

Censorship Challenge Report – Quarter 2 FY2012

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In terms of numbers of challenges, Quarter 2 of FY2012 was much quieter than the same time last year or even the year before. However, this quarter we saw challenges that have been thornier and more time consuming to handle. In at least three instances, policies for handling the challenge were either nonexistent or in place but ignored. Nothing is more difficult than trying to handle a book challenge without a policy because decisions to ban or keep the text are usually made in an arena of personal opinion rather than based on criteria defining what’s good to have in the curriculum or library. NCTE’s [Students' Right to Read](#) is a great resource that outlines reasons books shouldn’t be censored but what to do if they’re challenged. In addition, classroom and library texts are at risk when schools and districts don’t have or observe a selection policy for texts. NCTE’s [Guidelines for Selection of Materials in English Language Arts Programs](#) provides a good model selection process for schools to adopt. Both of these NCTE positions are recommended as resources to those who come to NCTE with a challenge.

Two challenges where existent policies were initially ignored are still underway (for the *Bone series*, *Beloved*, and *Waterland*), and in a Wyoming district, the good news is that new policies have been developed. So far, one challenge from this quarter has been positively resolved.

Recently, the Tucson School District has decided to ban a long list of books from its classrooms, citing compliance with an Arizona law about forbidding ethnic studies courses in the schools. The list of books includes those by many well known authors. NCTE will be working with others to protest this decision and the story of this challenge will be told in the FY2012 Quarter 3 report.

Below is a chart comparing the Quarter 2 FY2012 and the Quarter 2 FY2011 challenges and numbers of challenged texts. Below that a list of the works challenged this quarter.

CENSORSHIP CHALLENGES COMPARISON Q2 FY12 AND Q2 FY11

A few things to know as you compare the numbers 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 quarterly Censorship Challenge Reports are featured on the [NCTE Anti-Censorship Website](#)*

October 2011	November 2011	December 2011	Q2 FY2012 Totals
3 challenges , 3 texts	2 challenges , 2 texts; 1 request for assistance on writing district policies for selection and challenge; 1 interview with student on book censorship	2 challenges , 3+ texts	7 challenges, 8+ texts; 1 request for assistance on writing district policies for selection and challenge; 1 interview with student on book censorship
October 2010	November 2010	December 2010	Q2 FY2011 Totals

2 challenges , 2 texts	8 challenges , 14 texts, 2 challenges to teaching methods, 2 reporter calls	3 challenges , 3+ texts	13 challenges , 19+ texts, 2 challenges to teaching methods, 2 reporter calls
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Listing of 2nd Quarter Challenges Reported October-December, 2011

Beloved, Toni Morrison (11/12 AP English, MI). Sent rationale,resources, and a letter to the school board.

The Bluest Eye, Toni Morrison (11th grade honors, CT). Sex scenes and profanity. Sent rationale and resources.

Bone Series (4th book,The Dragonslayer, Jeff Smith (library, NM). Smoking & drinking. Sent resources.

Feed, M. T. Anderson (9th grade English, OH). Sent rationale and resources. **Retained without limitations.**

The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini (10th grade, NY). Curriculum committee does not want to approve as a text. Sent resources.

Model selection policies, (WY). Sent resources. **Rewrote board policy around selection of materials book challenge procedures.**

Speak, Laurie Anderson (HS, Canada). Parent complaint. Sent rationale and resources.

The Things They Carried, Tim O'Brien (PA). Sent rationale and resources.

Waterland, Graham Swift (11/12 AP English, MI). Sexual experimentation. Sent resources.