

Censorship Challenge Report – Quarter 4 FY2011

Millie Davis

As we approached the end of school, censorship challenge reports wound down with only three in April, six in May, and none in June. This number is one less than the same as for the same period last year. We'll have a bit of a respite now until August when schools return from the summer break and the challenges to summer reading list texts begin. We worked on [one challenge](#) with the National Coalition Against Censorship and other first amendment groups this quarter.

Challenge reports this quarter have been for newer texts that have not often been reported, with the exception of the one reported challenge for *The Perks of Being A Wallflower* and yet another for *The Absolutely True Diary of A Part Time Indian*. In fact, Sherman Alexie and his novel *The Absolutely True Diary of A Part Time Indian* have been under fire all year and NCTE has worked with one case in each quarter with mixed results. Recently a review committee in the state of Washington retained the book in the senior English curriculum while last summer and fall a long, public battle in Missouri resulted in the book being banned from the curriculum and the libraries. This quarter's Nebraska challenge is as yet unresolved but the second quarter challenge in Montana—public as the Missouri challenge was—resulted in the novel being retained in the curriculum. Recently Alexie wrote [a response](#) in the Wall Street Journal to an article by [Megan Cox Gurdon](#) that suggested that young adult literature was just too bleak. Her article was strongly refuted by YA advocates nationwide in a huge social media response (#YAsaves on Twitter and numerous blogs including by NCTE members [Donalyn Miller](#) and [Teri Lesesne](#)). But the battle lines seem to have been drawn over this issue of whether young people should read books that cover difficult material and feature less than upstanding characters or whether they should be given a steady diet of what might be described as “sunshine” books or “happily ever after books.”

This quarter, in fulfilling a member request, I rediscovered the [NCTE SLATE Starter Sheet](#) that lists and describes the legal cases that form the basis for the legal protection of the students' right to read.

Below is a chart comparing the Quarter 4 FY2011 and the Quarter 4 FY2010 challenges and numbers of challenged texts. Below that a list of the works challenged this quarter. And, below that a list of any challenge results we've received since the last report.

CENSORSHIP CHALLENGES COMPARISION Q2 FY11 AND Q2 FY10

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 Censorship Challenge Reports by quarter are posted on the NCTE website. See <http://www.ncte.org/action/anti-censorship/reports>*

April 2011	May 2011	June 2011	Q4 FY2011 Totals
3 challenges/3 works	6 challenges/6 works/1 request for information	0 challenges	8 challenges/ 9 works
April 2010	May 2010	June 2010	Q4 FY2010 Totals
5 challenges / 1 advice & materials on content ratings for books	3 challenges including the book expurgation	3 challenges / 1 request for rationales	13 challenges / 18++ works / 1 request for rationales, 1 interview on banned books, 1 request for help with a parent petition to put content ratings on all texts.

Listing of 4th Quarter Challenges Reported April-June 30, 2011

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

After the First Death, Robert Cormier (9th grade honors banned book week project, NY). Explicit sexual and violent material. Sent rationale and resources.

Angels in America, Tony Kushner (11th grade AP, CA). Depiction of Mormons, sexuality. Signed letter with other groups.

Girl Interrupted, Susanna Kaysen (9th grade honors banned book week project, NY). Explicit sexual and violent material. Sent rationale and resources.

Monster, Walter Dean Myers (9th grade honors banned book week project, NY). Sexual and violent material. Sent rationale and resources.

Nineteen Minutes, Jodi Picoult (9th grade honors banned book week project, NY). Sexual and violent material. Sent rationale and resources.

Perks of Being A Wallflower, Stephen Chbosky (9th grade honors banned book week project, NY). Explicit sexual and violent material. Sent rationale and resources.

The Poisonwood Bible, Barbara Kingsolver (12th grade English IVAP, TX). Negative view of religion. Sent resources. Approved for summer reading or curriculum for English IVAP.

Rainbow Boys, Alex Sanchez (9th grade honors banned book week project, NY). Explicit sexual and violent material. Sent rationale and resources.

Outcomes of Previous Challenges

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian, Sherman Alexie (senior English, WA). Review Committee upheld approval to teach the book in Senior English curriculum.

The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini (9th grade, CO). Resolved: Parents have option to choose an alternative assignment.

The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini (10th grade English, AZ). Retained for reading list

A Long Way Gone, Ishmael Beah (10th grade English, AZ). Retained for reading list

An Ordinary Man, Paul Rusesabagina and Tom Zoellner (10th grade English, AZ). Retained for reading list

Persepolis, Marjane Satrapi (10th grade English, AZ). Retained for reading list

Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe (10th grade English, AZ). Retained for reading list

They Called Themselves the KKK, Susan Campbell Bartoletti (8th grade classroom library, TN). Retained.