

About Censorship . . . In Her Own Words

Judy Blume

Author of Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret, Blubber, and many other teen classics

When I began to write thirty years ago, I didn't know if anyone would publish my books, but I wasn't afraid to write them. I was lucky. I found an editor and publisher who were willing to take a chance. They encouraged me. I was never told what I couldn't write. I felt only that I had to write the most honest books I could.

It never occurred to me, at the time, that what I was writing was controversial. Much of it grew out of my own feelings and concerns when I was young.

COMMUNISM?

There were few challenges to my books then, although I remember the night a woman phoned, asking if I had written *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret*. When I replied that I had, she called me a Communist and slammed down the phone. I never did figure out if she equated Communism with menstruation or religion, the two major concerns in 12-year-old Margaret's life.

But in 1980, the censors crawled out of the woodwork, seemingly overnight, organized and determined. Not only would they decide what their children could read, but what all children could read. Challenges to books quadrupled within months, and we'll never know how many teachers, school librarians, and principals quietly removed books to avoid trouble.

FEAR

I believe that censorship grows out of fear, and because fear is contagious, some parents are easily swayed. Book banning satisfies their need to feel in control of their



children's lives. This fear is often disguised as moral outrage. They want to believe that if their children don't read about it, their children won't know about it. And if they don't know about it, it won't happen.

Today, it's not only language and sexuality (the usual reasons given for banning my books) that will land a book on the censors' hit list. It's Satanism, New Age-ism and a hundred other "isms," some of which would make you laugh if the implications weren't so serious. Books that make kids laugh often come under suspicion; so do books that encourage kids to think, or question authority; books that don't hit the reader over the head with moral lessons are considered dangerous.

Censors don't want children exposed to ideas different from their own. If every individual with an agenda had his/her way, the shelves in the school library would be close to empty. I wish the censors could read the letters kids write.

*Dear Judy,
I don't know where I stand in the world. I don't know who I am. That's why I read, to find myself.
—Elizabeth, age 13*

But it's not just the books under fire now that worry me. It is the books that will never be written. The books that will never be read. And all due to the fear of censorship. As always, young readers will be the real losers.

(Source: www.judyblume.com)

About the Writer

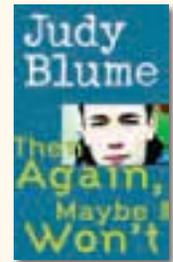
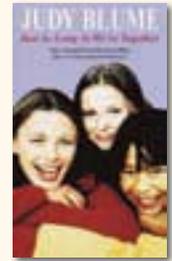
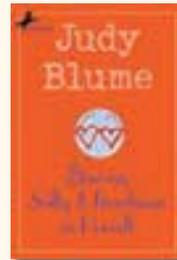
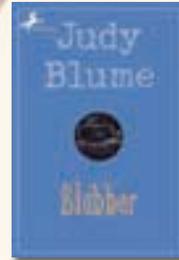
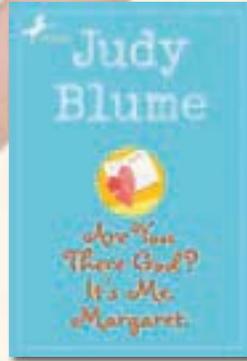
JUDY BLUME's books have won many awards and have sold over sixty-five million copies worldwide. Judy Blume has received the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. Ms. Blume is a tireless supporter of the First Amendment. She divides her time between Key West, New York City, and Martha's Vineyard.

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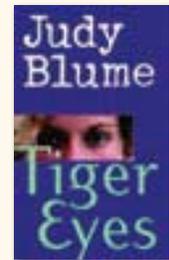
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