

CENSORSHIP CHALLENGES Q2 FY09 – 1/20/09

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Quarter 2 FY2009 was relatively mild in terms of challenges. We fielded 5 fewer challenges (10 in FY09 versus 15 in FY08), although 2 of these challenges were for multiple texts. It's significant to note that 4 of the 10 challenges concerned AP texts, a trend that seems to be growing, not only according to NCTE statistics but also according to those issued by the National Coalition Against Censorship, as reported by executive director Joan Bertin in "Book Censorship 2008: A View from the Trenches," in *RHI: Censorship & Banned Books*, Volume 3, No. 1.

We worked with one of our local school districts in Champaign, Illinois, to resolve an August challenge to Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. The novel was used as a summer reading choice for 10th grade AP students in the district and a parent objected to the rape scene that occurs early in the story. The parent refused an alternative reading for her student and took the challenge through the reconsideration process. The district reconsideration committee of teachers, parents, administrators, and students sent forth a unanimous recommendation to the school board to retain the novel. However, the board voted instead to restrict the novel to students in grades 10 and below. After the vote, community members, teachers and administrators petitioned the board to change its mind, which it did during its December meeting. Millie Davis sat on the reconsideration committee meeting with the parent and testified on behalf of NCTE at the December board meeting, both at the invitation of district personnel. See [http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=CNGB&p_theme=cngb&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&s_dispstring=kite%20runner%20AND%20date\(all\)&p_field_advanced-0=&p_text_advanced-0=\(kite%20runner\)&xcal_numdocs=20&p_perpage=10&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=CNGB&p_theme=cngb&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&s_dispstring=kite%20runner%20AND%20date(all)&p_field_advanced-0=&p_text_advanced-0=(kite%20runner)&xcal_numdocs=20&p_perpage=10&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no)

What students choose to read from classroom libraries has been the source of several challenges over the past year, including the nationally publicized Texas challenge of a year ago. This quarter we worked with the Office of Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association on one of this quarter's challenges as well as on an inquiry about policies for classroom libraries, suggesting how the teacher might combine ALA and NCTE policies into a policy governing her classroom library.

Once again we had an inquiry from a teacher seeking to obtain many rationales at no cost for use in preparing her curriculum. NCTE, of course, has two CDs of several hundred rationales for purchase but we also have several hundred rationales in our files that are only available to those undergoing challenges. The teacher sought rationales from both groups. While we were able to suggest she purchase the CDs, we were unable to provide her with the file rationales, which we reserve for those who are undergoing challenges.

NCTE's Anti-Censorship Resources

The [NCTE Anti-Censorship Website](#) is the first stop resource center for those who are experiencing censorship challenges or looking to develop challenge policies. All who contact NCTE receive email, telephone, or fax responses, including rationales, policies, advice, and letters when requested. Many have visited the website before calling or filling out a Censorship Challenge Report.

If you are experiencing a challenge to materials or methods, or if you know someone who is, visit the [NCTE website](#), click on the "Report a Censorship Incident" option, and fill out the report, or call Millie Davis at 800-369-6283, extension 3634, (or 217-278-3634).

Also note that NCTE now has two CD's of rationales for challenged texts available for purchase: [Volume 1](#) and [Volume 2](#).

Quarter 2 FY2009 Challenges

Find below a chart comparing the Quarter 2FY2009 and the Quarter 2 FY2008 challenges and numbers of challenged works. Below that is a listing of Quarter 2 challenges alphabetically by the title of the text challenged. A few things to know as you compare the numbers in the chart are the following:

- Number of challenges = number of individuals who reported challenges.
- Number of works challenged is usually higher because often challenges involve more than one work.
- The bimonthly *SLATE Newsletter* goes to all NCTE members and features Censorship Challenge Reports, such as this one, by quarter.

CENSORSHIP CHALLENGES COMPARISION Q2 FY08 AND Q2 FY09

October 2008	November 2008	December 2008	Q2 FY2009 Totals
7 challenges , 13+ texts, including one to several titles from the ALA Quick Picks for Reluctant Readers, 1 request on obtaining rationales	1 challenge , 3 texts	2 challenges , 2 texts, 1 request for classroom library policy, testimony before Champaign School Board	10 challenges , 18+ texts, 1 request to obtain rationales, 1 request for classroom library policy, testimony before Champaign School Board
October 2007	November 2007	December 2007	Q2 FY2008 Totals
15 challenges , including 2 library challenges, 1 challenge to remove all books with word "nigger" in them from school, 1 student production of a play, the big Nitro, West Virginia Challenge, and 1 challenge in a dual-credit course / 3 requests for information	7 challenges , including 2 library challenges and the big Tuscola, Texas challenge / 1 who wanted to challenge a book/ 1 request for information	5 challenges	27 challenges / 4 requests for information

Listing of 2nd Quarter FY2009 Challenges Reported - October-December 2008

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian, Sherman Alexie (WI). Sent rationale and resources.

ALA quick picks for reluctant readers, various books offered as optional reading (10th grade, KY). Offered assistance.

Beloved, Toni Morrison (AP English, NC) controversial. Sent rationale and resources.

The Bluest Eye, Toni Morrison (AP English, NC) controversial. Sent rationale and resources.

The Bluest Eye, Toni Morrison (11th grade AP English, IN) sexual content. Sent rationales and resources.

The Catcher in the Rye, J. D. Salinger (AP English, NC) controversial. Sent rationale and resources.

Chinese Handcuffs, Chris Crutcher (11th grade AP English, IN) vulgar language. Sent rationales and resources.

The Color Purple, Alice Walker (AP English, NC) controversial. Sent rationale and resources.

In Country, Bobbie Ann Mason (11th grade AP English, IN) sexual content. Sent rationales and resources.

The Giver, Lois Lowry (7th grade, IA). Sent rationale and resources.

Going After Cacciato, Tim O'Brien (AP English, NC) controversial. Sent rationale and resources.

Kaffir Boy, Mark Mathabane (9th grade Pre-AP English, MN) child prostitution incident. Sent rationale and resources.

The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini, (AP English, NC) controversial. Sent rationale and resources.

Nintendo Power Magazine, Nov 2008, (6th to 8th grades, OH) cover inappropriate. Offered to write letter of support.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Ken Kessey (11th grade English curriculum, PA) racism. Sent rationale and resources.

The Secret Life of Bees, Sue Monk Kidd (9th grade Pre-AP English, TX) language. Sent rationale and resources.

The Things They Carried, Tim O'Brien (11th grade curriculum, VA) language. Sent rationale and resources.

The Things They Carried, Tim O'Brien (AP English, NC) controversial. Sent rationale and resources.