

Dangerous Words: Censorship in the Public Schools

Caren J. Town, Georgia Southern University

Abstract

This essay discusses the problems raised by book challenges in the public schools and offers practical and philosophical responses to censorship. It also summarizes the legal history of book censorship in schools and libraries and provides a list of often challenged books that should be used in the classroom.

We cannot protect our children from this world, which is a scary place. The only thing we can do is help them develop an inner strength to meet the inevitable challenges they will face.
—Young Adult Novelist Katherine Paterson, Foerstal Interview, pp. 168-69.

Imagine you are a new ninth-grade language arts teacher, fresh out of college, filled with big ideas, and inspired by the large number and wide variety of books for young adults. You assign your class a novel by well-known (and critically-acclaimed) young adult author Chris Crutcher, and everything seems to be going well. The students appear to like the book, the class discussions are lively, and you are certain you are teaching them about reading, interpretation, and argument. Best of all, students actually seem to be *enjoying* themselves. Then your principal calls you into her office, closes the door, and tells you there's been a complaint by one of the parents—

Now imagine you are that parent, trying to teach your children by precept and example how to live what you consider to be a good and honest life. Your child has just started high school, and you are worried about the wider range of influences—both good and bad—on him. You’ve tried to keep him as innocent as possible in this modern world, limiting television and movie access, monitoring computer time, paying attention to his friends. One day, he comes home with a book that he’s reading for class, and you casually pick it up and glance at a couple of pages. What you see concerns you, and you pick up the phone to call the principal—

This time, imagine you are the principal of that high school. You’ve spent all day putting out fires—fights in the lunch room, a possible teachers’ strike, mold in the gym—and you are exhausted. In general, you are happy with your teachers; they are hard working, innovative, committed to the welfare of the students, and you believe in letting them have as much freedom in the classroom as possible. Still, your salary is paid by the taxpayers of your community, and you must be sensitive to their concerns. Then, the phone rings—

These are the initial players in a book challenge, and added to them could be the student whose parent is challenging the book, the teacher’s colleagues (including the media specialist), the school board, and, eventually the courts. If the issue is not resolved in the early stages, sides will be taken, harsh words will be spoken, and each person involved will consider him or herself on the side of Right. It is important to recognize, however, as Chris Crutcher (2005) did in one of his novels, that “*These are all good guys. They want good things.* The principal characters here are mad at one another for what they believe, so maybe the fact that they look good or bad to *one another* can take the place of good and evil” (*The Sled-ding Hill*, p. 34. Italics in original.). In other words, there is no pure good or pure evil in a book challenge; for the most part, all of those involved have what they consider to be the best interests of children at heart. Crutcher, of all people, should know about the moral questions surrounding censorship—his books for young adults have appeared on the American Library Association’s “100 Most Fre-

quently Challenged Books” lists for both 1990-2000 and 2000-2009 (American Library Association [ALA], 2010). What Crutcher and others involved in book challenges know is that there are no easy answers to this issue.

Although respecting the good intentions of one’s opponents can be a fruitful strategy, if one desires lasting solutions to complex problems like book challenges, educators such as those involved with the National Network for Educational Renewal’s mission “to educate the young for thoughtful participation in a social and political democracy” (National Network for Educational Renewal [NNER], 2010) must consider whether the larger interests of students, schools, communities, and the nation are served by giving in to book challenges and censorship. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) said in their “Guideline on the Students’ Right to Read”:

In many ways, education is an effort to improve the quality of choices open to all students. But to deny the freedom of choice in fear that it may be unwisely used is to destroy the freedom itself. For this reason, we respect the right of individuals to be selective in their own reading. But for the same reason, we oppose efforts of individuals or groups to limit the freedom of choice of others or to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large. (National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2010)

Even though children may possibly stumble as they make their way through the wide variety of materials available to them, denying them choice is more dangerous than the potential for missteps. To put the issue in a slightly different context, the American Library Association’s “Library Bill of Rights” says, “Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment” (American Library Association [ALA], 2010). School personnel should take their responsibilities to inform and enlighten as seriously as do librarians. Removing books (or movies or internet sites, for that matter) from classrooms hurts

everyone in a democracy, not just students (and teachers, principals, and parents) in a particular school.

When it comes to resisting challenges to literary works (and actually any work that might be considered “controversial”), the most important question for teachers, media specialists, and administrators to ask themselves is always “Why?” Why teach—or recommend or buy—a particular novel, short story, play, or poem? And the bigger question: Why teach literature at *all*, or even make it available to students, especially when some parents, administrators, and school boards seem determined to challenge any book (and any teacher) that raises “controversial” issues? Finding the answers to these questions, answers that are sensitive to the various political, religious, and personal reasons people try to limit access to books, is vital to preventing censorship in schools.

The books I teach and write about (including Crutcher’s novels and short stories) raise these questions insistently. They challenge teachers, students, parents, and other community members who love (or hate) them to look closely at difficult issues, to confront racism, sexism, homophobia, and religious fanaticism, to face the realities of adolescent sexuality and harsh language, and, most important, to consider the consequences of not looking such issues squarely in the face. However, these novels also serve as canaries in the coal mine, pointing out the potentially challenging elements of *all* literature worth reading. As James Davis (1992) said in his article on censorship and the young adult novel: “What is *not censorable*? Probably almost nothing. Certainly all of the plots, themes, characters, values, and words of which young adult literature is made are possibly objectionable to someone at some time for some reason” (p. 170). In other words, literature is about the very things that make people uncomfortable—love, death, sex, betrayal, racism, violence, and so on. Joan DeFattore (1992), in her landmark book on censorship in schools, noted: “[L]iterature . . . is easier to challenge [than evolution, for example] because the ideas it contains are often ambiguous or abstract, opening the door to a wide range of justifications for declaring particular literary works unsuitable for certain age groups” (p.100). In other words, because literature invites a number

of interpretations, it also creates the possibility for a variety of challenges. These challenges range from concerns about language, sexuality, and drug and alcohol use, to worries about the depiction of religion and disrespect for authority.

Young adult novels that are both challenging and potentially challengeable include works for middle grades students such as Lois Lowry's Newbery Award-winning *The Giver*, a perennial favorite on challenged books lists since its publication in 1993, and Jean Craighead George's *Julie of the Wolves* (1972), also a winner of the Newbery Award and in the top 100 challenged books for 2000-2007. In addition, Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, and Katherine Paterson's *The Great Gilly Hopkins* and *Bridge to Terabithia* are provocative and moving books that have all been challenged at one time or another (ALA, 2010). Most parents and school boards challenging these books are concerned about their "adult" themes, subjects, and language, which they consider to be inappropriate for middle grades students.

Books designed for older (high school) readers include several works by Chris Crutcher. *Athletic Shorts*, his collection of short stories, and his novels *Whale Talk*, *Iron Man*, and *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*, for example, all made the 2000-2007 list of banned books (ALA, 2010). Any discussion of challenged books would not be complete without Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*, which was number two on the ALA's most frequently challenged books of 2007 and has made the list of challenged books nearly every year since its publication in 1974. Number one that year was a book about gay penguins (ALA, 2010). Also worthy of classroom discussion are Cynthia Voigt's *Homecoming*, Mildred Taylor's adolescent novel *The Road to Memphis*, and Laurie Anderson's *Speak*, which made the 2000-2007 list as well. I would also consider encourage teachers to use *The Lovely Bones* (another frequently challenged book), as well as two other novels that might be seen as controversial because of their treatment of the afterlife: *Elsewhere* and *Godless*. A wonderful new book is probably raising challenges right now: Sherman Alexie's 2007 novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*.

The most potentially controversial young adult fiction deals with gay and lesbian teens. I imagine that most of these books remain unchallenged because they are rarely taught in middle or high schools, although children's books such as *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Leslea Newman, Michael Wilhoite's *Daddy's Roommate*, and *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson/Peter Parnell (the gay penguin picture book) make the banned books lists nearly every year. Some novels recommended for classroom use include David Levithan's hilarious *Boy Meets Boy*, Nancy Garden's classic, *Annie on my Mind*, and M.E. Kerr's insightful *Deliver Us from Evie*. These books present issues of concern to gay and lesbian teens in a sensitive and thoughtful way, and the characters are complex enough to catch the interest of heterosexual teens as well.

Books like these represent a continuing problem for those concerned about censorship, however, in spite of their obvious quality; their subjects and styles will raise the eyebrows of teachers, administrators, parents, school boards—and perhaps lead to their being challenged. DeFattore (1992) said: “[N]o matter how little sense a school board decision seems to make, the board has the authority to determine curriculum unless protesters can prove the establishment of a religious or political orthodoxy” (p. 118). The decision to remove a book doesn't have to be logical or even particularly sensible; it merely has to avoid the appearance of religious or political bias. As a result, some school administrators have, and will continue to try, with the tentative permission of the courts, to censor a wide variety of literary works, including many of the ones just mentioned.

This should raise alarms, but it should not cause language arts teachers in middle and high schools—and anyone else concerned about book censorship—to give up hope. These books—and others like them—need to be taught, need to be studied by middle and high school students, and they need to be discussed by language arts departments, principals, and members of local communities. The secret is not that these books are dangerous but that they are actually *beneficial* to students (and their teachers and parents), and that with the right preparation, a clear sense of mission, and a well-thought-out rationale, each of these novels can be successfully taught and,

if need be, defended. One postulate of the NNER's "Agenda for Education in a Democracy" is that "Programs for the education of educators must involve future teachers in the issues and dilemmas that emerge out of the never-ending tension between the rights and interests of individual parents and interest groups and the role of schools in transcending parochialism and advancing community in a democratic society" (NNER, 2010). By preparing future teachers to consider the issues of censorship, and helping them develop strategies and arguments to counter attempts to remove books from the classroom, both future educators and their students will develop a heightened awareness of their roles in the "never-ending tension" of a democratic society.

The NCTE said it well: "Teachers of English, librarians, and school administrators can best serve students, literature, and the profession today if they prepare now to face pressures sensibly, demonstrating on the one hand a willingness to consider the merits of any complaint and on the other the courage to defend their literature program with intelligence and vigor" (NCTE, 2010). In their "Guideline on the Students' Right to Read," the NCTE also offers detailed instructions for choosing, defending, and creating rationales for literary works, as well as descriptions of the wide array of possible challenges to literary texts in the classroom (NCTE, 2010). As the authors of *Teaching Literature to Adolescents* (2006) said, "The Literature classroom is a delicate ecosystem of texts, teaching strategies, human circumstances, choice, and constraint" (p. 241). Within this "ecosystem," they continued, teachers should consider how they can make their English classrooms "a site of transformation" (p. 244). It is possible to transform students by carefully exposing them to ideas, characters, and situations that challenge them without alienating them.

Jim Burke, veteran high school language arts teacher and author of *The English Teacher's Companion* (2003) and numerous other works on teaching, offered this insight:

[It] is the discussion of what it is right and wrong, the growth of moral intelligence that counts. We cannot make our stu-

dents act “better,” but we can put them at the center of such essential conversations and, by allowing students to occupy the lives of others—through literature—help them develop the habit of asking themselves such questions. (p.78)

It is the obligation of teachers, parents, and citizens to engage children in “essential conversations” about big issues—life, love, betrayal, sexuality, religion, hatred—all the subjects that literature takes as its bread and butter. Adults are not obligated (and probably *shouldn't*) indoctrinate young people in particular positions, but they must educate them by teaching them how to ask the right sorts of questions.

Most important, children should be trusted with these ideas and questions. As the NCTE’s “Guideline on The Students’ Right to Read” says: “The right of any individual not just to read but to read whatever he or she wants to read is basic to a democratic society. This right is based on an assumption that the educated possess judgment and understanding and can be trusted with the determination of their own actions. In effect, the reader is freed from the bonds of chance” (NCTE, 2010). Educated people “can be trusted with the determination of their own actions.” That is, even young people, who are in the process of becoming educated citizens of a democracy, should have the freedom to read what they choose. They should not be subject to the “bonds of chance” or the whims of a parent, a teacher, a principal, or an outraged member of the community. Adolescents experience all of the things—and more—that these works describe; teachers do young people a valuable service when they strengthen their confidence and give them a sense of belonging to a larger human community. Davis (1992) expressed this well: “[P]ublic schools and libraries in a free society have an obligation not only to provide,” he said, “but also to encourage such diversity of opinions and points of view, thereby developing what tests show contemporary students lack so much—critical thinking ability” (p. 171). Not only can students feel their particular burdens shared when they read about teens like themselves, they can also learn to

deal with the inherent diversity of contemporary society and learn to evaluate critically their own—and others'—judgments.

It may also be language arts teachers' obligation to create or support nurturing, inclusive, and tolerant classrooms. As Beach (2006) said, "A fundamental responsibility in creating an ethical classroom is selecting texts that represent this vast and rich heritage [in the United States] for all students regardless of the cultural, ethnic, and racial makeup of the schools in which we teach" (p. 248). Classrooms have become increasingly diverse, with students of different races, social classes, ethnicities, religious (or non-religious) perspectives, and sexual orientations, and hence teachers must "consider the cost of not confronting such issues [racism, sexism, and homophobia] head-on as part of [their] teaching" (Beach, 2006, p. 250). To put it another way, "it may be [their] ethical responsibility to bring issues of hatred and bias to the foreground of [their] curriculum so that no student is ever forced to suffer for being outside the norm of social stereotypes" (Beach, 2006, p. 251). Novels, plays, poems, and short stories about a wide range of people and issues can help teachers to help students to do this.

Defending all students' rights to read and to be exposed to a variety of ideas and positions, though, is no easy task. Challenges arise frequently—from students, parents, school boards, fellow teachers, and community members. J. Bushman and K.P. Haas reminded readers in *Using Young Adult Literature in the Classroom* (2001) that "Many parents, for whatever reason, are often frustrated about their relationships with the schools. . . . As a result, they strike out at something very specific—what is taught in the classroom, especially if they believe that it is incongruous with their values" (p. 249). Teachers often self-censor as well, avoiding books that raise controversial subjects and therefore could be subject to challenges. Davis (1992) reported that "[m]any teachers, librarians, and administrators are so intimidated by a single call or the fear of a single complaint that materials are never ordered or are removed after any criticism, even in a nearby school" (p. 171). He noted that this "is the most unfortunate kind of censorship done, not under pressure,

but in fear that the pressure might come” (Davis, 1992, p. 172). The inherent isolation of the classroom teacher is also a contributing factor. In “The Ripple Effect of Censorship” (1994), E. Noll said that “[a] significant difference in the teachers' responses to the threat of censorship lies in the extent to which they did or did not involve others—colleagues, administrators, parents, and students—in their decisions” (p. 62). Teachers who handle censorship alone are much more likely to keep potentially controversial works out of their classrooms.

Even though teachers and administrators often self censor, fearing a lawsuit, the case law concerning school book challenges is complicated and inconclusive, and not uniformly supportive of censorship. As H. Foerstel (2002) pointed out, “the overwhelming majority of book banning is local, not federal” (p.xxv), but the issues have often been brought to the federal courts. It is important to note, though, that “most of the case law on such book banning [in public schools] does not deal directly with books at all, concentrating more generally on the authority of school officials to control the curriculum and the libraries as part of the process of inculcating and socializing students” (Foerstel, 2002. p. 73). The bottom line is that “the courts have usually held that a student's right to receive information is subject to a school board's authority to determine the curriculum, including the library's collections” (Foerstel, 2002, p. 81).

Excellent summaries of relevant First Amendment court cases can be found in R. P. Doyle's *Banned Books* (2007), Foerstel's *Banned in the U.S.A.*(2002), and DeFattore's *What Johnny Shouldn't Read* (1994). The cases most often cited as significant are: First is *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969), where “the Supreme Court held that students ‘do not shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate’ [and] that the First Amendment protects public school students' rights to express political and social views” (Doyle , 2007, p.185). Second is the *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico* (1982) case in which the Supreme Court “held that school boards do not have unrestricted authority to select library books and

that the First Amendment is implicated when books are removed arbitrarily” (Doyle, 2007, p.185). Justice Brennan declared in the plurality opinion: “Local school boards may not remove books from school library shelves simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books and seek by their removal to prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion” (as cited in Doyle, 2007, p. 185). Content alone, then, cannot justify limiting students’ access to books.

However, a third case, *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* (1988), seems to move in the opposite direction. Here the Supreme Court concluded that “educators do not offend the First Amendment by exercising editorial control over the style and content of student speech in school-sponsored expressive activities so long as their actions are reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns” (as cited in Doyle, 2007, p. 186). This could mean that teachers of potentially controversial material must be able to show that a particular novel, play, or short story, has educational value. This is in part why the NCTE advises that:

In each school the English department should develop its own statement explaining why literature is taught and how books are chosen for each class. This statement should be on file with the administration before any complaints are received. The statement should also support the teacher's right to choose supplementary materials and to discuss controversial issues insofar as they are relevant. (NCTE, 2010)

Finally, in *Virgil v. School Board of Columbia County* (1989), according to Doyle, “the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals concluded that a school board may, without contravening constitutional limits, take such action when the removal decision was ‘reasonably related’ to the ‘legitimate pedagogical concern’ of denying students access to ‘potential sensitive topics’” (p. 186). Once again, administrators, in certain limited situations, can claim “legitimate pedagogical concerns” that allow them to remove books from libraries and classrooms.

A more recent (and more hopeful) case is *John D. Ashcroft, Attorney General, et al. v. Free Speech Coalition, et al.* In this 2002 case, Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy said: “First Amendment freedoms are more in danger when the government seeks to control thought or to justify its laws for that impermissible end. The right to think is the beginning of freedom, and speech must be protected from the government because speech is the beginning of thought” (as cited in Doyle, 2007, p. 191). Here the court recognized the link between speech and thought, and between free thought and democracy, and such a case might be used as precedent for allowing free access to materials in the classroom.

Clearly, the Supreme Court takes the First Amendment very seriously, but it also reserves the right of textbook and library selection to local schools. As Foerstel (2002) put it, “*Hazelwood* . . . established that teachers, principals, and school boards may take action within the school’s educational mission that might otherwise be unconstitutional” (p. 98). What this means, then, Foerstel (2002) said, is that “the best defense against book banning in post-*Hazelwood* schools and libraries [is] enlightened school boards and supportive courts” (p. 108). For this reason, the NCTE supports the establishment of committees “to inform the community about book selection procedures; enlist the support of citizens, possibly by explaining the place of literature in the educational process or by discussing at meetings of parents and other community groups the books used at that school; and consider any complaints against any work” (NCTE, 2010). Such community organizations can become a strong voice against censorship.

Who enlightens the community, though? Teachers and principals, mostly. Teachers must know why they are teaching certain materials, what their literary and educational values are, and they must be able to articulate those values in public. Principals need to stand behind their teachers, trusting them to know what material is valuable to students, and they also need to have clearly written, widely available, and closely followed procedures for potential book challenges. Written rationales and procedures for books included on the curriculum are necessary, as are written permission slips from par-

ents, but, most important, teachers must be able to give voice to these books and the values that they teach.

Works that are honest about the lives of adolescents are likely to have words and concepts that may shock some parents (although it isn't likely that most students would even be *surprised* by them). With that in mind, teachers have to be able to explain why these works—for all their mature and controversial subject matter—are worth teaching and reading. As Seventh District Judge Richard Posner said in the 2001 case of *American Amusement Machine Association et al. v. Teri Kendrick et. al*, which overturned a decision to censor violent video games, “People are unlikely to become well-functioning, independent-minded adults and responsible citizens if they are raised in an intellectual bubble” (as cited in n Doyle, 2007, p. 203). Video games may not be considered by everyone as being on the same level as classic works of literature (or even young adult problem novels), but the issue of adult control over what children can (or cannot) see is the same. It is the responsibility of teachers and administrators to make sure students move outside that “intellectual bubble” and are challenged—and sometimes shocked—by what they read.

Teachers also need to find innovative approaches to teaching and think critically about the existing curriculum. A. N. Applebee, who has been studying high school curricula for 20 years, noted in 1989 that two decades of strategies to broaden the curriculum, unfortunately, hadn't worked:

The factors that shape the curriculum have been too strong to be offset by the consciousness-raising and resource development activities that have taken place so far. New strategies are obviously needed, perhaps strategies that focus on asking teachers to read and discuss specific titles during preservice coursework, inservice workshops, and department discussion groups, so that teachers can gain the familiarity with alternative texts that they now have with the texts that dominate the lists. (p. 18)

When Applebee looked again in 1993, he commented that “The overall impression of literature instruction that emerges from the present series of studies is one less of confusion than of complacency. During the past two decades, goals for and approaches to the teaching of literature have been taken for granted rather than closely examined” (p. 192). What was missing, he said, was

a well-articulated overall theory of the teaching and learning of literature, one that will give a degree of order and coherence to the daily decisions that teachers make about what and how to teach. Such a theory is needed to place the various critical traditions into perspective, highlighting the ways in which they can usefully complement one another in the classroom, as well as the ways they are contradictory. (Applebee, 1993, p. 202)

In other words, the best defense against censorship may be a fully articulated view of why texts both inside and outside of the traditional literary canon should be taught. The more teachers can be reflective—both inside and outside the classroom—about what they teach and why, the more they will create curricula that reflect the diversity and plurality of ideas inherent in American culture.

Curricular reform is only part of the picture, however. Teachers and administrators, especially, need to have plans in place to respond effectively to would-be censors. Davis (1992) said:

In the initial selection of materials, a decision to use a work needs to be justified and supported. . . . Taking the time and making the effort to prepare effective rationales allows teachers not only to preclude confrontation but also to become prepared to discuss and defend a book selection intelligently. (Davis, 1992, p. 177)

Rationales are the key to circumventing—or better yet, preventing—book challenges. If parents and other community members know that teachers have given careful thought into their book selec-

tions and syllabi, they will be much less likely to challenge those choices. Although most teachers think long and hard about the materials they are going to use in the classroom, many (if not most) parents and community members may not be aware of this process.

Another assertive option is teaching *about* censorship. “By exposing the issue to scrutiny,” Davis (1992) said, “teachers can help students learn why books are censored, by whom, and how it affects them and their communities” (p. 177-78). Most important, Davis (1992) said, “As we prepare for the fight, we need to remember that many of the books that appear on censors' lists affirm life. They are not immoral, and thus teachers and librarians must challenge anyone who interferes with our right to teach them or with readers' right to read them” (p. 179). Teachers must not only prepare for and resist censorship; they also need to speak out about *why* it's such a bad idea. Highlighting the contrast between book censorship and the ideals of democracy is a good place to start.

Literary works such as the ones mentioned in this paper confront racism, sexuality, religion, abuse; they are frequently discomfiting, sometimes shocking, and often profane. They are worth teaching, though, because they also demonstrate the value of perseverance, tolerance, kindness, generosity, honesty, and stubbornness. They allow young people of all races, religions, and sexualities to experience love and acceptance. They also paint an honest picture of the difficulties, degradations, and the joys young adults actually experience in their lives. The NCTE insisted that

English teachers must be free to employ books, classic or contemporary, which do not lie to the young about the perilous but wondrous times we live in, books which talk of the fears, hopes, joys, and frustrations people experience, books about people not only as they are but as they can be. English teachers forced through the pressures of censorship to use only safe or antiseptic works are placed in the morally and intellectually untenable position of lying to their students about the nature and condition of mankind. (NCTE, 2010)

In other words, teachers distort the truth when they sanitize the material they put into the hands of young people. Schwartz (1979) took much the same position: “Good literature tells the truth, mainly. Bad adolescent literature pretends to tell the truth but confuses sentimentality with sentiment, panders to the cheap triumph, and sacrifices the universal for the topical” (p. 11). As they begin to make their way in the world, young people need to be able (on their own) to distinguish between sentimentality and true sentiment, between easy success and hard-won victory. As Chris Crutcher told an interviewer (Carter, 2000): “It’s risky business letting people have their own lives, particularly if they are our children. It’s risky business giving up ownership, which, by the way, we never had in the first place”. Yes, these works could be seen as dangerous, but life is dangerous, and children, eventually, have to face it on their own, maybe with some literary models—and teachers—to guide them.

References

- Alexie, S. (2007). *The absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian*. New York: Little, Brown.
- American Library Association. (2010). *100 most frequently challenged books 1990-1999; 2000-2009*. Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/frequently_challenged.
- American Library Association. *Library bill of rights*. (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/index.cfm>.
- Anderson, L. (2006). *Speak*. New York: Penguin.
- Applebee, A.N. (1989). *A study of book-length works taught in high school English courses*. Albany NY: Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature.

- Applebee, A. N. (1993). *Literature in the secondary school: studies of curriculum and instruction in the United States*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.
- Beach, R., Appleman, D., Hynds, S. & Wilhelm, W. (2006). *Teaching literature to adolescents*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Burke, J. (2003). *The English teacher's companion*. (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Bushman, J. H., & Haas, K.P. (2001). *Using young adult literature in the classroom*. (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Carter, B. (2000). Eyes wide open. [Interview with Chris Crutcher]. *School Library Journal*, 46, 42-45.
- Cormier, R. (1986). *The chocolate war*. New York: Dell.
- Crutcher, C. (1991). *Athletic shorts*. New York: Greenwillow.
- Crutcher, C. (1993). *Staying fat for sarah byrnes*. New York: Greenwillow.
- Crutcher, C. (1995). *Ironman*. New York: Greenwillow.
- Crutcher, C. (2001). *Whale talk*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Crutcher, C. (2003). *King of the mild frontier*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Crutcher, C. (2005). *The sledding hill*. New York: Greenwillow.
- Davis, J. (1992). Censorship and the young adult novel. In V. Monseau & G. Salvner (Eds.) *Reading their world: The young adult novel in the classroom* (168-82). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- DelFattore, J. (1992). *What johnny shouldn't read: Textbook censorship in America*. New Haven: Yale.
- Doyle, R. P. (2007). *Banned books*. Chicago: American Library Association.

- Foerstel, H. N. (2002). *Banned in the U.S.A.: A reference guide to book censorship in schools and public libraries*. New York: Greenwood.
- Garden, N. (1982). *Annie on my mind*. New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux.
- Hauptman, P. (2004). *Godless*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Kerr, M.E. (1995). *Deliver us from Evie*. New York: HarperTeen.
- Levithan, D. (2003). *Boy meets boy*. New York: Knopf.
- Lowry, L. (1993). *The giver*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- National Council of Teachers of English. *Guideline on the students' right to read*. (2010) Retrieved from <http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/righttoreadguideline>.
- National Network for Educational Renewal. *Mission statement*. (2010) Retrieved from <http://www.nnerpartnerships.org/about/mission.htm>.
- National Network for Educational Renewal. *Twenty postulates*. (2010) Retrieved from <http://ieiseattle.org/Publications/postulates.htm>.
- Newman, L. (1989). *Heather has two mommies*. New York: Alyson.
- Noll, E. (1994). The ripple effect of censorship: Silencing in the classroom." *English Journal*, 83, 59-64.
- Paterson, K. (1977). *Bridge to Terebithia*. New York: Harper-Collins.
- Patterson, K. (1978). *The great Gilly Hopkins*. New York: Harper-Collins.
- Richardson, J. & Parnell, P. (2005). *And Tango makes three*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Schwartz, S. (1979). *Teaching adolescent literature: A humanistic approach*. Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden.
- Sebold, A. (2002). *The lovely bones*. New York: Little, Brown.

Taylor, M. (1976). *Roll of thunder, hear my cry*. New York: Dell.

Taylor, M. (1992). *The road to Memphis*. New York: Puffin.

Voigt, C. (1981). *Homecoming*. New York: Ballantine.

Wilhoite, M. (1994). *Daddy's roommate*. New York: Alyson.

Zevin, G. (2007). *Elsewhere*. New York: Square Fish

Caren J. Town is professor of English at Georgia Southern University. She teaches courses in adolescent literature and language arts methods courses. She has been a member of NNER for nearly a decade and serves on the Tripartite and Governing Councils.