



**Join the
Battle Against
Censorship—**

READ!

Dear Friend,

These are dangerous times for books that dare to disturb the universe.

Robert Cormier wrote *The Chocolate War* more than 30 years ago, and his haunting story of one boy who dared to defy abusive social pressure has been a target of censors ever since. Of course, this provocative writer is only one of the many authors under fire for their literary works.

Today, the fundamental right to read what we want is facing more challenges than ever. Section 215 of the Patriot Act allows the government to apply for an order authorizing the release of certain records, including those of bookstores and libraries. Children's books continue to be constant targets of book-banning efforts in school systems and public libraries.

Random House Children's Books is committed to those who stand against censorship. With this First Amendment First-Aid Kit, we ask you, the teachers, booksellers, and librarians who are confronted with censorship issues each and every day, to join with us in utilizing the resources provided here to put this issue front and center in classrooms, libraries, and bookstores all over the country.

Sincerely,



Chip Gibson
President & Publisher
Random House Children's Books

**C
E N
S O R
S H I P
C A U S E S
B L I N D N E S S**

READ!





**In support of Banned Books Week,
the national celebration of First Amendment Rights**

America's booksellers, librarians, and teachers have long been on the front lines of the battle against censorship. In support of these daily efforts, Random House Children's Books is pleased to provide the First Amendment First-Aid Kit. We are proud to champion the First Amendment to insure that challenged, inspiring books, new and old, will continue to be available to generations of readers.

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

—Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas

To conform the principles, morals, and manners of our citizens to our republican form of government, it is absolutely necessary that knowledge of every kind should be disseminated through every part of the United States.

— Benjamin Rush, founding father and signer of the Declaration of Independence

What to Do If Someone Challenges a Book

General Strategies

1. Contact National Organizations Who Can Help

Numerous national organizations provide information, tools, and support, including the American Library Association (ALA), the National Coalition Against Censorship, and the American Booksellers Foundation for Freedom of Expression. The back cover of this brochure lists contact information and Web site addresses for these and other censorship experts.

2. Know the First Amendment

Freedom of speech is a powerful tool supported by law that protects your rights and the rights of your readers. A copy of the First Amendment is included in this brochure.

3. Be Familiar with the Definition of Intellectual Freedom

Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. For a fuller analysis and defense of this right, read the Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Q & A at www.ala.org/ala/oif/basics/intellectual.htm

4. Research Past Cases

Over the years many books have been challenged. Responses to these challenges are archived on several Web sites, including www.ala.org/oif.html. Use these past examples to support your defense.

BOOKSELLER STRATEGIES

1. The American Booksellers Foundation for Freedom of Expression (ABFFE) is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to booksellers who are faced with book challenges as well as subpoenas, search warrants, and other demands for customer information. In case of First Amendment emergency, please call ABFFE at (212) 587-4025 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday. During the evenings and weekends, call (800) 727-4203 or log on to www.abffe.com.
2. If faced with a challenge, you don't need to defend it alone. Recruit allies in your cause; alert the local media to the challenge. Local libraries and other local bookstores may also be a source of support as there is a good chance they too may be under fire. (See page 12 for a sample letter to the editor.)
3. Set up discussion groups inviting consumers, booksellers, and educators to share their thoughts and views on specific titles and their debatable topics. (See "Talking About Banned Books," pages 8–9.)
4. The best defense is often a good offense. Celebrate the First Amendment throughout the year, but especially during Banned Books Week (September 27–October 4, 2008). The poster, staff buttons, easel, and bookmarks in this kit can provide the foundation for a table or window display. Discuss the issues and objectives of Banned Books Week with your staff, especially new employees.



LIBRARIAN STRATEGIES

1. Be familiar with the Library Bill of Rights:
www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/statementsif/librarybillrights.htm
2. When faced with a challenge to a book in your collection, explain your selection process—and the legal protection of that policy—to the complainant. Advice from the ALA:

Each library has its own selection and collection development policies. . . . Selection is an inclusive process, in which librarians seek materials that will provide a broad range of viewpoints and subject matter. This means that while library collections have thousands of items families want, like and need, they also will have materials that some parents may find offensive to them or inappropriate for their children.

Because an item is selected does not mean the librarian endorses or promotes it. He or she is simply helping the library to fulfill its mission of providing information from all points of view. (Source: www.ala.org)

3. As public institutions, libraries cannot discriminate based on age, sex, race, or any other characteristic. Therefore, a library cannot legally restrict access to materials based on age—a common request of concerned adults in relation to children’s material.
4. Reach out to your local community and the local media. The library is a public institution and their goal is to serve the people. Incorporate the public because the books in your collection belong to all citizens.

TEACHER STRATEGIES

1. Know the full substance of the book you are assigning or reading aloud. Be ready to discuss controversial subjects with your students and be prepared to address parents’ concerns. Develop a written rationale to articulate the reasons for using a particular literary work in the classroom. According to the National Council of Teachers of English:

Rationale development should be a part of thoughtful planning for classroom instruction. If we have not reflected on the whys of what we teach, we will be unprepared to meet the needs and challenges of our students and to respond to potential complaints, either from parents or from others in the community who seek to influence the curriculum. . . .

(Source: www.ncte.org)

2. Provide parents with a copy of the written rationale, as proof of how the title in question fits into the curriculum. If a parent raises a challenge, advise them to read the entire book, and explain the danger of interpreting language or actions outside of the context of the story.
3. Talk to other teachers, librarians, guidance counselors, principals, and the board of education to explain the situation. Getting their support will make a big difference—multiple voices are louder than one.
4. Be familiar with your material selection policy, including local criteria, the methods for choosing materials, and who selects materials. Know your school’s method for dealing with complaints. Make sure the entire school staff is aware of the policy for handling challenges and will strictly adhere to these policies.



JUDY BLUME

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

When I began to write, 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.



Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret.
 ISBN: 978-0-440-40419-4 • \$6.50/\$8.99 Can. ♻️
 ISBN: 978-0-440-90419-9 • \$6.99/\$7.99 Can. ♻️

Blubber
 ISBN: 978-0-440-40707-2 • \$5.99/\$8.99 Can. ♻️

Deenie
 ISBN: 978-0-440-93259-8 • \$5.99/\$7.99 Can.

Tiger Eyes
 ISBN: 978-0-440-98469-6 • \$6.99/\$8.99 Can.

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)

ROBERT CORMIER

The critically acclaimed author of *The Chocolate War*

SOME THOUGHTS ON CENSORSHIP

+ I sympathize with the parents who want to have control over their own children. What their children should do, see, read. My wife and I exercised those kinds of controls. If [parents] object to their children reading *The Chocolate War*, I don't protest. But when they forbid other children from reading it, then I strongly object. This, in fact, is the censorship problem in its most basic concept. Telling other people what they can do, see, or read. Invading rights of individuals in a free country.

+ I try to write realistic stories about believable people, reflecting the world as it is, not as we wish it to be. I think there is room in the great halls of reading for this kind of book. The hundreds of letters I receive each year from both teachers and young people are what sustain me at moments when censorship threatens my work. I owe a great debt to the many teachers, librarians, and parents who support my work. The blessing is that in doing so they also strike blows for freedom. Freedom is what our nation stands for and what makes our country special.

+ The irony of book-banning attempts is that the publicity often causes people to read the books for the wrong reasons. If a book is controversial, perhaps the best place for it is the classroom where, under the guidance of a teacher, the book can be discussed and evaluated, where each student will be free to proclaim how he or she feels about the book and, in fact, can even refuse to read the book. The point is that free choice must be involved.

+ There are many victims of the censorship problem. Often, the children themselves suffer. There was a case in Massachusetts where the parents of a girl strongly objected to *The Chocolate War* and insisted that their daughter go to the school library when the book was being discussed in the classroom. A classmate of hers wrote to me of her dilemma. In his P.S., he added that she had read *The Chocolate War* a year earlier on her own. You see how impossible it is to protect young people from the world even when it is done by parents with the best of intentions? The world intrudes, whether through classmates or books and movies and television.



Daring to Disturb the Universe for More Than 30 Years

The Chocolate War
ISBN: 978-0-375-82987-1 • \$8.95/\$13.95 Can.
978-0-7393-5015-7 • \$26.00/\$34.00 Can. ☞

8 + 1
ISBN: 978-0-440-20838-9 • \$6.50/\$7.99 Can.

After the First Death
ISBN: 978-0-440-20835-8 • \$6.99/\$8.99 Can.

The Bumble Bee Flies Anyway
ISBN: 978-0-440-90871-5 • \$5.99/\$7.99 Can.

Beyond the Chocolate War
ISBN: 978-0-440-90580-6 • \$6.99/\$9.99 Can.

Fade
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ISBN: 978-0-440-21091-7 • \$5.50/\$7.99 Can.

Frenchtown Summer
ISBN: 978-0-440-22854-7 • \$5.99/\$8.99 Can.

Heroes
ISBN: 978-0-440-22769-4 • \$5.99/\$8.99 Can.

I Am the Cheese
ISBN: 978-0-440-94060-9 • \$6.99/\$9.99 Can.

In the Middle of the Night
ISBN: 978-0-440-22686-4 • \$6.50/\$9.99 Can.

Other Bells for Us to Ring
ISBN: 978-0-440-22862-2 • \$4.99/\$6.99 Can.

The Rag and Bone Shop
ISBN: 978-0-440-22971-1 • \$6.50/\$9.99 Can.
ISBN: 978-0-385-72962-8 • \$15.95/\$23.95 Can.

Tenderness
ISBN: 978-0-385-73133-1 • \$7.95/\$10.50 Can.

Tunes for Bears to Dance To
ISBN: 978-0-440-21903-3 • \$5.99/\$7.99 Can.

We All Fall Down
ISBN: 978-0-440-21556-1 • \$6.50/\$8.99 Can.



ZILPHA KEATLEY SNYDER

Three-time Newbery–winning author of *The Gypsy Game*,
The Headless Cupid, and *The Witches of Worm*

The Egypt Game, first published in 1968, has earned several awards, among them the Newbery Honor Book, an American Library Association Notable Book, first prize in the Spring Book Festival in New York, a Lewis Carroll Shelf Award, and a George C. Stone Recognition of Merit awarded by Claremont Graduate School. It has been only in the past several years that I have heard of any protests concerning the book’s subject matter.

The setting of the story is Berkeley, California, where I taught school for three years while my husband was a graduate student at University of California. All six of the main characters are loosely based on kids who were in my class at that time. I feel that one value of the book is that it deals with children from different ethnic backgrounds who, for the most part, interact well with each other. And whose problems, when they do occur, have nothing to do with race—as was true of the kids in my Berkeley classes.

To further explain the background of the story, I would have to go back to when I was in fifth and sixth grade and our teacher took us through several inspiring and fascinating studies of ancient civilizations: Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Chinese. I loved it all, and throughout my entire life, my understanding of history and literature and culture has been enhanced by facts I learned at that time.

But it was Egypt that I found most fascinating. I played my own version of the Egypt Game, made up my own hieroglyphic alphabet, collected things Egyptian, and walked the several miles to school as various Egyptian personalities, including Cleopatra and Queen Nefertiti.

My own Egyptian period passed and I went on to other phases and games. I was a great game player and I was constantly involved in complicated scenarios based on not only Greek and Egyptian history and mythology, but also on stories from the Bible and, of course, on a multitude of beloved novels. My mother, a devout Quaker lady, never seemed to confuse game playing with being involved in some kind of pernicious pseudoreligious ritual. And I am absolutely convinced that there is no better way for children to stretch their imaginations, and develop their creative instincts than to be involved in such imaginative game playing.

The point is, the Egypt Game, just as the title suggests, was a game! Nothing else is ever implied in the story. And at the end, when the girls realize they have covered most of the interesting aspects of Egyptian culture, they are beginning to be on the lookout for new inspirations: “What do you know about gypsies?”

And as to any connection with “occultism” or “idol worship,” I am astounded and appalled. I truly fear for children whose parents are so fearful. Will they forbid their children to learn about Greek and Roman mythology, other forms of legend and folklore, and even fairy tales because of such fears? I certainly hope not.

And a word about imaginative game playing in general, in my opinion a well-developed imagination is necessary not only for any kid of artistic endeavor, but also in many other career areas. Imaginative approaches to problem solving are necessary not only for a successful professional life, but also in the area of personal relationships.



LOIS LOWRY

The esteemed author of *The Giver*, *Gathering Blue*, and *The Messenger*

In my early years as a writer for young people, I occasionally received letters from people who wondered why I had used a “bad word” in a book. I always wrote back, explaining that an author tries to reflect reality, and so book characters have to speak the way real people would speak; it didn’t mean, I always explained, that the reader should speak that way, or that the author does.

When I wrote *The Giver*, it contained no so-called “bad words.” It was set, after all, in a mythical, futuristic, and Utopian society. Not only was there no poverty, divorce, racism, sexism, pollution, or violence in the world of *The Giver*, there was also careful attention paid to language: to its fluency, precision, and power.

The reaction to the book was startling. It was startling in the number of letters and responses I received almost immediately, but it was even *more* startling in the degree of differences in the responses.

- ✦ A Trappist monk wrote from his monastery that he and his brothers were reading the book as a Christian metaphor and finding it profoundly significant as a message of redemption.
- ✦ At about the same time, a parent in California demanded that it be taken off the library shelves of her child’s school because of its immorality.
- ✦ A private school in Michigan made it required reading not only for all the upper-school students, but for their parents.
- ✦ At the same time, a teacher wrote to me that the Newbery committee should be chastised for their awarding the 1994 medal to a sensationalistic piece of trash.
- ✦ The children of Belgium and France chose the book, in translation, as their favorite of the year.
- ✦ A parent wrote to me that I should be ashamed for exposing children to “messy data.”

What’s wrong with this picture? I found myself thinking.

I went back and re-read the book myself. I tried to figure out whether these disparate people were, in fact, all responding to the same thing: whether there was actually a theme in the book that people found either uplifting or terrifying, or maybe both. And I discovered that it was the concept of *choice*. *The Giver* is about a world where those decisions are made for them. It seems very safe and comfortable, and I bet a lot of parents—later to object and censor—liked the book until they were two-thirds of the way through it.

Then it got scary. It got scary—and they decided to take it away from their own kids—because it turned out that it *wasn’t* safe and comfy to live in a world where adhering to rigid rules is the norm. It turned out, in the book, that such a world is very, very dangerous, and that people have to learn to make their own choices.

I sympathize with the fear that makes some parents not want that to be true. But I believe without a single shadow of a doubt that it is necessary for young people to learn to make choices. Learning to make *right* choices is the only way they will survive in an increasingly frightening world. Pretending that there are no choices to be made—reading only books, for example, which are cheery and safe and nice—is a prescription for disaster for the young.

Submitting to censorship is to enter the seductive world of *The Giver*: the world where there are no bad words and no bad deeds. But it is also the world where choice has been taken away and reality distorted. And that is the most dangerous world of all.



Talking About Banned Books

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

—The First Amendment



Talking about censorship and specific book challenges is important for adults and young readers alike, whether in a book group setting at a library or bookstore or in a classroom.

When beginning any discussion on censorship issues, it is a good idea to be familiar with the terminology and issues:

What is censorship?

Censorship is the suppression of ideas and information that certain persons—individuals, groups, or government officials—find objectionable or dangerous.

What is the difference between a challenge and a banning?

A challenge is an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. A banning is the removal of those materials. Challenges do not simply involve a person expressing a point of view; rather, they are an attempt to remove materials from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others.

What is intellectual freedom?

Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause, or movement may be explored.

Why are books challenged?

Books usually are challenged with the best intentions—to protect others, frequently children, from difficult ideas and information. Censorship can be subtle, almost imperceptible, as well as blatant and overt, but nonetheless, harmful.

—The American Library Association

BOOKSELLERS/LIBRARIANS

Tips for a Discussion Leader in a Book Group

- + **Invite discussion** about the various themes of the chosen book. Remind readers to look at the full work and to not take challenged information out of context.
- + **Stress the importance of freedom of choice**—to pick up a book or reject it. Most readers will innately reject what they aren't ready for.
- + **Author meaning**—Ask book group members to think about what the author might have meant when he or she wrote the book. For instance, why might the author have chosen to include particular language?
- + **Opposing viewpoints or healthy discussion?** When there are conflicting opinions about the book being discussed, it is important to encourage opposing viewpoints so that all students understand that their views count. This is the very basis of the First Amendment!



Portions of Talking About Banned Books were written by Pat Scales,
Children Literature Consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

TEACHERS

Discussion Questions and Activities for the Classroom

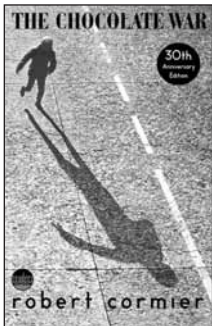
- + **Challenge vs. Censorship**—Have the class discuss the difference between a book challenge and censorship. How might a book challenge cause school officials to ultimately censor a book? Ask students to find out the school district's policy regarding issues related to questionable books and materials. Invite a school board member or a district official to speak to the class about local challenges.
- + **Dramatic Presentations**—Stage a talk show featuring a parental challenge to one of the books shown on the poster. The host or hostess of the show should give a brief synopsis of the book and an overview of the challenge. Guests should include: parents who oppose the book, parents who support the book, a school or public library board member, a librarian, and several young adults who have read the book. Ask students in the audience to be prepared with pertinent questions.

A Banned Books Week theme is “Let Freedom Read: Read a Banned Book.” After the class has participated in a thorough discussion about the First Amendment and the freedom to read, ask them to prepare a dramatic interpretation of the Banned Books Week theme. Encourage them to perform for a PTA group and other classes in their school.

- + **Essay Writing**—Contrast the meaning of intellectual freedom and censorship. Have students write an essay that explains the thought that intellectual freedom is about respect, and censorship about disrespect.
- + **Let the Press Know!** Encourage students to write an editorial for the local newspaper about Banned Books Week and teenagers' right to read.

DARE TO DISTURB THE UNIVERSE

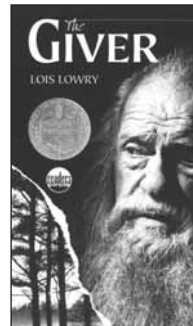
Thought-Provoking Book Group Discussion Questions



Robert Cormier
THE CHOCOLATE WAR

An uncompromising portrait of conformity and corruption, this is a bestselling—and provocative—young adult classic.

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Ages 12 up



Lois Lowry
THE GIVER

In Jonas's perfect world, everything is under control. There is no war or fear or pain. But when Jonas learns the truth, there is no turning back.

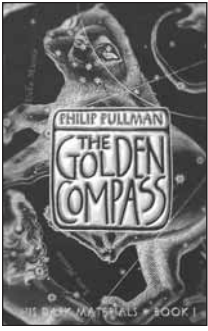
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978-0-8072-6203-0 • \$28.00/\$36.00 Can. • Listening Library Compact Disc ♻️
Ages 12 up

- + Jerry likes the poster in his locker that says “Do I Dare Disturb the Universe?” Although at first, he doesn’t understand the meaning of it. At what point in the novel does it appear that Jerry is beginning to get the meaning of the poster? Why do you think Jerry decides not to sell the chocolates even after his assignment is over? Have you ever dared to “disturb the universe?” What happened?
- + Robert Cormier’s books have been under attack by censors for his “negative portrayal of human nature,” and because the endings appear hopeless since the good guys don’t always win. Cormier responded to this criticism by stating that he was simply writing realistically. Discuss the responsibility of the writer to present life as it is.

- + Underneath the placid calm of Jonas’s society lies a very orderly and inexorable system of euthanasia, practiced on the very young who do not conform, the elderly, and those whose errors threaten the stability of the community. What are the disadvantages and benefits of a community that accepts such a vision of euthanasia?
- + Examine the ways in which Jonas’s community uses euphemism to distance itself from the reality of “Release.” How does our own society use euphemism to distance us from such realities as aging and death, bodily functions, and political activities? What are the benefits and disadvantages of such uses of language?



For extensive discussion guides on all of these books and more, visit www.randomhouse.com/teachers



Philip Pullman
THE GOLDEN COMPASS

Philip Pullman's intriguing and haunting His Dark Materials trilogy sends fantasy lovers on an incredible journey through other worlds where they meet mysterious creatures and a brave and extraordinary 12-year-old girl, Lyra Belacqua, who has the power to seek truth.

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978-0-440-23813-3 • \$7.50/\$9.99 Can. • Dell Laurel-Leaf
978-0-440-41832-0 • \$7.50/\$9.99 Can. • Dell Yearling
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978-0-8072-0471-9 • \$29.95/\$37.95 Can. • Listening Library Compact Disc
Ages 12 up

- + The common elements of fantasy include good vs. evil, magic, dangerous quests, and more. What are some of the moral lessons learned in works of fantasy? How does fantasy relate to the real world?
- + Discuss why fantasy is often targeted by censors. What is a good rebuttal to someone who believes that the young shouldn't read works of fantasy, including Pullman's high-fantasy classics, *The Golden Compass* and the other novels in the His Dark Materials trilogy?

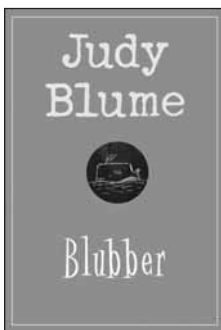


Lois Duncan
KILLING MR. GRIFFIN

The plan was only to scare their English teacher. . . . They never actually intended to kill Mr. Griffin. But sometimes plans go wrong.

978-0-440-94515-4 • \$6.50/\$7.99 Can. • Dell Laurel-Leaf
Ages 12 up

- + In *Killing Mr. Griffin*, Susan is striving to be accepted by the kids at school, and Mark uses his handsome looks and popularity as leadership skills to get Susan and the others to go along with the plan to abduct Mr. Griffin. How is Susan considered an outsider? How does her desire to be accepted affect her behavior? How do Mark's qualities make him a leader with devastating results?
- + The teenagers in *Killing Mr. Griffin* make very bad decisions that lead them into a life of guilt and lies. What consequences do these teens face for their deceit? At what point do the characters acknowledge that they are responsible for their actions?



Judy Blume
BLUBBER

Blubber is a good name for her, the note from Wendy says about Linda. Jill crumples it up and leaves it on the corner of her desk. But then Robby grabs the note, and before Linda is done talking, it has gone halfway around the room.

978-0-440-40707-2 • \$5.99/\$8.99 Can. • Dell Yearling
Ages 8–12

- + *Blubber* has sometimes been attacked by censors because of the way the kids treat each other and the language some of the characters use. Bullies seek attention to feel important and feed their low self-esteem by being mean to others. Wendy, the most popular girl in Mrs. Minish's fifth-grade class, is a bully. How would you describe Wendy? How does Wendy misuse her popularity? Why does Jill fall to Wendy's power?
- + Describe Jill and Tracy's friendship. How is Tracy more perceptive about Wendy than Jill? Would Tracy have participated in bullying Linda if she were in Mrs. Minish's class? How is it sometimes easier to see through a situation from the outside?

“[I]t'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.”

—Judy Blume



Sample Letter to the Editor

When fighting censorship it is important to remember you are not alone. Reaching out for help is one of the first steps when dealing with a banned book. The media can serve as a great source of support. By filling out this form letter and sending it to various newspapers, magazines, and other media outlets, you can begin to spread the word and form a united front against censorship.

Dear (Name):

As you know, (Organization) has recently challenged the right of the children of our community to read (Book/Author). In a way, this is an honor—(Book) takes its place beside other books that have been banned, titles including such classics as *Little House on the Prairie*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Hamlet*, and *Of Mice and Men*. Certainly, (Book) is in august company.

Censorship—the suppression of ideas or other information that a portion of the population finds objectionable—is an abrogation of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America. It is this amendment that guarantees us the right to free speech, and by extension, freedom to read. When censorship is applied to what our children read, even for what appears to be the noblest of motives, we teach the young a far more harmful lesson than any work of literature ever could. We teach that a few can disrupt the rights of all. We teach our children that they are not capable of learning to think for themselves, to make considered and thought-out decisions. We teach that conformity is worth more than true learning.

This is a lesson we cannot support.

The American Library Association, the American Booksellers Association, the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, the Association of American Publishers, the American Society of Journalists and Authors, the National Coalition Against Censorship, The Center for the Book, and The Library of Congress are just a few of the organizations that agree with us. So does the U.S. Constitution. The First Amendment states simply and clearly: “Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.”

We are writing to invite your support for our children’s constitutional right. Our children deserve the best we can offer—limitless ideas and the freedom to read about them.

Sincerely,

To download a copy of this letter, go to
www.firstaidfirstamendment.com



The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The following organizations can assist your defense against attempts at censorship:

The American Booksellers Foundation
for Freedom of Expression
139 Fulton Street, Suite 302
New York, NY 10038
(212) 587-4025
www.abffe.com
www.kidspeakonline.org

American Civil Liberties Union
125 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004-2400
(212) 549-2500
www.aclu.org

American Library Association
Office for Intellectual Freedom
50 E. Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
1-800-545-2433
www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/aboutoif

First Amendment Schools
Association for Supervision and
Curriculum Development
1703 N. Beauregard Street
Alexandria, VA 22311-1714
(703) 575-5475
www.firstamendmentschools.org

International Reading Association
800 Barksdale Rd.
PO Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139
(302) 731-1600
www.reading.org

National Coalition Against Censorship
275 7th Ave
New York, NY 10001
(212) 807-6222
www.ncac.org

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, IL 61801-1096
www.ncte.org

People for the American Way
2000 M Street NW, Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 467-4999
Fax: (202) 293-2672
www.pfaw.org

