

## Banned Books: To Read or not to Read

“Yes, books are dangerous. They should be dangerous. They contain ideas.”-Pete Hautman. Banned books, usually described as “dangerous” or “immoral,” should not be avoided. Rather, these books should be seen as educational instruments to help us learn about life like any other book. Banned books teach us about the world and how it is seen through another’s perspective. They help us understand how others are thinking and allow us to immerse ourselves into their imagination. We should embrace the gift of another’s thoughts when given to us on a silver platter.

In every book there are ideas; in fact, it’s inevitable that *all* books contain ideas. These ideas *can* be different than what your ideas of the subject might be, and, these ideas *can* offend you. For instance, on the banned list is *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. You would think that, being historically accurate, the racially derogative text, in parts of the book, would be understandable; it was not. Someone found the historically accurate dialogue to be offensive. The idea of the book was to promote the abolitionist cause by demonstrating why slavery was unjust in the eyes of God. The idea of the book was *not* to display that Harriet Beecher Stowe used “offensive” slang to describe African Americans.

“The books that the world calls immoral are the books that show the world its shame.”-Oscar Wilde. Banned books are often books that reflect what is going on in the world. For example, *The Outsiders*, most likely banned because of the teen violence and drug use throughout the book, gives us a perspective of how life would be like to grow up outside of society standards. Although it contains graphic scenes and drug use, *The Outsiders* is an invaluable book that teaches us about the world in a way that may have been unforeseen to us before.

“Books are Weapons in the War of Ideas”-Council on Books in Wartime (WWII) slogan. During WWII, banned books served as soldiers’ portals to a better realm where they could have brief moments of pleasure without the anxiety of war. Through these books, distributed generously by the Council on Books in Wartime, these soldiers experienced a world they could thoroughly revel in. These soldiers cherished these books and knew that even when books were burned, to enforce censorship, the book’s message would survive the harsh flames of iniquity.

Banned books are means for learning like any other book, even if the learning experience differs from what you would learn from other literature. Books are books; they all contain ideas and thus were meant to be read. We have no right to stunt another’s imagination, or force someone to be ignorant of another’s perspective of the world. Through publications, of all sorts, we have been given the gift of other’s imaginations on a page. We should delight in the opportunity to see through another’s eyes.