



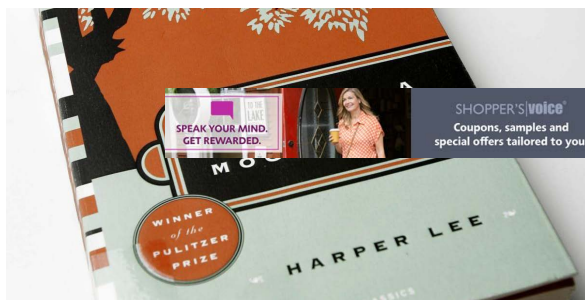
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Ginnie Graham: Honor independent thought with a banned book

By Ginnie Graham Editorial Writer 7 hrs ago



"To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee is often banned for use of the n-word. Tulsa World file

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Top 10 Challenged Books of 2017

1. "Thirteen Reasons Why," by Jay Asher. Originally published in 2007, the young adult bestseller hit the list after Netflix aired a series by the same name. It was banned in multiple school districts for discussion suicide.
2. "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian," by Sherman Alexie. The National Book Award winner portrays poverty, alcoholism and sexuality and includes profanity and sexually explicit situations.
3. "Drama," by Raina Telgemeier. The Stonewall Honor Award-winning 2012 graphic novel includes LGBTQ characters and some complaints deemed it "confusing."
4. "The Kite Runner," by Khaled Hosseini. The multi-generational novel was challenged for its sexual violence and thought to "lead to terrorism" and "promote Islam."
5. "George," by Alex Gino. This Lambda Literary Award-winning book for elementary ages drew criticism for including a transgender child.
6. "Sex is a Funny Word," by Cory Silverberg and illustrated by Fiona Smyth. The children's book was written by a certified sex educator. It has

Growing up, if a book had been banned or needed parental permission to read, that was — well, still is — my first choice.

It's how I knew Holden Caulfield of "The Catcher in the Rye" needed to stop whining and get a job; and that a sixth-grader named Margaret was constantly asking if God was there; and that women could lose their identity to social politics by becoming handmaidens in a tale by Margaret Atwood.

Banned and often-challenged books are the best, but I've been slacking.

Of last year's 10 most challenged and banned books in the U.S., I can only check off two: "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee (No. 7) and "The Absolutely True Story of a Part-Time Indian" by Sherman Alexie (No. 2).

It's Banned Books Week: time to honor the writers and books making us think, cringe, debate and feel.

Tulsa's Jeff Martin, founder of Booksmart Tulsa and the Magic City Books at 221 E. Archer St., cited "Lord of the Flies," "Lolita" and "The Outsiders" as his favorite most-challenged books.

"One of the key missions of what we do at Magic City Books and what I did for nearly a decade through Booksmart Tulsa was to talk about things that are going on in the world right now and bring in writers tackling controversial topics and themes," Martin said.

"In many ways, every week is Banned Books Week. We have to be constantly on our toes to protect freedom of expression, the things we agree with and, more importantly, the things we don't."

As a fun exercise, Magic City Books asked people [on its Facebook page](#) about their favorite banned books.



Most Popular

- 1 Letter to the Editor: Claims made by Walmart about eye care aren't true
- 2 Risha Talks: What do black people do that irritate white people? I got hundreds of responses to that question.
- 3 Letter to the Editor: Don't use term 'massacre' to describe the 1921 Tulsa race riot
- 4 Ryan Walters: Oklahoma's governor's office doesn't have enough power
- 5 Bruce Plante Cartoon: New drink for Cosby

Meet the newsroom



Wayne Greene: Editorial pages editor



Write A Letter To The Editor

Letters to the editor are encouraged. Each letter must include the author's name, mailing address and daytime telephone number.

The author's name and city of residence will be used if the letter is used in print or online.

Addresses and phone numbers will not be published. Letters have a 250-word limit.

Letters may be edited for length, style and grammar. Send to letters@tulsaworld.com.

drawn challenges for its topic of sex education, with some people believing it will lead to children wanting to have sex or ask questions about sex.

7. "To Kill a Mockingbird," by Harper Lee. The Pulitzer Prize-winning American classic continues to draw challenges for depictions of violence and use of the n-word.

8. "The Hate U Give," by Angie Thomas. The young adult novel was banned in some school libraries and curriculum for being "pervasively vulgar" with scenes of drug use, profanity and offensive language.

9. "And Tango Makes Three," by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson and illustrated by Henry Cole. This children's book, published in 2005 features a same-sex relationship.

10. "I Am Jazz," by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings and illustrated by Shelagh McNicholas. The autobiographical picture book, co-written by the 13-year-old protagonist, addresses gender identity.

Source: American Library Association Office of Intellectual Freedom tracked 416 books challenged or banned in 2017 in libraries, schools and universities.

Owasso Library banned books event

4:30 p.m. Thursday at the Owasso Library, 103 W. Broadway

Celebrate by decorating a backpack. Ages 10-18.

String backpack and supplies provided.

Registration is required by calling 918-549-7323.

"The Perks of Being a Wallflower" was the top pick for Pat Cawiezell, the store's buyer and event coordinator.

Most popular were "To Kill a Mockingbird," "Catcher in the Rye" (J.D. Salinger), "The Color Purple" (Alice Walker), "Portney's Complaint" (Philip Roth), "Huckleberry Finn" (Mark Twain) and the "Harry Potter" series (J.K. Rowling).

Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum is an avid reader but says he doesn't read much fiction, preferring history, biographies and politics. But, then he found a familiar title on a most-challenged list.

"I saw 'All the King's Men' by Robert Penn Warren on a list, and that is one of my all-time favorites," Bynum said. "It is the story of a guy who gets into politics for all the right reasons and is slowly corrupted by the pursuit of power.

"I've seen it happen in real life plenty of times, and I always reference Willie Stark when it happens; so many lessons in that book."

The American Library Association compiles an annual list of most-challenged and banned books.

In Tulsa, the libraries don't receive a lot of challenges to the books in their collections. When they do, the reasons are sometimes peculiar.

In Tulsa Public Schools, a complaint was made last November about a French-language dictionary containing more nudity on statues and art than American publishers use in its dictionaries.

The French are cool with nakedness? Who knew? TPS wisely retained the resource book.

The only other TPS challenge was made in October 2015 of Raina Telgemeier's "Drama," which is also at No. 3 on the national list because of its LGBTQ characters. TPS opted to keep the book available to students 5th grade and older.

I remember seeing my daughter reading Telgemeier novels. I asked her why adults might not like this one.

"That's crazy," she said. "I love that book. There is a gay character in it, but he's a friend. There might be some homophobic parents out there or something. The book is so good, and everything at the end turns out nice and sweet."

This is a proud parenting moment. That's what I want my kids to get from books; a greater view of the world and independent thought.

At the Tulsa City-County Library, since Jan. 1, 2017, only four challenges were lodged; all against materials in the adult section.

"The City Baker's Guide to Country Living" by Louise Miller has some f-bombs; Christine Feehan's "Wild Cat" is sexually explicit; "Communism for Kids" by Bini Adamczak seems like propaganda for indoctrinating youth; and Hillary L. Chute's "Graphic Women" was too graphic.

If we banned everything that had cursing, I'd never see half my uncles. And, the Feehan book jacket states "passions explode" among characters.

Mail to Tulsa World, Letters to the Editor, Box 1770, Tulsa, OK 74102.

For more information, call 918-581-8330 Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Write a Readers Forum column

Op'd space in the Tulsa World is limited. To preserve the space for the pieces we think our readers will most appreciate, we have these guidelines for submissions:

1. Op/eds should be about public policy issues not personalities.
2. They should be debatable in nature: They should take a stance that some but not all of our readers would agree with.
3. They should not be in direct response to previous op/ed columns, syndicated columns, letters to the editor or Tulsa World editorials. The proper forum for such responses is our letter to the editor space.
4. They should come from authors who are authoritative on the topic or offer some unique identifiable perspective.
5. They should be to be about 600 words long.
6. They cannot be election endorsements or un-endorsements, although at times the editorial department will solicit op/ed columns on both sides of an election for publication.
7. They cannot be product endorsement.
8. They should come from an author who lives within our circulation area.
9. They should not have been published elsewhere or submitted for publication elsewhere.
10. They cannot be libelous, incendiary or offensive to broad portions of our readership.
11. They should be accompanied with an electronic photo of the author for publication.

These are not hard-and-fast rules. Sometimes, typically because of relative light demand for op/ed space, the editorial editor may waive one or more of the guidelines. At times of high demand, he may not be able to do so.

Columns should be submitted to: wayne.greene@tulsaworld.com

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Communism in the title pretty much tells you what it's about. And "graphic" is literally in the title of the Chute book, so it expect it to be graphic.

A committee recommended retaining each in the appropriately placed adult section, citing critical reviews and good circulation. Another wise decision.

Just because a person doesn't like something doesn't mean it should be taken away from others.

Having a Banned Books Week comes down to the protection of our First Amendment and encouragement to engage with uncomfortable thoughts.

In times of strife and upheaval, it's books that can lead a way to peace and understanding.

Get the Morning Read newsletter in your inbox each morning with the top stories.

Ginnie Graham | Editorial Writer Ginnie Graham

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- Classifieds
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- Homes
- Jobs
- Browse job categories
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