, Violence, Other  
**Action taken:** Retained  
**Notes:** Parent complains that textbook doesn’t address TEKS curriculum. “We should use another book or not use one at all, they say.”

**Brazos ISD**  
**School:** Brazos Middle School  
**Book:** *The Facts Speak For Themselves*, by Brock Cole  
**Reason cited:** Profanity, Language  
**Action taken:** Banned  

**Boerne ISD**  
**School:** Boerne Middle School North  
**Book:** *World Geography - Building a Global Perspective*, by Celeste Fraser  
**Reason cited:** Other--

**Brazos School for Inquiry and Creativity**  
**School:** Elementary  
**Book:** *Harry Potter* (entire series), by J. K. Rowling  
**Reason cited:** Mysticism or Paganism  
**Action taken:** Banned (Special permission required)  
**Notes:** “Teacher was reading it aloud in class. Parent asked us not to read the book. We were surprised. Did research to find that book is often challenged. We respected parent’s wishes and chose another book to read.”

**Burkeville ISD**  
**School:** Burkeville Secondary  
**Book:** *Ordinary People*, by Judith Guest  
**Reason cited:** Profanity, sexual content  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Notes:** Book challenged and removed from library after investigation into content.

**Canutillo ISD**  
**School:** Alderete Middle School  
**Book:** *It’s Perfectly Normal*, by Robie H. Harris  
**Reason cited:** Other--  
**Action taken:** Banned  

**Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD**  
**School:** all schools  
**Book:** *The Grapes of Wrath*, by John Steinbeck  
**Reason cited:** Other--  
**Action taken:** Retained  
**Notes:** "Challenged as a "Trashy novel".

**Cedar Hill ISD**  
**School:** Lake Ridge Elementary  
**Book:** *In the Night Kitchen*, by Maurice Sendak  
**Reason cited:** Other--  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Notes:** Nudity

**Columbia-Brazosport ISD**  
**School:** Lincoln Jr. High  
**Book:** *Gossip Girl* (series), by Cecily von Ziegesar  
**Reason cited:** sexual content  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Notes:** “Seemed to be advocating pre-marital sex.”

**Columbia-Brazosport ISD**  
**School:** West Brazos Junior High  
**Book:** *A Fisherman of the Inland Sea*, by Ursula LeGuin  
**Reason cited:** Profanity or inappropriate language  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Notes:** “Challenge taken through the district policy process with unanimous decision to remove book from library.”

**Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD**  
**School:** West Brazos Junior High  
**Book:** *Zero to Sixty*, by Gary Paulsen  
**Reason cited:** Profanity, inappropriate language, sexual content
**Conroe ISD**

School: Caney Creek High School  
**Book:** *Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury  
**Reason cited:** Profanity, Language  
**Action taken:** Allowed alternate book  
**Notes:** “The District allowed the complainant’s daughter to read another book.”

**Coppell ISD**

School: middle schools  
**Book:** *TTYL*, by Lauren Myracle  
**Reason cited:** Profanity, Sexual Content  
**Action taken:** Use Restricted  
**Notes:** Removed from middle school collection. Placed at high school level.

**Cypress-Fairbanks ISD**

School: Postma Elementary  
**Book:** *It’s Perfectly Normal*, by Robie H. Harris  
**Reason cited:** Sexual Content  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Notes:** Student showed the book to her parent, who showed it to librarian. Librarian and principal agreed the title was inappropriate for the campus.

School: Frazier Elementary  
**Book:** *So Long, Snowman*, by Tana Reiff  
**Reason cited:** Profanity, Language  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Notes:** Title did not meet campus interpretation of District’s objectives of enrichment/support of curriculum or personal needs of students.

School: Frazier Elementary  
**Book:** *Take Away Three*, by Tana Reiff  
**Reason cited:** Profanity, Language  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Notes:** Title did not meet campus interpretation of District’s objectives of enrichment/support of curriculum or personal needs of students.

School: Adam Elementary  
**Book:** *Yankee Girl*, by Mary Ann Rodman  
**Reason cited:** Profanity, Language, Violence, Horror  
**Action taken:** Restricted  
**Notes:** Tagged title for 5th grade checkout only. Note to ask student if parent would be okay with them reading book due to mature language. Accelerated Reader status deleted.

**Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD**

School: Chisholm Ridge Elementary  
**Book:** *Endangered & Extinct Prehistoric Animals*, by Michael Bright  
**Reason cited:** Sexual Content  
**Action taken:** Retained  
**Notes:** Parent complained of pictures of naked men. Said it’s no different than pornography and the book is only appropriate for married adults. Review committee found it completely appropriate for students.

**Eanes ISD**

School: Eanes Elementary  
**Book:** *Olive’s Ocean*, by Kevin Henkes  
**Reason cited:** Profanity, Inappropriate Language, Sexual Content  
**Action taken:** Restricted  
**Notes:** Bluebonnet Award book; use restricted to upper elementary students.

**Ector County ISD**

School: Pecan Grove Elementary School  
**Book:** *Olive’s Ocean*, by Kevin Henkes  
**Reason cited:** Profanity, Inappropriate Language  
**Action taken:** Restricted  
**Notes:** Challenge made by parent. Book to remain on library shelves for 5th grade students.

School: Fort Settlement Middle School  
**Book:** *The Da Vinci Code*, by Dan Brown  
**Reason cited:** Other--  
**Action taken:** Retained  
**Notes:** Misrepresentation of church history. Challenge made by parent.

**Frisco ISD**

School: Elementary Schools  
**Book:** *And Tango Makes Three*, by Peter Farnall and Justin Richardson  
**Reason cited:** Other--  
**Action taken:** Use restricted  
**Notes:** Sensitive subject matter and the book is written so that young readers may be drawn to the book and not fully understand the subject matter. Challenged by principal.

**Grapevine-Colleyville ISD**

School: Bear Creek Elementary  
**Book:** *When Plague Strikes: The Black Death, Smallpox, AIDS*, by James Cross Giblin and David Frampton  
**Reason cited:** Sexual Content, Other--  
**Action taken:** Restricted  
**Notes:** “Could stir up fears based on subject matter of plagues.” The book was placed in a professional collection available only to teachers.

**Henderson ISD**

School: Henderson Middle School  
**Book:** *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, by Mildred Taylor  
**Reason cited:** Profanity or Inappropriate language  
**Action taken:** Alternate book allowed
Houston ISD
School: Edison Middle School
Book: House of the Spirits, by Isabel Allende
Reason cited: Sexual Content
Action taken: Restricted

School: Hogg Middle School
Book: Always Running, by Luis Rodriguez
Reason cited: Profanity, Violence
Action taken: Banned
Notes: Parental challenge

School: Davis High School
Book: Dancing with an Alien, by Mary Logue
Reason cited: Sexual Content
Action taken: Retained

Humble ISD
School: Kingwood Middle School
Book: Girl 15, Charming but Insane, by Sue Limb
Reason cited: Profanity, Inappropriate Language, Sexual Content
Action taken: Banned
Notes: Parental challenge

School: Atascocita Middle School
Book: What Jamie Saw, by Carolyn Coman
Reason cited: Profanity, Inappropriate Language
Action taken: Retained
Notes: Parental challenge

School: Atascocita Middle School
Book: Rat Boys, by Thom Eberhardt
Reason cited: Profanity, Inappropriate Language
Action taken: Retained

Karnes City ISD
School: Karnes City Junior High
Book: The Black Tattoo, by Sam Enthoven
Reason cited: Mysticism or Paganism
Action taken: Restricted
Notes: If desired for checkout, students must first take home a book summary and secure written parent approval.

School: Roger E. Sides Elementary
Book: Homefront, by Doris Gwaltney
Reason cited: Sexual Content
Action taken: Restricted
Notes: Challenged by third grade teacher; too sexually explicit for elementary age children.

School: Roger E. Sides Elementary
Book: Olive’s Ocean, by Kevin Henkes
Reason cited: Sexual Content
Action taken: Restricted

Katy ISD
School: Jo Ella Exely Elementary
Book: The Fashion Disaster That Changed My Life, by Lauren Myracle
Reason cited: Profanity, Language, Sexual Content
Action taken: Banned
Notes: Book was removed and transferred to a Katy ISD junior high school library.

School: Indian Springs Middle School
Book: Alice On Her Way, by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
Reason cited: Sexual Content
Action taken: Retained
Notes: Book remains as approved classroom text with no restrictions.

School: Kennedale High School
Book: Running Loose, by Chris Crutcher
Reason cited: Profanity, Sexual Content
Action taken: Alternate book allowed
Notes: Book was removed from required reading list, but is still available in library and still available as alternative reading selection in class.

Klein ISD
School: Theiss Elementary
Book: The Giver, by Lois Lowry
Reason cited: Other--
Action taken: Retained
Notes: Designated for curriculum use at intermediate grade levels and not elementary. Retained in library. Challenge made by someone outside of school system.

School: Northampton Elementary
Book: Tusk, Tusk, by David McKee
Reason cited: Other--
Action taken: Retained
Notes: Inappropriate for students in primary grade levels. Call number
changed. Challenge made by someone outside of school system.

School: Benigus Elementary  
Book: *Anastasia Again!*, by Lois Lowry  
Reason cited: none  
Action taken: Restricted  
Notes: “No formal request or challenge. Question by student’s guardian. Challenge made by someone outside of school system.”

School: Schindewolf Intermediate  
Book: *I Am The Cheese*, by Robert Cormier  
Reason cited: Profanity, Inappropriate Language  
Action taken: Alternate book allowed  
Notes: Challenge made by someone outside the school system

Leander ISD  
School: Wiley Middle School  
Book: *Zipped*, by Laura McNeal  
Reason cited: Sexual Content  
Action taken: Restricted  
Notes: No formal challenge; after a librarian read the book following a parent's concern, she now requires parent permission.

School: Laura Bush Elementary  
Book: *Chemical and Biological Weapons: Anthrax and Sarin*, by Gregory Payan  
Reason cited: Violence  
Action taken: Retained  
Notes: First grade parent concerned about appropriateness of topic for elementary age children.

School: Knowles Elementary  
Book: *Star Wars: a New Hope* (manga version), by Hisao Tamaki  
Reason cited: Profanity or Inappropriate language  
Action taken: Retained  
Notes: Parent filed reconsideration request because of language.

School: Deer Creek Elementary  
Book: *Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret*, by Judy Blume  
Reason cited: Profanity, inappropriate language, sexual content  
Action taken: Pending  
Notes: Second grade parent was concerned about appropriateness for that grade level.

Liberty Hill ISD  
School: Liberty Hill High School  
Book: *The Girl With a Baby*, by Sylvia Olsen  
Reason cited: Profanity, inappropriate language, sexual content  
Action taken: Retained with notation about possible objectionable material  
Notes: “Book provides insight into cultural differences and into difficulties/prejudices/stereotypes associated with teenage pregnancy. Book meets/exceeds criteria for selection despite content that some find objectionable.”

School: Bill Burden Elementary  
Book: *The Adventures of Captain Underpants*, by Dav Pilkey et al  
Reason cited: Other--  
Action taken: Restricted  
Notes: “Principal and selected teachers disapproved of content. All copies removed and placed in restricted area; may only be checked out with parental permission -- no formal procedure followed for removal.”

School: Liberty Hill Intermediate  
Book: *Olive’s Ocean*, by Kevin Henkes  
Reason cited: Sexual content  
Action taken: Retained  
Notes: Followed district procedure for challenged materials; book retained upon committee’s recommendation.”

Mabank ISD  
School: Middle School  
Book: *The True Meaning of Cleavage*, by Mariah Fredericks  
Reason cited: Profanity, Language, Sexual Content, Mysticism or Paganism, Drug References  
Action taken: Retained  
Notes: Parent believed the Star of David on cover was a pentagram associated with witchcraft. Parent believed that a passage which said “down a dark path” had a figurative meaning of an evil way of life.”

Magnolia ISD  
School: four elementary schools  
Book: *The Higher Power of Lucky*, by Susan Patron  
Reason cited: Profanity or Inappropriate language  
Action taken: Restricted  
Notes: Parent challenges

School: Magnolia West High School  
Book: *Seabiscuit*, by Laura Hillenbrand  
Reason cited: Sexual content  
Action taken: Alternate book allowed  
Notes: Challenged by 2 parents - both elementary teachers. One scene describes actions of a prostitute; not explicit, only suggestive.

School: Magnolia High School  
Book: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee  
Reason cited: Profanity or Inappropriate language  
Action taken: Alternate book allowed

Mansfield ISD  
School: Danny Jones Middle School  
Book: *Dancing Naked*, by Shelley Hrdlitzechka  
Reason cited: Profanity, Language  
Action taken: Banned  
Notes: “Patron feels book glorifies teen pregnancy.”

McKinney ISD  
School: McKinney High School  
Book: *Siddhartha*, by Herman Hesse  
Reason cited: Sexual Content  
Action taken: Retained  
Notes: “On Curriculum. Formal challenge was made anonymously. Campus committee met and unanimously voted to retain the book.”

Midland ISD  
School: Emerson Elementary  
Book: *Number the Stars*, by Lois Lowry  
Reason cited: Mysticism or Paganism  
Action taken: Alternate book allowed  
Notes: “Parent believed the Star of David on cover was a pentagram associated with witchcraft. Parent believed that a passage which said “down a dark path” had a figurative meaning of an evil way of life.”

Nacogdoches ISD  
School: Brooks Quinn Jones Elementary  
Book: *The Human Alphabet*, by Pilobolus and John Kane  
Reason cited: Sexual Content  
Action taken: Banned  
Notes: “The children thought the human bodies creating the alphabet were inappropriate poses.”

School: Brooks Quinn Jones Elementary  
Book: *Give a Boy a Gun*, by Todd Strasser  
Reason cited: Profanity, Language, Violence, Horror  
Action taken: Banned
Notes: “A student brought the book back explaining that his parents thought the topic was inappropriate and had a couple of inappropriate words.”

Nederland ISD  
School: Langham Elementary  
Book: Slot Machine, by Chris Lynch  
Reason cited: Profanity, Language  
Action taken: Banned  
School: Central Middle School  
Book: Wizardology, by Dugald Steer  
Reason cited: Mysticism or Paganism  
Action taken: Banned  
School: Highland Park Elementary  
Book: Willy’s Pictures, by Anthony Browne  
Reason cited: Sexual Content  
Action taken: Retained  
Notes: Hans Christian Anderson Award winning book. Pictures in question are historical works of art from the 1700s and 1800s.

New Boston ISD  
School: Middle School  
Book: Broken Promises, by Judy Baer  
Reason cited: Sexual content  
Action taken: Retained  
Notes: Complaint made by parent  

Nixon-Smiley ISD  
School: Nixon-Smiley Elementary  
Book: Then Again, Maybe I Won’t, by Judy Blume  
Reason cited: Profanity or Inappropriate language  
Action taken: Banned  

Northside ISD  
School: middle and high schools  

Notes: “The committee felt the content of the book was appropriate. Parents have the prerogative to review library resources and decide on appropriateness.”

Notes: “A picture depicts an individual in jail. Jail is not an appropriate place to be. Committee said “75% of the committee felt it inappropriate.”

Notes: “A picture depicts an individual in jail. Jail is not an appropriate place to be. Committee said “75% of the committee felt it inappropriate.”

Pleasant Grove ISD  
School: Pleasant Grove Middle School  
Book: The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants, by Ann Brashares  
Reason cited: Other --  
Action taken: Restricted  
Notes: “Exposing young readers to material they are not mature enough to understand. Boy/girl relationship/inappropriate relationships for 10 year olds.”

Poolville ISD  
School: Poolville Junior High  
Book: Boy Next Door, by Meg Cabot  
Reason cited: Sexual content  
Action taken: Restricted  
Notes: Only one copy will remain on the shelf. All others will be housed in library office, and parents can check them out to review and discuss with their children.

Pilot Point ISD  
School: Pilot Point High School  
Book: A Time to Kill, by John Grisham  
Reason cited: Sexual content  
Action taken: Alternate book allowed  
Notes: “Parent conference with teacher, campus administrator, and follow-up conference with superintendent. Expressed concern, but did not request removal, simply expressed concern about appropriateness of this book for young high school students.”

Plano ISD  
School: Bowman Middle School  
Book: Charmed, by Carrie Mac  
Reason cited: Inappropriate Language  
Action taken: Alternate book allowed  
Notes: “Book contains text that some might find sensitive or controversial. Book used in 7th grade English class.
Alternate titles available. Review Committee recommends book for 10-12th grades.”

Rising Star ISD
School: Rising Star High School
Book: The Color Purple, by Alice Walker
Reason cited: Profanity, Sexual content
Action taken: Banned

Santa Fe ISD
School: Santa Fe Elementary
Book: Inkheart, by Cornelia Funke
Reason cited: Profanity, inappropriate language
Action taken: Banned

School: Santa Fe High School
Book: The Color Purple, by Alice Walker
Reason cited: Other--
Action taken: Alternate book allowed
Notes: The parent was upset about the graphic description of the rape. She felt the teacher had no moral or Christian values by allowing students to read it. Alternate book was assigned.

Sierra Blanca ISD
School: Sierra Blanca ISD (all schools)
Book: Educating Esme, by Esme Raji Codell
Reason cited: Profanity, Sexual content
Action taken: Banned

Silverton ISD
School: Silverton School
Book: The Red Pony, by John Steinbeck
Reason cited: Profanity, Violence
Action taken: Retained

Splendora ISD
School: Splendora Intermediate

Reason cited: Sexual content
Action taken: Restricted
Notes: The library book is now by request only, and must have parental permission.

Spring Branch ISD
School: Stratford High School
Book: I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings, by Maya Angelou
Reason cited: Sexual content
Action taken: Retained
Notes: “The Committee recommended keeping the book in the curriculum with some added suggestions (like move it from 10th grade to 11th grade). The parent took the case to the Superintendent. The Superintendent upheld the Committee recommendations.”

Stephenville ISD
School: Henderson Junior High
Book: The Slightly True Story of Cedar B. Hartley, by Martine Murray
Reason cited: Profanity or Inappropriate language
Action taken: Banned

Tioga ISD
School: Tioga Elementary
Book: Wolf Rider, A Tale of Terror, by Avi
Reason cited: Violence
Action taken: Banned
Notes: “Teacher found it inappropriate for young adults.”

Tyler ISD
School: Kissam Middle
Book: Loch, by Paul Zindel
Reason cited: Profanity, Inappropriate Language
Action taken: Retained
Notes: Parent complaint

School: Valley View Jr. High
Book: Go Ask Alice, by Anonymous
Reason cited: Profanity, inappropriate language, sexual content
Action taken: Banned
Notes: “This book was purchased for use in the classroom. It was never used because of the content found in it. It was restricted and later removed on the direction of the Supt. of Schools.”

Waco ISD
School: Viking Hills Elementary
Book: The Adventures of Super Diaper Baby, by Dav Pilkey et al
Reason cited: Profanity, Inappropriate language
Action taken: Banned
Notes: “Book was not formally challenged. A parent expressed concern. Ban was principal’s decision and it was supported by the library coordinator.”

West Hardin CCISD
School: West Hardin Elementary
Book: Olive’s Ocean, by Kevin Henkes
Reason cited: Profanity, inappropriate language, sexual content
Action taken: Pending

Woodville ISD
School: Woodville High School
Book: The Perks of Being A Wallflower, by Stephen Chbosky
Reason cited: Sexual Content
Action taken: Banned
Notes: “The parent of a freshman girl who checked out the book challenged it. The girl was offended by the sexual explicitness of the book; mother requested the review.”
2007 LIST OF BOOKS BANNED OR CHALLENGED IN TEXAS SCHOOLS
(ALPHABETICAL BY TITLE)

Note: Most of the book summaries come from the Library of Congress Annotated Card project. The Award notation may be representative. We have not attempted to include all awards won by these titles, but have chosen the highest award as representative. The AR notation indicates an Accelerated Reader test is available for the book. See section on Accelerated Reader.

The Adventures of Blue Avenger, by Norma Howe, Holt, 1999. A boy trying to cope with the unexpected death of his father decides to change his name to Blue Avenger, hoping to find a way to make a difference in his neighborhood and in the world. Award: 2000 Best Books for Young Adults. AR: Yes

The Adventures of Captain Underpants, by Dav Pilkey et al, Blue Sky Press, 2002. When two boys hypnotize their principal into thinking that he is the superhero Captain Underpants, he leads them to the lair of the nefarious Dr. Diaper, where they must defeat his evil robot henchmen. Award: 1998 Best Children's Books of the Year. AR: Yes


Alice on Her Way, by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, Atheneum, 2005. Alice is adjusting to her new stepmother, her brother's new apartment, her ex-boyfriend, and getting a driver's license. AR: Yes


Anastasia Again! by Lois Lowry, Houghton Mifflin, 1981. Twelve-year-old Anastasia is horrified at her family’s decision to move from their city apartment to a house in the suburbs. Award: Nominee for 2 state children's book awards. AR: Yes

And Tango Makes Three, by Peter Parnall and Justin Richardson, Simon & Schuster, 2005. At New York City’s Central Park Zoo, two male penguins fall in love and start a family by taking turns sitting on an abandoned egg until it hatches. Award: 2005 Best Children's Books of the Year. AR: Yes

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret, by Judy Blume, Bradbury, 1990, 1970. Faced with the difficulties of growing up and choosing a religion, a twelve-year-old girl talks over her problems with her own private God. Award: 1970 NYT Best Books for Children. AR: Yes


Bartholomew and the Oobleck, by Dr. Seuss, Random House, 1949. The King, tired of rain, snow, sun, and fog, commands his magicians to make something else come down from the sky, but when oobleck falls, in sticky greenish droplets, Bartholomew Cubbins shames the King and saves the kingdom. Award: 1950 Caldecott Honor Book. AR: Yes

The Black Tattoo, by Sam Enthoven, Razorbill, 2006. When his best friend is possessed by an ancient demon, a fourteen-year-old boy, accompanied by a girl with superhuman powers, battles all over London and into Hell to save him. AR: Yes


Bride of the Living Dummy (Goosebumps Series), by R.L. Stine, Scholastic. 1998. A horror tale in which a ventriloquist’s dummy comes to life. AR: Yes

Broken Promises, by Judy Baer, Bethany House, 1989. Christian "chick lit" title from the Cedar River Daydreams series, a realistic series packed with drama, adventure, and tests of faith. AR: Yes

Charmed, by Carrie Mac, Orca, 2004. A teenager finds she is trapped in a prostitution ring, with no way to escape.

Chemical and Biological Weapons: Anthrax and Sarin, by Gregory Payan, Children’s Press, 2000. Discusses the components, use, and history of chemical and biological weapons, especially anthrax and sarin, and explains the effects on humans after exposure. AR: Yes


Dork in Disguise, by Carol Gorman, HarperCollins, 1999. Starting middle school in a new town, brainy Jerry Flack changes his image from "dork" to "cool kid," only to discover that he'd rather be himself. Award: 2002 Adventuring with Books: a Booklist for pre-K - Grade 6. AR: Yes

Endgame, by Nancy Garden, Harcourt, 2006. A fifteen-year-old boy, bullied at school and ridiculed by an unfeeling father for preferring drums to hunting, goes on a shooting rampage at his high school. Award: 1998 Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers. AR: Yes

The Facts Speak For Themselves, by Brock Cole, Front Street, 1997. At the request of her social worker, a thirteen-year-old girl gradually reveals how her life with her unstable mother and her younger brother led to her rape and the murder she witnessed. Award: 1994 Newbery Award.


Eight Seconds, Jean Ferris, Harcourt, 2000. An eighteen-year-old boy must confront his own sexuality when he goes to rodeo school and finds himself strangely attracted to an older boy who is smart, tough, complicated, gorgeous, and gay. Award: 2002 Best Books for Young Adults. AR: Yes

Eldorado in East Harlem, by Victor Rodriguez, Arte Publico Press, 1992. Capturing the essence of barrio life in the 1960s, gang members are disillusioned with their lot, yet don't know anything else.

Endgame, by Nancy Garden, Harcourt, 2006. A fifteen-year-old boy, bullied at school and ridiculed by an unfeeling father for preferring drums to hunting, goes on a shooting rampage at his high school. Award: 2006 Senior High School Library Catalog. AR: Yes

The Fashion Disaster That Changed My Life, by Lauren Myracle, Dutton Children's, 2005. Seventh-grader Ali inadvertently arrives on the first day of school with underwear static-clinging partly outside her pant leg. AR: Yes


Girl 15, Charming but Insane, by Sue Limb, Delacorte, 2004. A fifteen-year-old English girl, living with her mum, separated from her father in Cornwall, and with a best friend who seems to do everything perfectly, finds her own assets through humor. Award: 2006, Finalist Heartland Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature. AR: Yes


The Girl with a Baby, by Sylvia Olsen, Sono Nis, 2003. Fourteen and a mother, Jane draws on her Indian heritage to make the best of her life for her child. Award: 2004 Best Children's Books of the Year. AR: Yes

Give a Boy a Gun, by Todd Strasser, Simon & Schuster, 2000. Events leading up to a night of terror at a high school dance are told from the point of view of various people involved. Award: 2006 Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults.

The Giver, by Lois Lowry, ECM/Paradigm, 2002. Given a lifetime assignment at a special ceremony, a boy becomes the receiver of memories shared by only one other in his world and discovers a terrible truth about the society in which he lives. Award: 1994 Newbery Award. AR: Yes


Gossip Girl (Series), Cecily von Ziegesar, Little, Brown, 2002-Presents a world of jealousy and betrayal at an exclusive private school in Manhattan. Award: 2003 Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers. AR: Yes
**The Grapes of Wrath**, by John Steinbeck, Sagebrush, 1999. Depression-era family moves from Arkansas to California as migrant farm workers. **Award:** 1976 Books for You: An Annotated Booklist for Senior High. **AR:** Yes

**Grendel**, by John Gardner, Hall, 1972. A vivid reinvention of the Beowulf tale. **Award:** 2002 Outstanding Books for the College Bound. **AR:** Yes

**Harry Potter** (series), by J.K. Rowling, Scholastic, 1998-2007. A young boy with a great destiny proves his worth while attending Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry. Subsequent titles follow his career. **Award:** 1997-98 Anne Spencer Lindbergh Prize in Children's Literature. **AR:** Yes

**The Higher Power of Lucky**, by Susan Patron, Atheneum, 2006. Fearing that her legal guardian plans to abandon her, ten-year-old aspiring scientist Lucky Trimble determines to run away while also continuing to seek the Higher Power that will bring stability to her life. **Award:** 2007 Newbery Award. **AR:** Yes

**Homefront**, by Doris Gwaltney, Simon & Schuster, 2006. In 1941 in rural Virginia, a twelve-year-old girl’s fervent desire for a room of her own is thwarted by the arrival of her ‘perfect’ English cousin who, having escaped the London blitz with her mother, is given the coveted room as well as all the care and attention of the rest of the family. **Award:** 2006 Society of School Librarians Int’l Book Awards honor book. **AR:** Yes

**The Hot Zone**, by Richard Preston, Anchor, 1995. A fictional account of a previously unknown deadly virus, and how it could enter the American country. **Award:** 1995 Quick Picks for Reluctant Teen Readers. **AR:** Yes

**House of the Spirits**, by Isabel Allende, Knopf, 1985. Written in the style of magical realism, this award winning novel describes a family saga, complete with a clairvoyant matriarch, in an unnamed South American country. **Award:** 2002 Recommended Literature Kindergarten through Grade Twelve (Calif. Dept. of Ed.) **AR:** Yes

**The Human Alphabet**, by Pilobolus and John Kane, Roaring Brook Press, 2005. An alphabet made of people — here are the 26 familiar letters of the alphabet and images to illustrate them, each made with ingenious grips, bends and twists of the human form. **Award:** 2006 Children's Catalog.

**I Am The Cheese**, by Robert Cormier, Knopf, 1977. A young boy desperately tries to unlock his past yet knows he must hide those memories if he is to remain alive. **Award:** 2000 Middle and Junior High School Catalog; 2002 Senior High School Catalog. **AR:** Yes

**I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings**, by Maya Angelou, Random House, 1970. An autobiographical treatment of racism, sexism, and self-acceptance through the story of a girl who finally finds peace in early motherhood. **Award:** 2001 Best of the Best Revisited (100 Best Books for Teens). **AR:** Yes

**In the Night Kitchen**, by Maurice Sendak, Harper & Row, 1970. A little boy’s dream-fantasy in which he helps three fat bakers get milk for their cake batter. **Award:** 1971 Caldecott Honor book. **AR:** Yes

**Inkheart**, by Cornelia Funke, Scholastic, 2003. A twelve-year-old girl learns that her father, who repairs and binds books for a living, can “read” fictional characters to life when one of those characters abducts them and tries to force him into service. **Award:** 2007 Educators’ Top 100 Children’s Books. **AR:** Yes

**Inkspell**, by Cornelia Funke, Scholastic, 2005. Now thirteen, the protagonist from *Inkheart* "reads" herself into Inkworld, where she, her family, and the characters in the book face chaos and danger as the original creator of the world frantically tries to redirect the story. **Award:** 2006 Notable Children's Books. **AR:** Yes

**Invisible**, by Pete Hautman, Simon & Schuster, 2005. Two boys are unlikely best friends — one a loner obsessed by his model trains, the other a popular student involved in football and theater — who grew up together and share a bond that nothing can sever. **Award:** 2006 Best Books for Young Adults. **AR:** Yes

**It's Perfectly Normal**, by Robie H. Harris, Candlewick, 1994. Provides scientific and medical answers to young people’s questions about sexuality, physical development, diseases, and responsible decision-making. Created with the input of parents, clergy, educators, and health professionals. **Award:** 1994 Notable Books for Children.

**A Killing Night**, by Jonathon King, Dutton 2005. A former policeman, now a private investigator, tracks another former police officer, considered a suspect in a string of murders.

**The Last Book In the Universe**, by Rodman Philbrick, Blue Sky Press, 2000. After an earthquake has destroyed much of the planet, an epileptic teenager nicknamed Spaz begins the heroic fight to bring human intelligence back to the Earth of a distant future. **Award:** 2001 Best Books for Young Adults. **AR:** Yes

**Life in the Fat Lane**, by Cherie Bennett, Delacorte, 1998. A sixteen-year-old winner of beauty pageants and Homecoming Queen, is distressed and bewildered when she starts gaining weight and becomes a fat girl. **Award:** 2005 Middle and Junior High School Catalog. **AR:** Yes


**Loch**, by Paul Zindel, Hyperion, 1995. Fifteen-year-old Loch and his younger sister join their father on a scientific expedition searching for enormous prehistoric creatures sighted in a Vermont lake, but soon discover that the expedition’s leaders aren’t interested in preserving the creatures. **Award:** 1995 Quick Picks for Reluctant Teen Readers. **AR:** Yes

**Looking for Alaska**, by John Green, Dutton Children’s, 2005. A sixteen-year-old’s first year at a preparatory
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author/Editors</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Award</th>
<th>AR: Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>My First Love and Other Disasters</em></td>
<td>Francine Pascal</td>
<td>Simon Pulse</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>An almost fifteen-year-old girl struggles with her life on Fire Island, but finally wins the attention of the handsomest boy at school.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Nightmare Hour</em></td>
<td>R.L. Stine</td>
<td>HarperCollins</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>A collection of ten short horror stories featuring a Halloween visit to a strange pumpkin patch, a girl who wants the power and respect that comes with being a witch, and a mask that lets the wearer see into another time.</td>
<td>Award: 2001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Number the Stars</em></td>
<td>Lois Lowry</td>
<td>Houghton Mifflin</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>In 1943, a ten-year-old Danish girl learns how to be brave and courageous when she helps shelter her Jewish friend from the Nazis.</td>
<td>Award: 1990</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Olive's Ocean</em></td>
<td>Kevin Henkes</td>
<td>Greenwillow</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>On a summer visit to her grandmother's cottage by the ocean, a twelve-year-old girl gains perspective on the death of a classmate, on her relationship with her grandmother, and on her feelings for an older boy, and on her plans to be a writer.</td>
<td>Award: 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>On the Edge: Stories at the Brink</em></td>
<td>Lois Duncan</td>
<td>Simon &amp; Schuster</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>A collection of twelve stories by different writers and in different genres in each of which a young person is physically or emotionally on the edge.</td>
<td>Award: 2000</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Ordinary People</em></td>
<td>Judith Guest</td>
<td>Penguin</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>The accidental death of the elder son of an affluent family strains family relationships.</td>
<td>Award: 1982</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Outsiders</em></td>
<td>S.E. Hinton</td>
<td>Viking</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>The struggle of three brothers to stay together after their parent’s death and their quest for identity among the conflicting values of their adolescent society.</td>
<td>Award: 1976</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Perks of Being A Wallflower</em></td>
<td>Stephen Chbosky, Pocket</td>
<td>Pocket</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Told through letters to an unknown recipient, the teenage protagonist struggles through love, drugs, and the loss of those dear to him.</td>
<td>Award: 2000</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Prehistoric Animals</em></td>
<td>Michael Bright, Copper Beech</td>
<td>Hyperion</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Fourteen-year-old girls use a magic ring to turn two rats into cute boys so that they can have dates for the Spring Fling.</td>
<td>Award: 2002</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Rat Boys</em></td>
<td>Thom Eberhardt</td>
<td>Hyperion</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>When mutant rats threaten to take over Staten Island, which has become a huge landfill, a fourteen-year-old girl and her younger brother try to figure out how to stop them.</td>
<td>Award: 2001</td>
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<td><em>Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry</em></td>
<td>Mildred Taylor</td>
<td>Dial</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>A black family living in Mississippi during the Depression of the 1930s is faced with prejudice and discrimination which its children do not understand.</td>
<td>Award: 1977</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Running Loose</em></td>
<td>Chris Crutcher</td>
<td>Greenwillow</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>A high school senior in a small Idaho town learns about sportsmanship, love, and death as he matures into manhood.</td>
<td>Award: 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Seabiscuit</em></td>
<td>Laura Hillenbrand</td>
<td>Random House</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>A biography of the most famous race horse in history, from which the movie of the same name was made.</td>
<td>Award: 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Siddhartha</em></td>
<td>Herman Hesse</td>
<td>New Directions</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Nobel laureate's acclaimed novel traces an Indian aristocrat's efforts to renounce sensual and material pleasures and discover spiritual truths.</td>
<td>Award: 2002</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants</em></td>
<td>Anne Brashares, Delacorte</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>During their first summer apart, four teenage girls, best friends since earliest childhood, stay in touch through a shared pair of secondhand jeans that magically adapts to each of their figures and affects their attitudes to their different summer experiences.</td>
<td>Award: 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Slightly True Story of Cedar B. Hartley</em></td>
<td>Martine Murray, A.A. Levine</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>When twelve-year-old Cedar loses her dog, it sets off a chain of events leading her to find a new friend, become an acrobat, and learn some bitter-sweet truths about family, community, and herself.</td>
<td>Award: 2004</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Slot Machine</em></td>
<td>Chris Lynch</td>
<td>HarperCollins</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>When an overweight thirteen-year-old is sent to camp at a seminary retreat center, he and his two best friends are forced to try out various sports in order to find out where they belong.</td>
<td>Award: 1996</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Star Wars: a New Hope** (manga version), by Hisao Tamaki, Dark Horse Comics, 1998. A manga (Japanese comic style) version of George Lucas's tale.

**Stop Those Pants**, by Mordecai Gerstein, Harcourt, 1998. A young boy has trouble getting dressed one morning when his clothes decide to play hard to get. **AR:** Yes

**Take Away Three**, by Tana Reiff, Tandem, 1999. A high-interest, low-vocabulary book. A young married couple work to overcome his morning when his clothes decide to get. **AR:** Yes

**Then Again, Maybe I Won't**, by Judy Blume, Bradbury, 1971. Unable to accept or explain his family's newly acquired wealth, his growing interest in sex, and a friend's shoplifting habit, a thirteen-year-old finds the pains in his stomach getting worse and worse. **Award:** 1996 Books for Young: An Annotated Booklist for Senior High. **AR:** Yes

**A Time to Kill**, by John Grisham, Wynwood, 1989. A white lawyer defends a black father who took revenge on the men who gang-raped his 10 year old daughter. **AR:** Yes

**To Kill a Mockingbird**, by Harper Lee, HarperCollins, 1999. White attorney defends a black man unfairly accused of rape. **Award:** 1961 Pulitzer Prize. **AR:** Yes

**Train**, by Charles Temple, Houghton Mifflin, 1996. Everyone along the way enjoys the sight and sound of the C & O train and its passengers rolling down the rail.

**The True Meaning of Cleavage**, by Mariah Fredericks, Atheneum, 2003. When best friends since seventh grade begin their freshman year of high school and one becomes obsessed with a senior boy, the other wonders if their friendship will survive. **Award:** 2003 Recommended Teen Books. **AR:** Yes

**TTYL**, by Lauren Myracle, Amulet, 2004. Chronicles, in "instant message" format, the day-to-day experiences, feelings, and plans of three friends as they begin tenth grade. **Award:** 2005 Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Readers. **AR:** Yes

**Tusk, Tusk**, by David McKee, Kane/Miller, 1990, 1978. After the white elephants and the black elephants kill each other off, the grey descendants of those nonfighting elephants who hid during the war emerge, only to eventually find new differences to set them against each other. **AR:** Yes

**Upstate**, by Kalisha Buckhanon, St. Martin's, 2005. A tale told in letters between a teenage girl and her boyfriend in prison.

**What Jamie Saw**, by Carolyn Coman, Front Street, 1995. Having fled to a family friend's hillside trailer after his mother's boyfriend tried to throw his baby sister against a wall, a nine-year-old finds himself living an existence full of uncertainty and fear. **Award:** 1996 Newbery Honor book. **AR:** Yes

**What They Want**, Omar Tyree, Simon & Schuster, 2006. The surprise pregnancy of one of his many girlfriends shows a male model that there is more to life than hedonism.

**When Plague Strikes: The Black Death, Smallpox, AIDS**, by James Cross Giblin and David Brampton, HarperCollins, 1995. The social, political, and economic impact of these three diseases. **Award:** 1995 Notable Books for Children. **AR:** Yes

**Willy's Pictures**, by Anthony Browne, Candlewick, 2000. Willy the chimp paints pictures that show his and his friends' tributes to art masterpieces, including "American Gothic," "The Birth of Venus," and "Mona Lisa." **Award:** 2002 Adventuring with Books: a Booklist for pre-K - Grade 6. **AR:** Yes

**The Witches of Worm**, by Zilpha Keatley Snyder, Atheneum, 1972. A lonely twelve-year-old is convinced that the cat she finds is possessed by a witch and is responsible for her own strange behavior. **Award:** 1973 Newbery Honor book. **AR:** Yes

**Wizardology**, by Dugald Steer, Candlewick, 2005. Originally discovered in 1588, this remarkable text by history’s most respected wizard is revealed to the world for the very first time. Recreated by four artists as a book with movable parts. **Award:** 2006 Children's Choices. **AR:** Yes

**Wolf rider, A Tale of Terror**, by Avi, Bradbury, 1996. After receiving an apparent crank call from a man claiming to have committed murder, a fifteen-year-old finds his close relationship with his father crumbling as he struggles to make everyone believe him. **Award:** 2005 Middle and Junior High School Catalog. **AR:** Yes


**Yankee Girl**, by Mary Ann Rodman, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004. When her FBI-agent father is transferred to Jackson, Mississippi, in 1964, an eleven-year-old girl wants to be popular but also wants to reach out to the one black girl in her class in a newly-integrated school. **Award:** 2005 Children's Book Award. **AR:** Yes

**Zero to sixty: the motorcycle journey of a lifetime**, by Gary Paulsen, Harcourt, 1997. An award-winning author's retrospective look at his own past, and how his life developed as it did. **Award:** Nat'l Council of Teachers of English. **AR:** Yes

**Zipped**, by Laura McNeal, Knopf, 2003. At the end of their sophomore year in high school, the lives of four teenagers are woven together as they start a tough new job, face family problems, deal with changing friendships, and find love. **Award:** 2004 PEN Center USA Literary Award. **AR:** Yes
Books Banned or Restricted Without Due Process

**Book:** Assorted manga titles  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Reason:** Sexual content  
**Notes:** Principal decided to pull them all when a parent complained about the violence in one of them. Librarian had tried the manga and her kids loved them, but the parent of one student who was having problems at home with his behavior complained that the books encouraged his behavior, so the principal just had them all pulled rather than restrict the one student. The librarian did not try to change the principal's mind.

**Book:** Captain Underpants (series), by Dav Pilkey et al  
**Action taken:** Restricted  
**Reason:** Other—  
**Notes:** Principal challenged because "book promotes disrespect for persons in authority." Book now housed in restricted shelves and must have parental permission.

**Book:** Counterfeit Son, by Elaine Marie Alphin  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Reason:** Sexual content  
**Notes:** Censoring party, assistant superintendent for administrative services, objected to discussion of pedophilia. When librarians complained about the policy not being followed, he called book "slam dunk" that needed no review.

**Book:** Friday Night Lights, by H.G. Bissinger  
**Action taken:** Banned (in two different districts)  
**Reason:** Profanity, Inappropriate language  
**Notes:** (From one district report) Censoring party is assistant superintendent for administrative services. Objected to "locker room language." When librarians complained about the policy not being followed, he called book "slam dunk" that needed no review.

**Book:** From Slave Ship to Freedom Road, by Julius Lester and Rod Brown  
**Action taken:** Restricted  
**Reason:** Other—  
**Notes:** Parent objected as inappropriate for age group.

**Book:** GANGS (Voices) by Clive Gifford  
**Action taken:** Restricted  
**Reason:** Other—Gang signs  
**Notes:** The Assistant Principal found them, confiscated the book, and came to librarian to say he wanted it off the shelf. Librarian asked him if he had read the book completely. He said he saw enough pictures to know it was not appropriate. Librarian explained the reconsideration procedures, so he took the book to read it, and gave it to the Principal. At that point the complete process stopped, and a compromise was encouraged. It is now re-cataloged and shelved with the teacher materials to use with the introduction to the *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton literature unit.

**Book:** The Giver, by Lois Lowry  
**Action taken:** Restricted  
**Reason:** Other—Inappropriate for PK-5 campus  
**Notes:** Censorship requested by campus teachers; reassigned to Prof. Dev. shelves, but no official challenge.

**Book:** Goosebumps (series), by R.L. Stine  
**Action taken:** Restricted  
**Reason:** Other--  
**Notes:** 2nd grade teacher said the series "promotes evil."

**Book:** Harry Potter (series), by J.K. Rowling  
**Action taken:** Restricted  
**Reason:** Mysticism  
**Notes:** Community member believes book glorifies witchcraft.

**Book:** Life is Funny, by E.R. Frank  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Reason:** Sexual content  
**Notes:** "Language made it unsuitable (in the mind of the campus) for middle school students. Sent to a special HS campus with a focus on teen mothers, drop-outs, and special situations. The campus had just gone through a formal process with another title and kept the books. I suspect the formal process requires just too much effort."

**Book:** Love and sex: ten stories of truth, by Michael Cart, ed.  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Reason:** Sexual content  
**Notes:** President of School Board complained that the book talks about sex and gays. Board President borrowed the book. After many months of requests, librarian was told to report the book as "lost." Book was never paid for, nor replaced. No official challenge.

**Book:** Spying on Miss Müller, by Eve Bunting  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Reason:** Profanity, Inappropriate language  
**Notes:** Parent objected. Character calls teacher a slut. Book sent to high school campus.

**Book:** The Drowning of Stephan Jones, by Bette Greene  
**Action taken:** Banned  
**Reason:** Profanity, Inappropriate language  
**Notes:** Principal objected to offensive language. Told librarian to remove book from library.

**Book:** The Story of Colors=La Historia de los Colores, by Subcomandante Marcos  
**Action taken:** Retained  
**Reason:** Inappropriate language; Other—Author’s reputation  
**Notes:** Book contains the phrase "making love" but no graphic illustrations; author is radical insurgent and leader of the Zapatista Party of National Liberation. Originally challenged by permanent sub; library aide, when she saw it, felt the same way for an additional reason.

**Book:** What’s the big secret? by Laurie K. Brown  
**Action taken:** Restricted  
**Reason:** Sexual content  
**Notes:** Involved parent felt that parents should be made aware of checkouts of books on the subject of reproduction and sexuality due to age of students. This book and similar books were moved to a cart right behind the circulation counter (highly visible) and a parent notification form was created and is now in use.
The ACLU of Texas Interviews
Newbery Award Winner, Susan Patron

Susan Patron is a collection development librarian at the Los Angeles Public Library. She won the 2007 Newbery Award - the highest award in children's literature - for The Higher Power of Lucky, a story of a gutsy young girl. Lucky overhears the word “scrotum,” and wonders about it. Some librarians believed the word made the book inappropriate for children.

Please tell us about the start of your career as a writer.

As a children's librarian beginning in the 1970's at the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL), I was immersed in folklore and storytelling. This led to Burgoo Stew, my contemporary retelling of the Stone Soup folktale, which was published by Richard Jackson at Orchard in the late 1980's. It was followed by three other picture books and a chapter book called Maybe Yes, Maybe No, Maybe Maybe.

When you began your career, did you instinctively limit the language you used or the themes you explored out of fear of offending readers?

When I became the Juvenile Materials Collection Development Manager at LAPL, part of my job was to respond to patron complaints and challenges to children's books. I found that people can be offended by such elements as a perception of too much violence in a Thomas the Tank Engine book or a humorous illustration of a can of bug spray in I Know An Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly. Almost anything can be offensive to someone. As a public librarian, I validated the parent's prerogative in selecting a more appropriate book for their child, but only for their child, and the challenged books were not removed from the shelves.

As a writer, I love the English language, with its immense vocabulary and potential for subtlety and shades of meaning. It can be a powerful, limber, and effective tool. I try to use it very deliberately, with respect for the intelligence of readers. My picture books contain words such as cantankerous, feisty, and peevish, which may not be in the vocabulary of the average 6 year old. But the words are the tools, and I'd never opt not to use the right tool for the job out of fear of offending some readers.

My use of the anatomical word scrotum in The Higher Power of Lucky offended some readers, but it's still the appropriate word and I wouldn't change it in hindsight.

When was it that censorship of your work became noticeable to you?

I'm not sure, at this point, whether or to what degree The Higher Power of Lucky was actually censored, as distinct from being banned, challenged, or simply not selected for a school or public library collection. The great debate about it began in February of this year.
Were you surprised by the public censure of your work?
I was amazed by the degree of passion evinced in the nationwide discussion over the appropriateness a book for children containing the word scrotum. Many of those who objected to the word freely admitted that they hadn't read the entire book, or even past the first page. This fact appalled me since any book should be evaluated as an entity without taking parts of it out of context.

How has the focus on your books by censors affected your writing?
I banish the voice of the censor when I'm writing. If need be, a debate about the book can take place in a direct and open way later, after publication, but not during the creative process.

Do you feel that those who call for the banning or restriction of your books are generally aware of what is going on in the real lives of children today?
It seems to me that there is a disconnect between the reality of what children experience (either directly in their own lives or through the media) and issues that some adults consider appropriate for children's books. It's as if fiction for kids should avoid subjects that mirror the real world, as if fiction should be "safe." This is implicit (if naïve) recognition of the power of literature, and simultaneously a disservice to and undermining of children. I believe that writers must trust in the intelligence of readers.

Do you feel that the presence of censors has affected the quality of writing for young readers?
No; there are marvelous books available to children and young adults. There are writers, editors, and publishers who aren't afraid to take risks, and this can be seen in our strong and vibrant body of contemporary juvenile fiction.

What has been the impact of censorship on young readers?
Some professionals and parents continue to seek out material that won't provoke questions about or pose challenges to their own beliefs. I believe that many kids will find these books anyway, sometimes through school and sometimes through the networks and alliances that young people form in order to get the information they need. When children perceive that adults are afraid of a book, this can have the effect of making that book all the more desirable.

What advice would you offer to parents who are concerned about what their children are exposed to in books?
Parents should be concerned about what their children are exposed to; good for them. They should read the book in question, and if they feel that it isn't appropriate, choose another book. Alternatively, read the book together and be open to questions and discussion. Books don't harm kids; they arm them to think more deeply and to make better choices.

Photo credit: Renee Patron
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