

## THE BOOK REPORT

Titles Targeted for Censorship 2024

ALAAmericanLibraryAssociation
OFFICE FOR INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

## INTRODUCTION



n 2024, the American Library Association (ALA) documented the third highest volume of attempts to censor books since the organization started tracking more than 30 years ago. Censors targeted 2,452 unique book titles in 2024. The average number of unique titles targeted annually from 2001–2020 was 268.

Nearly 72% of the 2024 censorship attempts came from pressure groups and government officials.<sup>2</sup> This increase follows a change in censors' tactics that began in 2021.<sup>3</sup> Extremist talking points filtered into the mainstream. Baseless attacks on schools, libraries, and higher education were repeated in the news. Politicians introduced bills to limit what could be taught and read.

The new tactics include demands to censor lists of titles identified on partisan book rating sites.<sup>4</sup> Public attacks using book excerpts found on these sites foster distrust of library workers. Pressure to eliminate certain voices and topics chills the purchase of new books. Titles identified on book rating sites were targeted 3,200 times in 2024.<sup>5</sup> The need to review so many books drains staff time and diverts district resources away from their missions.<sup>6</sup>

The most common reasons provided by those seeking to censor books were:

- false claims of illegal obscenity for minors;
- inclusion of LGBTQIA+ characters or themes; and
- covering topics of race, racism, equity, and social justice.<sup>7</sup>

Extremist groups like Moms for Liberty and No Left Turn use false claims to play on biases and fears about child safety. Prejudice and fear spread as their false claims are repeated. Threats against library workers and other civil servants are one result.

The prevalence of censorship is an indicator of a democracy's health. Voters need access to information and the chance to discuss it in order to understand the issues on the ballot. Without the freedom to read, we cannot consider different perspectives, we cannot speak or question freely, and we cannot learn. Without shared stories, communities fall apart. When books are censored, reading becomes an act of resistance.

Library workers build bridges between curiosity and knowledge. People learn about one another by sharing their stories. Stories spark compassion and imagination. Compassion melts the barriers between us. Imagination admits the possibility of a better world. We must stand together to create opportunity and oppose tyranny. We must uplift storytellers, because stories unite us. We must listen with open hearts and open minds. We must champion all who help others' voices be heard. We must defend our freedom to read.

- 1. ALA documented 5,813 distinct challenges to these 2,452 unique titles. Most challenged titles (76%) were written and reviewed for a young adult audience. Children's titles made up 11% of the total. The remainder included titles written for an adult audience that are frequently included in high school curricula, read in preparation for the AP English exam, or popular with older teens.
- 2. From 2001–2020, only 13% of library book challenges were brought by pressure groups, administrators,

- and government officials. Collectively, they challenged an average of 46 titles per year prior to 2021.
- 3. These tactics include pulling excerpts from popular books out of context to make them appear offensive and unethical. This supports a false narrative that books are dangerous and reading them can harm young people. All parents have the right to guide their own children's reading. No one has the right to deny other parents and families the opportunity to make their own choices. Every family is different, but the desire to protect children is shared. Children cannot be harmed by books, no person can. Greater understanding of the world helps people of all ages navigate it more safely. On the other hand, fragile worldviews can shatter when exposed to better ideas. This is one reason antidemocratic governments suppress access to different viewpoints.
- 4. These sites equip activists with tools to press for the censorship of library books, often in ways that abuse the intended purpse of the reconsideration process. Eroding trust in public schools and libraries appears to be a key goal of the people responsible for these sites. After Executive Orders were issued to dismantle the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Department of Education, BookLooks, the most prominent book rating site, removed their content proclaiming their "mission has been largely accomplished." A functional clone of the site operating under a different name continues to promote discriminatory censorship using the same rating scale and targeting the same titles.
- 5. These 3,200 censorship attempts represent 55.4% of the total documented book challenges in 2024. The 120 most frequently challenged titles in 2024 are all targeted through book rating sites.
- 6. Of the 5,813 challenges to titles ALA documented in 2024, 5,253 were part of multi-title challenges (90.4%). Of the 7,224 challenges to titles ALA documented from 2001–2020, 471 were part of multi-title challenges (6.5%).
- 7. No school or public library book has ever been determined by a court of law to meet the legal definition of obscenity for minors. However, complainants included allegations that books contained illegal obscenity for minors in their attempts to censor 4,316 titles in 2024. Of the titles targeted, 44% prominently feature the voices and lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals or persons who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color.

"The librarian sighs. How can you know, she says, if no one teaches you, and no one ever talks about it, and all the books about it are gone?"

**—CELESTE NG, OUR MISSING HEARTS** 

#### The Most Frequently Targeted Titles in 2024

**ANDREWS, JESSE** 

## ME AND EARL AND THE DYING GIRL (2015)

30 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 27 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES



This acclaimed novel tells the story of two high school outcasts and wouldbe filmmakers who befriend a young woman dying from leukemia.

In September, 59 titles were removed from all school libraries in the Council Bluffs Community School District (IA). The books included Me and Earl and the Dying Girl, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, and The Handmaid's Tale. Superintendent Vickie Murillo said the books were removed to comply with Senate File 496. This Iowa law requires schools to remove any library book containing a description of a sex act.

Enforcement of the law was enjoined on March 25, 2025, due to constitutional concerns.

ASHER, JAY

## THIRTEEN REASONS WHY (2007)

26 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 26 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES

Asher's award-winning novel recounts a high school sophomore's suicide

through the audio recordings she left behind, chronicling the bullying and abuse she suffered.

Thirteen Reasons Why was one of 10 titles challenged at the St. Joseph School District (MO) by individuals associated with the Christian nationalist Herzog Foundation.<sup>8</sup> Other titles targeted include And Tango Makes Three and This Book Is Anti-Racist. The individuals alleged the books contain illegal obscenity and requested Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey to issue warrants for the arrest of all school librarians working for the district.

The books went through the district's reconsideration process. The review committee recommended retaining eight titles without restriction. After a split vote by the committee, *Tricks* and *All Boys Aren't Blue* now require parental permission for checkout.

**CHBOSKY, STEPHEN** 

## THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER (1999)

35 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 33 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES



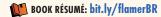
Reviewers characterized this novel set during freshman year at a suburban Pittsburgh high school as a latter-day Catcher in the Rye.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower was one of 419 titles removed from libraries by the Wilson County School District (TN) in response to the passage of HB 843.° Other titles removed include It's Christmas, David!; Wacky Wednesday; and The Time Machine. According to WTVF, the books were removed "preemptively to avoid potential scrutiny." Many titles removed were identified through a partisan book rating site. Some were previously reviewed by district committees and found to have educational merit and meet board-approved criteria.

**CURATO, MIKE** 

#### FLAMER (2020)

27 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 19 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES



Set at a Boy Scout summer camp, Flamer tells the tale of a Filipino

#### **BOOK RÉSUMÉS**



Created in partnership with dozens of publishers, Book Résumés are free resources from Unite Against Book Bans that support access to books targeted for censorship. Find them at: bit.ly/BookResumes

American who navigates bullying and body image insecurities as he reconciles his conservative religious upbringing with his homosexuality. Flamer appeared on a litany of best book lists, including those from Kirkus Reviews, NPR, School Library Journal, YALSA, and the Cooperative Children's Book Center.

The Mission Consolidated Independent School District (TX) removed 589 titles from school libraries after an email from Christian nationalists characterized the books as "filthy and evil." The district did not review any of the titles prior to banning them. According to The Texas Tribune, superintendent Carol G. Perez replied to the email within five minutes, thanking Citizens Defending Freedom and the Remnant Alliance for identifying the books and promising to remove them.

DAWSON, JUNO

## THIS BOOK IS GAY (2015)

22 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 15 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES



Bestselling author Juno Dawson wrote this pertinent award-winning book for LGBTQIA+ teens, tweens, and adults; parents of LGBTQIA+ youth; and readers seeking to learn more about the LGBTQIA+ community.

#### STAY UPDATED ON CENSORSHIP ATTEMPTS

Stay updated on censorship attempts by following the Office for Intellectual Freedom on Bluesky (@OIF) and Facebook (@ALAOIF) and reading Intellectual Freedom News at oif.ala.org

The Geneva County Republican Women, Intercessors for Children, state representative Rick Rehm, and conservative radio personalities all engaged in a campaign to pressure the Dothan Houston County Library System (AL) to censor books. The titles targeted were ones the groups characterized as "harmful, obscene materials," such as ones with LGBTQIA+ representation or that are part of "a DEI movement."

This Book is Gay and Gender Queer were moved from the young adult to the adult section in response to these efforts. The 47 other books they challenged were retained in the YA collection.

**GREEN, JOHN** 

## LOOKING FOR ALASKA (2005)

30 CHALLENGES. INCLUDING 30 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES



This coming-of-age story interweaves themes of grief and hope. It won the 2006 Michael L. Printz Award and was honored by School Library Journal and Kirkus Reviews as the best book of the year.

Looking for Alaska was one of eight titles at the Pickens County Public Library (SC) that were targeted for censorship in 2024. Individuals spoke out at board meetings and wrote letters to the editor of *The Pickens County Courier* falsely claiming that the books were illegal, "obscene," and "materials harmful to children."

Drama, Flamer, Gender Queer, Forever, and Fade were retained without restriction. All Boys Aren't Blue and Looking for Alaska were moved from the Young Adult section to Adult Biography and Adult Fiction, respectively.

## REPORT CENSORSHIP

When there's a censorship attempt at your library, school, or university, report it to the Office for Intellectual Freedom. You don't have to be a librarian or an ALA member to get confidential one-on-one help. Find more ways to reach us at ala.org/oif

HOPKINS, ELLEN

#### TRICKS (2009)

33 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 30 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES

BOOK RÉSUMÉ: bit.ly/tricksBR

CRANK (2004)

28 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 28 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES

BOOK RÉSUMÉ: bit.ly/crankBR

#### **IDENTICAL** (2008)

26 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 23 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES

BOOK RÉSUMÉ: bit.ly/identicalBR

Nevada Writers Hall of Fame inductee Ellen Hopkins explores teenagers' experiences with drug addiction, mental illness, violence, and exploitation in her bestselling YA novels.

During the August 12 board meeting of the Lehighton Area School District (PA), treasurer Sean Gleaves, a member of Moms for Liberty, called for the removal of 33 titles from school libraries. Gleaves said he believed the books were inappropriate because they contained "LGBTQ issues" and "critical race theory." Tricks, Crank, and Identical were included on his list.

Gleaves also called for an audit of all school library materials, claiming that books on topics like white privilege, transgender rights, birth control, and homosexuality should require parental permission.

On September 3, the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association sent a letter pointing out serious constitutional concerns with a process that doesn't follow board-approved policy and could censor library materials in a subjective viewpoint-based manner.

HOSSEINI, KHALED

#### THE KITE RUNNER (2014)

25 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING IN 22 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES



Hosseini's bestselling novel spans four decades of the recent history of Afghanistan and its people. It received numerous accolades, including the 2004 Alex Award.

The Hernando County School District (FL) discussed censoring The Black Friend and The Kite Runner during their February 7 board meeting. Review committees recommended retaining both books in the high school library in accordance with district policy. Board chair Shannon Rodriguez falsely

#### "CHALLENGES" **ARE NOT JUST** COMPLAINTS **ABOUT BOOKS**



They are willful attempts to remove or restrict access to library resources or programming. Challenges can be written complaints, forms submitted to a library, or calls to action on social media.

claimed the entire board could be arrested if they remained in circulation. The board voted to ban both books.

JOHNSON, GEORGE M.

#### **ALL BOYS AREN'T BLUE** (2021)

39 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 33 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES



Johnson's award-winning memoir about growing up gay and Black deals frankly with experiences of bullying and sexual abuse. It appeared on numerous best book lists and was a Kids' Book Choice Award finalist.

A member of a parents' rights group created an online petition calling for the Platteville School District (WI) to ban five books and MAD magazine from the middle school library. Following district policy, a committee reviewed all challenged titles. Per their recommendations, It's Perfectly Normal, Flamer, Me and Earl and the Dying Girl, Heartstopper, and MAD were retained. All Boys Aren't Blue was moved to the high school library.

KOBABE, MAIA

#### **GENDER QUEER**

A MEMOIR (2019)

38 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 21 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES



Kobabe wrote this tender, visually complex, and painfully honest graphic novel to help friends and family understand what it means to be asexual and nonbinary.

Members of Purple for Parents Indiana challenged eight titles at the Middlebury Public Library (IN),



During 2024, 261 public library systems and 228 school districts reported at least one attempt to censor materials or services.

including Gender Queer and You Be You. The review committee recommended retaining all titles without restriction. The board upheld their recommendation. Despite this, members of the hate group continue to harass and threaten the library director. Flyers were posted throughout town falsely accusing her of distributing illegal obscenity to minors.

**KUKLIN, SUSAN** 

#### BEYOND MAGENTA TRANSGENDER AND NONBINARY **TEENS SPEAK OUT** (2014)

24 CHALLENGES. INCLUDING 23 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES

BOOK RÉSUMÉ: bit.ly/magentaBR

Author and photographer Susan Kuklin met and interviewed six transgender or gender-neutral young adults, revealing the varied emotional and physical journeys each youth has taken.

On October 14, the Christian nationalist organization Conservatives for the Commonwealth began a political mailer campaign supporting Amendment 2 on the Kentucky ballot. The amendment would allow public money to fund private schools. The mailers pulled excerpts from Beyond Magenta, Shine, and Lucky out of context to manufacture outrage regarding books in public school libraries.

#### **BOOK CLUB** IDEA



Suggest an enlightening banned or challenged book as your next book club read.

On October 16, Ballard County Schools (KY) announced they were banning all three titles. Superintendent Casey Allen said they had not received any complaints about the books and the decision was in response to the mailer.

MAAS, SARAH J.

#### A COURT OF MIST AND FURY (2016)

25 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 24 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES

#### A COURT OF **THORNS AND** ROSES (2016)

25 CHALLENGES. INCLUDING 24 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES

#### **EMPIRE OF** STORMS (2016)

24 CHALLENGES. INCLUDING 24 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES

#### A COURT OF FROST AND STARLIGHT (2020)

21 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 21 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES

Maas's award-winning fantasy series sold tens of millions of copies and were translated into 38 languages.

On July 1, Utah HB 29 changed the state code regarding "sensitive materials" in schools. HB 29 requires all school districts in the state to remove a book if three districts determine it is "pornographic or indecent."

The growing list of books banned from all school libraries in Utah includes six titles by Sarah J. Maas, as well as books by Margaret Atwood and Judy Blume.

MCCORMICK, PATRICIA

**SOLD** (2006)

28 CHALLENGES. INCLUDING 28 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES

BOOK RÉSUMÉ: bit.ly/soldBR

This National Book Award finalist tells the story of a 13-year-old Nepalese girl sold into sexual slavery by her stepfather. It received the Gustav-Heinemann Peace Prize, the Quill Award, a California Young Reader Medal, and the Eliot Rosewater Award.

The King George County School District (VA) received challenges to more than 100 titles from an individual without a child in any of its schools. The challenges were all copied and pasted from pro-censorship book rating sites. After learning from the challenger that some school library books include gay characters, a local pastor began regularly advocating for book restrictions during board meetings. His

#### **HOW CAN YOU AND** YOUR COMMUNITY STAND TOGETHER FOR LIBRARIES AND THE FREEDOM TO READ?

Join the Unite **Against Book Bans** campaign and use the action toolkit at uniteagainstbookbans.org /toolkit

When a challenge occurs in your community, attend a local board meeting and explain why you think the resource should remain in the library.

#### CELEBRATE BANNED BOOKS WEEK® OCTOBER 5-11, 2025

Attend local programs or start your own event. Learn more at ala.org/bbooks

Visit your local library to check out materials from an array of perspectives, attend programs, and take advantage of the library's many resources!

son and daughter-in-law are both on the school board.

Groups of parents, students, and concerned community members have spoken out against censoring school library books. Despite this, the board restricted access to dozens of titles, including Sold. Restricted books are kept under lock and key at the middle school library, and they are held behind the librarian's desk at the high school library.

MORRISON, TONI

#### THE BLUEST EYE (1994)

35 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 32 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES

BOOK RÉSUMÉ: bit.ly/bluestBR

Nobel laureate Toni Morrison's debut novel The Bluest Eye raises questions about race, class, and gender while examining beauty and conformity. It tells the story of Pecola Breedlove, an 11-year-old Black girl who prays for her eyes to turn blue so she will be beautiful, people will notice her, and her world will be different.

During the March 11 board meeting of the Norfolk Public School District (NE), a member of the pressure group Parents United expressed anger that The Bluest Eye "might possibly be available to minors." School superintendent Jami Jo Thompson said "the process to remove"

#### **WRITE AN AUTHOR**



Want to let a banned author know you have their back? Send them a handwritten letter. Find postcards and addresses at ala.org/bbooks /dear-banned-author

the book could not be completed until it was returned by the student currently reading it. The Bluest Eye is covered on the AP English test.

PICOULT, JODI

#### NINETEEN MINUTES (2007)

24 CHALLENGES. INCLUDING 24 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES



BOOK RÉSUMÉ: bit.ly/nineteenBR

Picoult's critically acclaimed bestselling novel depicts the events surrounding a school shooting perpetrated by a lonely and bullied student in New Hampshire.

#### **LETTERS TO** THE EDITOR



If there's a local challenge reported in the news, write a letter to the editor or decisionmakers. Your letter could touch on the benefits of unrestricted reading, defend your right to read, or share your personal experience with reading a banned book. Find tips at uniteagainstbookbans.org /toolkit

On August 12, the board of the Elizabeth School District (CO) announced they were removing 19 titles from school libraries "for review" and requiring parental permission for 110 others. The board cited concerns over the religious views expressed; LGBTQIA+ content; and depictions of drug use, sex, and violence in the books.

Nineteen Minutes was one of the titles removed. Titles requiring parental permission included 1984, Fahrenheit 451, Brave New World, and Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl. 10

On March 19, 2025, a federal judge ordered the district to restore access to all 129 titles and prohibited further censorship of library books "because the district disagrees with the views expressed therein or merely to further their preferred political or religious orthodoxy."

**VONNEGUT, KURT** 

#### SLAUGHTERHOUSE-**FIVE** (1969)

21 CHALLENGES, INCLUDING 21 MULTI-TITLE CHALLENGES



BOOK RÉSUMÉ: bit.ly/slaughterhouseBR

This darkly satirical novel about the psychological trauma of war was written by a survivor of the Dresden firebombing. It was characterized as a work of "unmatched moral clarity" by The New York Times.

On December 3, Knox County Schools (TN) announced the removal

#### **HOLD LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE**

When legislation adverse to public and school libraries is introduced, contact your representatives and share your concerns. If you need talking points, contact your state library association or ALA. When school and library board members are on the ballot, ask them to sign the candidate pledge or use the candidate questionnaire at uniteagainstbookbans.org

of 48 titles from all libraries to comply with SB 2407.11 The Knox County chapter of Moms for Liberty helped identify titles for removal. Titles banned included Slaughterhouse-Five, The 57 Bus, A Light in the Attic, and In the Night Kitchen.

Teachers and parents of district students spoke out against the lost educational opportunities for their children during the first board meeting after the book bans were announced.

- 8. According to their website, the Herzog Foundation seeks to "catalyze and accelerate . . . Christ-centered K-12 education."
- 9. HB 843 went into effect on July 1, 2024, and prohibits access to books containing references to sex.
- 10. The censorship of books critical of authoritarian governance should not be considered ironic or unintentional; authoritarian rule requires censorship and cannot tolerate criticism.
- 11. SB 2407 passed in 2022 and was amended by HB 843 in July 2024.



The Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) is charged with implementing ALA policies concerning the concept of intellectual freedom as embodied in the Library Bill of Rights.

The goal of the office is to educate librarians and the general public about the nature and importance of intellectual freedom in libraries.

OIF Staff: Deborah Caldwell-Stone, Director; Sarah Lamdan, Deputy Director; Betsy Gomez, Assistant Director; Eric Stroshane, Assistant Director; Joyce McIntosh, Assistant Program Director; Karen Gianni, Program Coordinator

Credits: Eric Stroshane, writer and editor; ALA Production Services, layout and design

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# TOP 10 MOST CHALLENGED BOOKS OF 2024

The American Library Association documented 821 attempts to censor materials and services at libraries, schools, and universities in 2024. The most common reasons for challenges were false claims of illegal obscenity for minors; inclusion of LGBTQIA+ characters or themes; and dealing with topics of race, racism, inclusivity, equity, and social justice. Of the 2,452 unique titles that were challenged or banned in 2024, here are the top 10 most frequently targeted.





ALL BOYS
AREN'T BLUE
A MEMOIRMANIFESTO
by George M. Johnson

WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS: bit.ly/allboysBR

(#2 in 2023)

2



GENDER QUEER
A MEMOIR
by Maia Kobabe

WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS: bit.ly/genderBR

(#1 in 2023)

The Luest Eye

THE BLUEST EYE

Toni Morrison

by Toni Morrison
WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS:
bit.ly/bluestBR
(#6 in 2023)

perks of boing a wallflower

## THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER

by Stephen Chbosky
WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS:

bit.ly/wallflowerBR

(#4 in 2023)

5



**TRICKS**by Ellen Hopkins

WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS: bit.ly/tricksBR

(#7 in 2023)

6/7



LOOKING FOR ALASKA

by John Green

WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS: bit.ly/alaskaBR

(#12 in 2023)



### ME AND EARL AND THE DYING GIRL

by Jesse Andrews

WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS: bit.ly/earlBR

(#7 in 2023)



#### **CRANK**

by Ellen Hopkins
WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS:

bit.ly/crankBR

(#14 in 2023)



#### SOLD

by Patricia McCormick

WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS: bit.ly/soldBR

(#10 in 2023)





#### FLAMER

by Mike Curato

WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS: bit.ly/flamerBR

(#5 in 2023)

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