

How to Appreciate Banned Books

Read this list of books. They all have one thing in common: `{| cellpadding='1' cellspacing='0' align='center' style='width:100%;border:0px #ffffff solid;|-| align='center' style='width:50%; background:#ffffff solid; padding:0.5em;...`

Part 1 of 2:

Learn about Faulty Reasoning behind Book Bans

Beware arguments that justify banning books. Books can contain ideas that may change the world. Some people will take exception to the argument that their reasons for banning books are faulty. They forget that to ban any book is to risk banning every book.



1.

Understand many books are banned because they present ideas that some people wish to suppress.
Ideas are the seed of change.

1. Scientific writings have historically been the most censored/banned texts. Today, scientific texts are generally allowed.
 1. Charles Darwin's *The Origins of Species* could not legally be taught in many states for years.
 2. Copernicus was forced (under threat of torture or death) to state that his sun-centered solar system was false.
2. *Black Boy* and *Black Like Me* were suppressed because they challenged the racial norms of the day. *Black Boy* is still challenged in libraries.

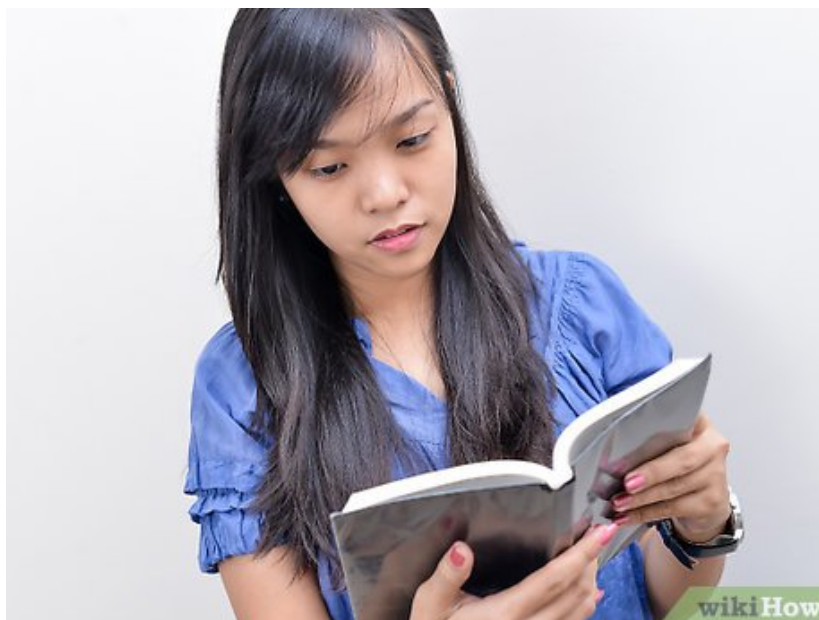
2.



Understand that many books are banned/challenged because of the perceptions of those that haven't read them.

1. At the top of the 2000-2009 American Library Association's banned/challenged book list is the *Harry Potter* series. People who obviously haven't read the books suggest that Harry Potter supports witchcraft, has magical spells, etc. Any reader of the series would tell you that (in the books): You have to be born with magical abilities, All of the spells named are either plays on words (like Avada Kedavra which is a play on the magician's Abracadabra) or Latinization of words or phrases with extra syllables thrown in.
2. Another example of this is *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie, which is probably better named, "The Anti-Satanic Verses". A death sentence was pronounced against Rushdie in absentia for his book.

3.



Understand that literature is a reflection of the life and attitudes of the author.

1. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* describes the time before the "War Between the States" when slavery still existed. It is often challenged for its use of the n-word. The term was common for the time it was written about and didn't carry the derogatory implications that the term does today, or not nearly to the same degree. The term was derived from the Latin word of the same spelling meaning "black" or "dark". This is similar to the term "Indians" which described the Native Americans. Today, "Indians" is often considered improper, though it is still widely used.
2. *Mein Kampf* by Adolph Hitler is a historical document, though its statements and suggestions are terribly bigoted. Reading the book is one of the best ways to learn from history. It is history's greatest example of the politics of hate, and where it leads to. Like all authors, Hitler wrote about what he knew.

4.



Understand that some books are banned/challenged because the content is deemed inappropriate for the audience.

1. Many of the children's books by Judy Blume have been challenged on this basis. Some parents believe they can completely isolate their children from sexual discussions. Judy Blume's works are often written about children who are nearing adolescence. Her books often discuss subjects that parents want to avoid.
2. Some books, like *1984* and *Brave New World* have some sexual content. Usually, the choice is made to allow these only after 5th grade.
3. Religious works are no exception. Members of almost every religion have tried to suppress the writings of other religions.

Part 2 of 2:

Take Action for the Freedom to Read

1.



Ask your librarian at your local school or public library which (if any) books have been banned or challenged. Ask for an explanation for any final decisions that were made.

2.



Ask how you can get involved in the decision making process. Most libraries have groups that review books. Ask how you can participate.

3.



Participate in Banned Books Week - September 21-27, 2014. Banned Books Week is the national book community's annual celebration of the *Freedom to Read*. Hundreds of libraries and bookstores around the country draw attention to the problem of censorship by mounting displays of challenged books and hosting a variety of events. Visit the the website to find out more.

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