

# Why and how censorship lead to ignorance in young people

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



When my 8th grade English teacher told me that *To Kill a Mockingbird* had been banned in many middle school classrooms in America I was shocked. I later learned that this was because of the strong racial themes present in the time that the story takes place, the 1930s. Though before then I had never heard of the idea of books being banned.

I thought that the schools who banned the book were making a grave error in banning such a good and educational book; I mean, if I'm allowed to learn about those ideas in my History class, then why should those ideas be banned in my English class? For this reason and many more, banning books in high school libraries limits education and causes young people to become ignorant of the sometimes harsh realities of life. Though Ray Bradbury is against the censorship of books, in *Fahrenheit 451* the fire chief, Beatty, makes the argument that many censored books contain controversial ideas which upset certain groups of people: " Don't step on the toes of the dog-lovers, the cat-lovers, doctors, lawyers, merchants, chiefs, Mormons, Baptists, Unitarians, second-generation Chinese, Swedes, Italians, Germans, Texans, Brooklynites, Irishmen, people from Oregon or Mexico. The people in this book, this play, this TV serial are not meant to represent any actual painters, cartographers, mechanics anywhere. The bigger your market, Montag, the less you handle controversy, remember that! All the minor minor minorities with their navels to be kept clean" (54). This quote is from Beatty's conversation with Montag about how things came to be the way they are in the society of F451. While this is a valid argument, Bradbury disproves this argument when later in the book Faber makes the argument that without controversial ideas people stop wanting information about the

world at all if it isn't happy news which forms a bubble around each individual which "protects" them from reality: "Patience, Montag. Let the war turn off the 'families.' Our civilization is flinging itself to pieces. Stand back from the centrifuge" (84).

This is what causes the ultimate destruction of the main city of F451. In short, Bradbury argues that censorship ultimately leads to ignorance even among adults which shows that this argument would also hold true for teens. He is saying that this ignorance will ultimately lead to the destruction of society. A reason that many people give for the banning of controversial books in high school libraries is that they promote inappropriate ideas about sexuality. These ideas and themes include LGBTQ characters, nudity, rape, and other sexually explicit content (10 Reasons Books are Challenged and Banned). Many school administrators say that teens are too young to learn about these things. This argument is unsubstantiated because it doesn't account for the fact that high school is the time when teens are supposed to be informed about these topics and learn how, though in the case of rape not, to do it. The argument that these sexual ideas are inappropriate is a false one because high school teens will soon be at the age when they will be able to experience those things; books containing this material can prepare teens to deal with those situations. Though the argument can be made that these books will corrupt teens' perceptions of these topics when combined with a sexual education class where students are free to ask questions this will not happen. If the high school doesn't offer sex ed then students can always come to their parents with questions. If these books are

read in tandem with a sexual education class or with the help of a parent, teens will understand the book even better and learn what is and isn't acceptable. These school administrations, as stated perfectly by Sherman Alexie in his article titled: *Why the Best Kids Books Are Written in Blood*, "are simply trying to protect their privileged notions of what literature is and should be" (Alexie 2). Finally, controversial books shouldn't be banned in high school libraries because while people may say that themes of rape, racism, physical abuse, drugs, and alcohol might cause teens to start doing those things (10 Reasons Books are Challenged and Banned), they are underestimating the capacity of high school students to understand what they are reading. When a high school student reads a book, they already have shown that they are interested in seeking information or learning about a story. While reading YA novels, or novels in general, usually students will take the themes exhibited in the book and think about them. When some of the aforementioned ideas or themes appear in books while reading teens have a chance to think about the topic and usually, the story shows the reader how badly people's lives are impacted by their bad choices.

For example, in the book *Thirteen Reasons Why*, there are strong themes of suicide as this is what the story centers around. When reading this book high school students wouldn't be inclined to kill themselves as the book doesn't encourage suicide; if anything, it allows teens who are contemplating suicide to think about their decision and if it's really worth it. To finish, censorship of books in high school libraries is something that limits the growth of students intellectually and sexually. Censorship also limits the capacity, ability, and

will of teens to think for themselves about controversial topics; it prevents them from accessing novels that contain ideas that will help them form a well-advised opinion. Young adult books allow students to learn about these things by providing examples of what not to do and the outcomes of those actions. In addition, the cultural critics who are advocating for these bans are assuming that high school teens aren't ready for the strong, explicit themes present in young adult novels (10 Reasons Books are Challenged and Banned); this ideology, as stated previously, displays great ignorance on the part of the critics. Hopefully, this paper has shown at least some of the reasons why and how censorship is something that will ultimately lead to ignorance in young people and a lack of education about the explicit ideas and themes seen in YA novels and, more importantly, the real world.

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