

Books Are Being Censored

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Books have had a major impact on children all around the world. The censorship of books can negatively impact children's development because it can stifle intellectual growth and how they express themselves. In terms of its impact on writing as a way of expressing themselves, if exposure is limited then children do not explore ideas that may widen their minds and enable them to think critically.

If students are taught to base their thinking on religious philosophy and trained to ignore scientific evidence, they are restricted from expressing themselves because they are unlikely to ask questions that may go against their base belief. On *Cosmos* the television show, Neil deGrasse Tyson, noted astrophysicist, said that Galileo Galilei was imprisoned and hanged because he believed the world was round. The website allaboutphilosophy.org defines creationism and evolution as "Creation denotes the existence of a divine Creator who has exercised His creative abilities, creating this world and the life-forms we see." "Evolution stresses the naturalistic (random, undirected) descent of all living creatures from a common ancestor who originally evolved from inorganic matter." A recent Gallop Poll, a company that polls nearly seven billion people worldwide, found that nearly 46% of Americans believe in the creationist view. Teaching creationism could undermine science education that has led to medical, technological, and other scientific advances for centuries.

History textbooks have been censored to silence a painful time in history. Some people believe that a specific period of history shapes that community in a negative way and should be changed to reflect their view of the world. For example, Antoon De Baets, a noted historian on the censorship of history textbooks, states "In 1945, the Allied Powers banned all history textbooks which had been in use in the Third Reich and no history lessons were given in the reopened schools." In addition De Baets stated "In the United States, some school boards tried to tailor the textbooks to their view." De Baets also stated "Similarly, in September 1945, officials of the Japanese Ministry of Education issued detailed orders to amend wartime textbooks." Following this order, teachers and students all over the country deleted objectionable passages in these wartime textbooks with ink and scissors as they saw fit." If schools censor information, students do not know the history and they may be doomed to repeat some of the same prejudices and disagreements that turn into war. Students unaware of their pasts inhibit their intellectual growth.

Adults censor books for many reasons from racial issues to books parents consider inappropriate for certain age groups. The three most common reasons are violence, witchcraft and so called age appropriateness. Some adults believe children exposed to violence exhibit certain violent or negative behaviors. Witchcraft or magic in books is often censored, for example J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, because parents fear witchcraft may undercut religious teachings. In 2006, the administrators at the Brentwood, Tennessee Middle School, challenged *To Kill a Mocking Bird* by Harper Lee because "the book contains 'profanity' and 'contains adult themes such as sexual intercourse, rape, and incest.'" The complainants also

contend that the book's use of racial slurs promotes 'racial hatred, racial division, racial separation, and promotes white supremacy.'" In 2009 the book was actually removed or banned from the St. Edmund Campion Secondary in Ontario, Canada "because a parent objected to language used in the novel, including the word nigger." Censoring books in schools prohibits teachers and students from expressing their opinions and ideas about race relations and the treatment of African Americans in classrooms. By reflecting and having a discussion about this book students get a greater understanding of race and American injustice.

Censorship negatively affects students' ability to think critically about the world around them because they are limited in what they are able to read, discuss, and form their own opinions. History books are important because they recount the past and students should learn about different people's stories and perspectives. Censoring books stifles students' intellectual growth and prevents them from fully expressing their ideas and opinions.

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