

Who Reads?

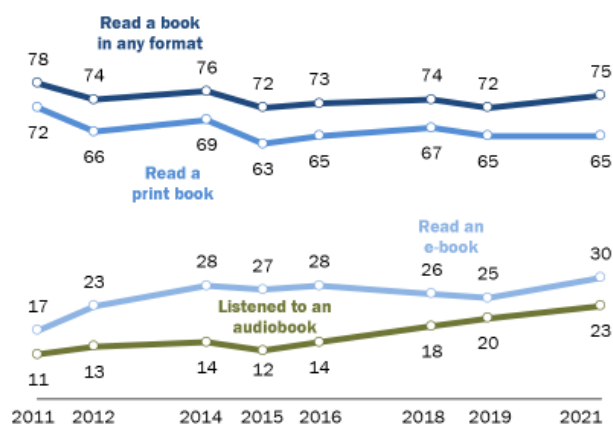
Document 1 a - Three-in-ten Americans now read e-books

The Pew Research Center, January 6 2022

Americans are spreading their book consumption across several formats. The share of adults who have read print books in the past 12 months still outpaces the share using other forms, but 30% now say they have read an e-book in that time frame.

Print books continue to be more popular than e-books or audiobooks

% of U.S. adults who say they have ____ in the previous 12 months



Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Overall, 75% of U.S. adults say they have read a book in the past 12 months in any format, whether completely or part way through, a figure that has remained largely unchanged since 2011, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted from Jan. 25 to Feb. 8, 2021. Print books remain the most popular format for reading, with 65% of adults saying that they have read a print book in the past year.

While shares of print book readers and audiobook listeners remain mostly unchanged from a Center survey conducted in 2019, there has been an uptick in the share of Americans who report reading e-books, from 25% to 30%.

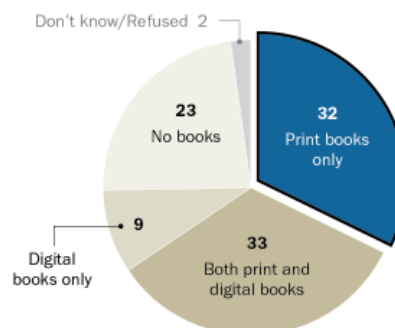
How we did this

Americans read an average (mean) of roughly 14 books during the previous 12 months and the typical (median) American read five books in that period, according to

the survey. These figures [are identical to 2011](#), when the Center first began conducting surveys of Americans' book reading habits.

A third of Americans say they read both print and digital books in the past year

% of U.S. adults who say they have read ____ in the previous 12 months



Note: The "digital books" category includes both e-books and audiobooks.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Demographic differences in book reading in 2021 are similar to the patterns seen in past [Center surveys](#). For example, adults who have a bachelor's or advanced degree are more likely to be book readers than those who have only attended some college and those with a high school education or less, and adults ages 18 to 29 are more likely to read books than those 65 and older. At the same time, patterns of book consumption among a few groups changed since 2019. Some examples:

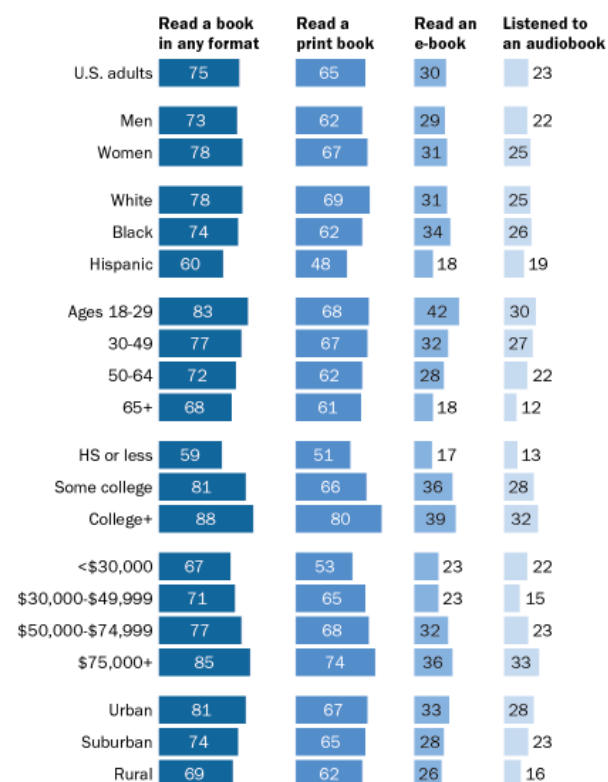
Adults with lower incomes – The share of adults with an annual household income of less than \$30,000 who have listened to an audiobook has increased 8 percentage points since 2019 (22% vs. 14%).

Urban adults – The share of American adults living in urban communities who say they have read a book in any format in the previous 12 months grew from 75% in 2019 to 81% now – an increase of 6 percentage points.

The table below covers how different groups reported their reading habits in the survey.

College graduates especially likely to say they read books in any format

% of U.S. adults who say they have ____ in the previous 12 months



Note: Those who gave other answers or no answer are not shown. White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Document 1b - 40% of Britons haven't read a single book in the last 12 months

Yougov.co.uk, March 05, 2025 Full results with graphs [HERE](#)

The median Briton has read just three books in the past year

It's World Book Day this week, when millions of British schoolchildren will receive a voucher to spend on a book of their choice. [The day is designed to encourage children to read for fun](#) and hold on to that habit for life.

At present, though, reading is far from a universal habit among British adults. In the last year, the median Briton has only read or listened to three books, with 40% of the public not reading or listening to a single book in that time.

A quarter of Britons (23%) say they have read or listened to between one and five books in the last year, with a further 10% reading or listening to between six and ten, and an extra 10% consuming between 11 and 20 books. There are a small number of mega-readers, with 4% saying they have read more than 50 books, i.e. roughly one or more books a week on average.

Not all Britons are equally likely to pick up a book. While two-thirds of women (66%) say they have read or listened to a book in the last year, just over half of men (53%) say they have.

Older Britons are also more likely to be readers, with 65% of over 65s and 63% of 50-64 year olds having read at least one book or listened to one audiobook in the last year, compared to 57% of 25-49 year olds and 53% of 18-24 year olds.

There is also something of a class divide in reading, with 66% of those living in middle class households (i.e. categorised as ABC1 in the NRS social grade scale), having read or listened to a book in the last 12 months, compared to just 52% those living in working class (C2DE) households.

When are Britons reading?

Half of Britons (50%) say they read or listen to books at least once a week, including 37% who say they read at least most days, and 20% of the public professing to read every day. Just 15% of Britons say they 'never' read or listen to books at all. Women are roughly twice as likely to be daily readers, with 27% of women reading every day, compared to 13% of men. Of those who say they ever read or listen to books, most say they do so when going to bed (57%), in their free time during the day (56%) or while on holiday (54%). Around one in five

readers do so while commuting (19%) or travelling outside of commuting (22%), while one in nine readers (11%) find a time to read or listen to books during breaks at work.

Paper, pixel or headphone: how are Britons reading/listening to books?

Nowadays, reading is not necessarily a case of picking up a paper copy of a book, with e-books and audiobooks becoming an increasingly common way of consuming books. Indeed, 18% of those who have read or listened to a book in the last year never did so using a physical book.

Overall, 40% of those who read at least one book in the last year read a digital or e-book, and 30% listened to an audiobook.

The traditional form does, however, remain the norm. Among those who have consumed at least one book in the past 12

months, physical books are the main way of reading for 61%, while 24% have usually or only read e-books and 14% listen to audiobooks as the norm.

Six in ten of those who have read an e-book in the last year (59%) have typically done so on a specialised device (such as a Kindle), while 20% have primarily read their books on a mobile phone and 18% on a tablet.

But while a growing number of Britons might be using audiobooks, most (53%) do not consider listening to one to be the equivalent of having read the same book. Only 29% of Britons say that listening to an audiobook is the same as having physically read that book, although that rises to 69% of those who have listened to an audiobook in the last 12 months, and 78% among those who say it is their main way of consuming books.

Book Bans

Document 3 - America's barmy battle to ban bawdy books 🎧

Organised puritans are invading school libraries

The Economist, Aug 7th 2025

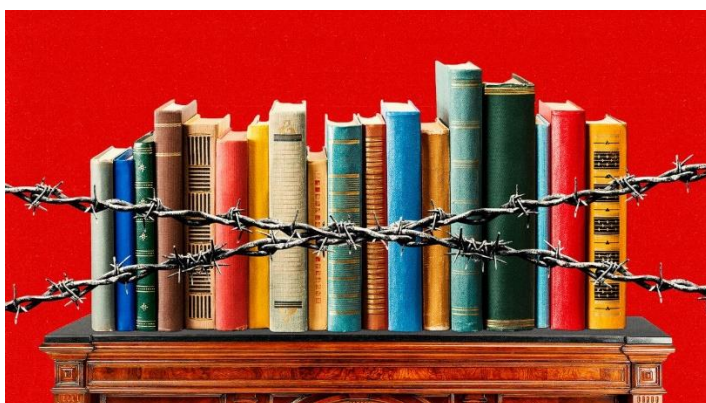


Illustration: Javier Palma

“With one long claw, he shredded through silk and lace, and my undergarment fell away in pieces.” Sex with a shape-shifting fairy who is sometimes part-wolf, part-bear is not everyone’s cup of tea. But many teenagers and young adults love reading about such things. Sarah J. Maas, a leading writer of “romantasy” fiction, has sold more than 75m novels. This horrifies those who think both witchcraft and fornication are detestable in the eyes of God. Which is why five of Ms Maas’s works—including “A Court of Thorns and Roses”, from which the quote above is taken—are among the most-banned books in American schools.

Book bans are increasingly common in America. According to PEN America, a free-speech group, there were roughly 10,000 in 2023-24, a four-fold rise in two years. PEN defines a ban as the removal or restriction of a title from school libraries because of its content,

often at the behest of worried parents or bossy politicians.

The themes that get books banned are as predictable as the use of phrases like “a ravenous, unyielding sort of hunger” in wolf-fairy bedroom scenes. Of the titles barred from two or more school districts, more than half had sexual content (see chart). Some of this was pretty mild. Monroe County, Tennessee, proscribed a work that had a classical nude statue on the cover.

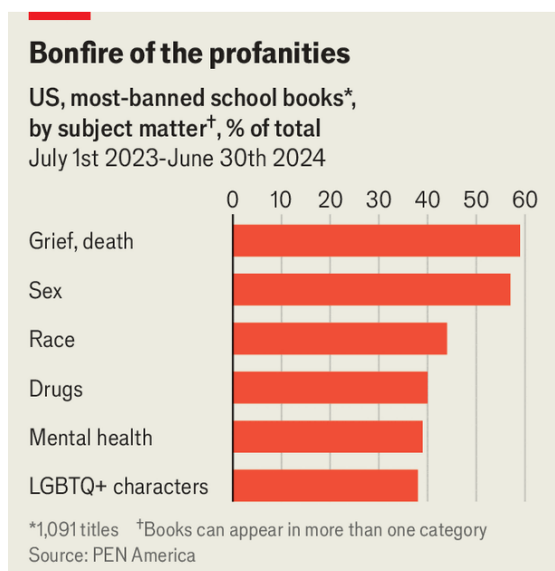


Chart:

The Economist

Titles that deal with teenage trauma upset parents. Ellen Hopkins has three novels in the most-banned top ten for her frank depictions of drug-taking, self-harm and prostitution. Stories about racism raise hackles, too: some schools shield pupils even from classics by Maya Angelou (“I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”) and Alice Walker (“The Colour Purple”).

Books that allude to homosexuality are vulnerable; those that deal with transgender issues, even more so. The most banned book of all is Jodi Picoult’s “Nineteen Minutes”, a novel about a school shooting. The chief objection to it is not that it might inspire copycat murders but that it depicts a date rape. Another often-purged work is “The Handmaid’s Tale”, which describes a dystopia in which women are not allowed to read. Irony is lost on book-banners.

Some states, such as Florida and Iowa, are especially censorious. Florida’s governor, Ron DeSantis, is on a mission to expel wokery from schools. Iowa’s “parental rights” law holds teachers personally liable if students have access to inappropriate books, prompting time-pressed administrators to ask ChatGPT whether

volumes include naughty bits. This method is quick but unreliable: just as humans fantasise about sex, AIs hallucinate about it.

The debate over which books are suitable for children has been as calm as werewolf sex. Martha Hickson, a school librarian in New Jersey, was asked by the school superintendent to remove a graphic novel with a lesbian protagonist. She refused, noting that the protocol for challenging it had not been followed.

A furious group of parents accused her of being a pornographer and a paedophile. Videos spreading these baseless allegations circulated on social media. “They’re working from a script,” Ms Hickson says of the campaigners, whom she describes as organised Christian nationalists. Her car was vandalised and she had to install security cameras in her home. She says some librarians shun controversial titles to avoid similar harassment.

Reasonable people can disagree about what should be taught in schools. Plenty of moderate parents object when their kids are taught contentious theories about gender identity or collective racial guilt, which is why Republicans have made it a campaign issue. However, activists cannot hear what is said in class, so books are an easier target than teachers. Anyone can find which volumes are in a library and search them for keywords.

Partisanship inflames matters. In years between elections, activists can keep their side angry and energised by picking battles with librarians who supposedly debauch innocent young minds. President Joe Biden thought censorship was a problem and appointed a “book ban co-ordinator” to look into it. One of the first acts of Donald Trump’s education department was to call this “Biden’s Book Ban Hoax” and eliminate the position.

Culture warriors cheered. Others fear that senseless censorship seriously damages your shelf. ■

Document 4 - ‘Rampant’ Book Bans Are Being Taken for Granted, Free Speech Group Warns

A new report from PEN America tracks restrictions on school books across 45 states.

By [Elizabeth A. Harris](#), *The New York Times*, Oct. 1, 2025

Restrictions on books in public schools have become “rampant and common,” according to a new report by the free speech organization PEN America, so frequent in some states that they are now considered “routine and expected part of school operations.”

Kasey Meehan, director of PEN America’s Freedom to Read program, said the frequency and breadth of

restrictions over the past four years has begun to desensitize Americans to the banning of books in schools. “There’s this numbness we have,” Meehan said, “toward not just book bans, but restrictions on education that are showing up in many ways across our public school system.”

When PEN America began tracking book bans, most of the activity took place on the local level, where national

organizations and parent groups targeted one school board meeting at a time.

Then states like Florida got involved, passing legislation that made it easier to prohibit certain reading material in public schools. Those laws had a chilling effect, PEN said, as district officials who worried about being out of compliance proactively pulled books off shelves.

More recently, the federal government has had a say in which books are appropriate for children. In the wake of President Trump's executive orders on education, a school system for military families run by the Department of Defense removed nearly 600 books this year, according to PEN America.

An A.C.L.U. lawsuit arguing that the move infringed on the First Amendment rights of students listed several of the titles, including Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," Khaled Hosseini's "The Kite Runner" and a book about L.G.B.T.Q. figures called "A Queer History of the United States."

Books with gay and lesbian themes continue to be a flashpoint. In June, the Supreme Court weighed in, ruling that at a public school district in Maryland, parents with religious objections could opt their children out of classroom instruction about books with L.G.B.T.Q. themes.

In the 2024-25 school year, PEN found that more than 3,750 unique titles were banned in 87 school districts across the country. Over the last four school years, the organization has tracked nearly 23,000 cases of book bans across 45 states. Those numbers, which are based on publicly available information, posted on district websites and gathered by local journalists, are almost certainly an undercount.

Schools and libraries have long had mechanisms for questioning what is on their shelves, but in recent years,

parents and activist groups have argued that the protocols in place were not sufficient, and that parents should have the ultimate authority over what books their children read. But Meehan said the current environment actually takes agency away from many parents. In Utah, for example, any book banned in at least three school districts is prohibited across all 41 districts statewide.

"We have decisions being made in, let's say, the northern part of Utah that affect every part of the state, but opinions may vary across families, across students, across educators," Meehan said. "Elected leaders are having a heavy-handed role in what's available for students in libraries."

PEN considers a book "banned" if it was removed from the classroom or library circulation, either permanently or while the book was under review. PEN also considers a book banned if access to it is restricted or diminished.

Among the most banned books of the 2024-25 school year, according to PEN America, were "A Clockwork Orange," by Anthony Burgess; "Breathless," a coming-of-age novel by Jennifer Niven; "Sold," by Patricia McCormick, a National Book Award finalist about a girl from Nepal sold into sexual slavery; and "Last Night at the Telegraph Club," a queer young adult novel by Malinda Lo, which won a National Book Award.

The list also includes "A Court of Mist and Fury" by Sarah J. Maas, an enormously successful fantasy author whose books have sold tens of millions of copies.

According to the report, many of the books most often targeted in recent years address themes of race or racism, or have L.G.B.T.Q. characters. Some, like Maia Kobabe's graphic memoir "Gender Queer," have dropped off the organization's most banned list, likely because they are no longer available in many schools around the country.

Document 5 - The history of book bans—and their changing targets—in the U.S.

Recent years have seen a record-breaking number of attempts to ban books. Here's how book banning emerged—and how it turned school libraries into battlegrounds.

National Geographic, September 20, 2024 – HISTORY & CULTURE

Mark Twain. Harriet Beecher Stowe. William Shakespeare. These names share something more than a legacy of classic literature and a place on school curriculums: They're just some of the many authors whose work has been banned from classrooms over the years for content deemed controversial, obscene, or otherwise objectionable by authorities.

Judy Blume is on this esteemed list. Her 1970 best seller *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* has been challenged in schools across the United States for its portrayal of female puberty and religion.

Even Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* has been targeted for censorship—not for its depiction of a young Jewish girl whose family is persecuted by Nazi Germany, but for the passages where the teen discusses her changing body.

Book banning never seems to leave the headlines. In fact, the American Library Association reports that there were a record-breaking number of attempts to ban books in 2023—up 65 percent from the previous year, which was itself a record-breaking year. As the organization notes, "the voices and lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ and

BIPOC individuals made up 47 percent of those targeted in censorship attempts."

Though censorship is as old as writing, its targets have shifted over the centuries. Here's how book banning emerged in the United States—stretching as far back as when some of the nation's territories were British colonies—and how censorship affects modern readers today.

Religion in the early colonial era

Most of the earliest book bans were spurred by religious leaders, and by the time Great Britain founded its colonies in America, it had a longstanding history of book censorship. In 1650, prominent Massachusetts Bay colonist William Pynchon published *The Meritorious Price of Our Redemption*, a pamphlet that argued that anyone who was obedient to God and followed Christian teachings on Earth could get into heaven. This flew in the face of Puritan Calvinist beliefs that only a special few were predestined for God's favor.

Outraged, Pynchon's fellow colonists denounced him as a heretic, burned his pamphlet, and banned it—the first event of its kind in what would later become the U.S. Only four copies of his controversial tract survive today.

Slavery and the Civil War

In the first half of the 19th century, materials about the nation's most incendiary issue, the enslavement of people, alarmed would-be censors in the South. By the 1850s, multiple states had outlawed expressing anti-slavery sentiments—which abolitionist author Harriet Beecher Stowe defied in 1851 with the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a novel that aimed to expose the evils of slavery.

In 1851, Harriet Beecher Stowe agreed to "paint a word picture of slavery" for an abolitionist newspaper. Her story, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, became an instant bestseller—and drew the ire of Southern slaveholders, who burned copies and banned it from bookshelves.

Photograph by Fine Art Images, Heritage Images/Getty

As historian Claire Parfait notes, the book was publicly burned and banned by slaveholders along with other anti-slavery books. In Maryland, free Black minister Sam Green was sentenced to 10 years in the state penitentiary for owning a copy of the book.

As the Civil War roiled in the 1860s, the pro-slavery South continued to ban abolitionist materials while Union authorities banned pro-Southern literature like John Esten Cook's biography of Stonewall Jackson.

A war against 'immorality'

In 1873, the war against books went federal with the passage of the Comstock Act, a congressional law that made it illegal to possess "obscene" or "immoral" texts or articles or send them through the mail. Championed by moral crusader Anthony Comstock, the laws were designed to ban both content about sexuality and birth

control—which at the time, was widely available via mail order.

The law criminalized the activities of birth control advocates and forced popular pamphlets like Margaret Sanger's *Family Limitation* underground, restricting the dissemination of knowledge about contraception at a time when open discussion about sexuality was taboo and infant and maternal mortality were rampant. It remained in effect until 1936. (*Read more about the complex early history of abortion in the United States.*)

Meanwhile, obscenity was also a prime target in Boston, the capital of the state that had sanctioned the first book burning in the U.S. Boston's book censors challenged everything they considered "indecent," from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, which the society's president called a "darling morsel of literary filth," to Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*.

The New England Watch and Ward Society, a private organization that included many of Boston's most elite residents, petitioned against printed materials they found objectionable, sued booksellers, pressured law enforcement and courts to bring obscenity charges against authors, and spurred the Boston Public Library to lock copies of the most controversial books, including books by Balzac and Zola, in a restricted room known as the Inferno.

By the 1920s, Boston was so notorious for banning books that authors intentionally printed their books there in hopes that the inevitable ban would give them a publicity boost elsewhere in the country.

Schools and libraries become battlegrounds

Even as social mores relaxed in the 20th century, school libraries remained sites of contentious battles about what kind of information should be available to children in an age of social progress and the modernization of American society. Parents and administrators grappled over both fiction and nonfiction during school board and library commission meetings.

The reasons for the proposed bans varied: Some books challenged longstanding narratives about American history or social norms; others were deemed problematic for its language or for sexual or political content.

The Jim Crow-era South was a particular hotbed for book censorship. The United Daughters of the Confederacy made several successful attempts to ban school textbooks that did not offer a sympathetic view of the South's loss in the Civil War. There were also attempts to ban *The Rabbits' Wedding*, a 1954 children's book by Garth Williams that depicted a white rabbit marrying a black rabbit, because opponents felt it encouraged interracial relationships.

These attempted bans tended to have a chilling effect on librarians afraid to acquire material that could be considered controversial. But some school and public

librarians began to organize instead. They responded to a rash of challenges against books McCarthy-era censors felt encouraged Communism or socialism during the 1950s and fought attempted bans on books like *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and even *The Canterbury Tales*.

A constitutional right to read

In 1969, the Supreme Court weighed in on students' right to free expression. In *Tinker v. Des Moines*, a case involving students who wore black armbands protesting the Vietnam War to school, the court ruled 7-2 that "neither teachers nor students shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."

In 1982, the Supreme Court overtly addressed schoolbooks in a case involving a group of students who sued a New York school board for removing books by authors like Kurt Vonnegut and Langston Hughes that the board deemed "anti-American, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, and just plain filthy."

"Local school boards may not remove books from school libraries simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books," the court ruled in *Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico*, citing students' First Amendment rights.

Nonetheless, librarians contended with so many book challenges in the early 1980s that they created Banned Book Week, an annual event centered around the freedom to read. During Banned Book Week, the literary and library community raises awareness about commonly challenged books and First Amendment freedoms.

Modern censorship

Still, book challenges are more common than ever. Between July 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022 alone, there were 1,586 book bans in 86 school districts across 26 states—affecting more than two million students, according to PEN America, a nonprofit that advocates for free speech. Stories featuring LGBTQ+ issues or protagonists were a "major target" of bans, the group wrote, while other targets included book with storylines about race and racism, sexual content or sexual assault, and death and grief. Texas led the charge against books; its 713 bans were nearly double that of other states. According to the American Library Association, the most challenged book of 2023 was Maia Kobabe's *Gender Queer*, a memoir about what it means to be nonbinary. Other books on the most-challenged list include Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

First Amendment advocate Pat Scales, a veteran South Carolina middle- and high-school librarian and former chair of the ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee, notes that outright censorship is only one face of book bans. Shelving books in inaccessible places, defacing them, or marking them with reading levels that put them out of students' reach also keep books out of would-be readers' hands, and challenges of any kind can create a chilling effect for librarians.

"Censorship is about control," Scales wrote in 2007 in the book *Scales on Censorship*. "Intellectual freedom is about respect."

Document 6 – AUDIO- Why Book Bans are so hard to stop

All Things Considered, NPR, September 27, 2024

<https://www.npr.org/2024/09/27/nx-s1-5114238/why-book-bans-have-been-so-hard-to-stop>

- The Most active parents' group behind the bans is Moms for Liberty <https://www.momsforliberty.org/>
- See the **Pen America** Website on Book bans

Document 7 - Book Bans - Should Parents or Other Adults Be Able to Ban Books from Schools and Libraries?

<https://www.britannica.com/procon/book-bans-debate>

In some places, at least. A brief world tour of book bans in the 21st century

The Economist, Feb 24th 2023

OVID WAS exiled by Augustus Caesar to a bleak village on the Black Sea. His satirical guide to seduction, “The Art of Love”, was banished from Roman libraries. In 1121 Peter Abelard, known for his writings on logic and his passion for Héloïse, was forced by the Catholic church to burn his own book. And in perhaps the most famous modern example of hostility to literature, Iran called for the murder of Salman Rushdie, author of “The Satanic Verses”, in 1989. For its perceived blasphemy, the novel remains banned in at least a dozen countries from Senegal to Singapore. Book-banning remains a favourite tool of the autocrat and the fundamentalist, who are both genuinely threatened by the wayward ideas that literature can contain. In democracies books can provoke a different sort of panic. Armies, prisons, prim parents and progressive zealots all seek to censor literature they fear could overthrow their values. Bans on books that shock, mock or titillate reveal much about a time and place. They invariably attract legions of curious readers, too. Here are eight books you shouldn’t read.

Lajja. By Taslima Nasrin. Translated by Anchita Ghatak. *Viking-Penguin India*; 337 pages; \$13 and £9.99

Lesser-known than the *fatwa* condemning Sir Salman to death, but probably inspired by it, is that aimed at Taslima Nasrin for “Lajja” (Bengali for “shame”). Her novel depicts the revenge meted out by Muslims to **Bangladesh’s** Hindu minority after a Hindu mob tore down a mosque in Ayodhya in India in 1992. It observes the Dutta family, who still bear the scars of earlier spasms of anti-Hindu violence; each member of the family deals in their own way with the latest. Bangladesh’s government banned the book. Ms Nasrin fled to Sweden and won the European Parliament’s Sakharov prize for freedom of thought in 1994. Photocopies of “Lajja” spread in Bangladesh; in India, Hindu fundamentalists distributed it as propaganda on buses and trains. Yet her novel was less about the conflict between Hindus and Muslims, said Ms Nasrin, than about that “between humanism and barbarism, between those who value freedom and those who do not”. The story still reverberates: a [temple to Ram](#), a Hindu god, will open in 2024 on the site of the destroyed mosque.

Friend. By Paek Nam Nyong. Translated by Immanuel Kim. *Columbia University Press*; 288 pages; \$20 and £14.99

“Friend” is the first novel approved by North Korea’s totalitarian regime to be available in English. Published in 1988, it is a beloved classic there. A compassionate account of characters caught up in marital strife and disappointed by their spouses, it is based on Paek Nam Nyong’s experience of sitting in on North Korean divorce hearings. An illuminating afterword by the book’s translator, who has met Mr Paek, situates it within North Korea’s literary output. It is the government of the country’s democratic neighbour, South Korea, that has banned the book for some readers. “Friend” is sold in the South’s bookstores. But its defence ministry includes it in a list of 23 “seditious books” banned for reading in the **South Korean army** (among them are two by Noam Chomsky, a linguist with radical politics). This prohibition applies to all male citizens for the 18 months, or more, of their mandatory military service. The ministry’s apparent fear is that a sympathetic portrait of South Korea’s hostile northern neighbour could undermine soldiers’ resolve to defend their country. Readers of “Friend” can expect some socialist-realist moralising. But this novel’s power is in its depiction of ordinary lives.

The Devils’ Dance. By Hamid Ismailov. Translated by Donald Rayfield. *Tilted Axis Press*; 200 pages; £12

When Hamid Ismailov was forced to flee Uzbekistan in 1992, he stood accused by his government of “unacceptable democratic tendencies”. In exile ever since, Mr Ismailov has written more than a dozen novels. All are banned in **Uzbekistan**. Aptly, “The Devils’ Dance”—the first of his Uzbek novels to be translated into English—reimagines the lives of real Uzbek dissident intellectuals during their time in prison before their executions in 1938. They include the protagonist, Abdulla Qodiriy, a poet and playwright, and Cho’lpon, who translated Shakespeare into Uzbek. When Qodiriy was locked up by Stalin’s secret police a novel he had been writing on 19th-century khans, spies and poet-queens was destroyed. Mr Ismailov imagines that Qodiriy reconstructs in his cell the novel he had been writing. (We [reviewed](#) the book in translation in 2018.)

The Bluest Eye. By Toni Morrison. *Vintage International*; 206 pages; \$16 and £9.99

[Toni Morrison's](#) celebrated novel about beauty and racial self-hatred has long appeared on lists of books banned in some of **America's high schools**. Parents complain about passages that depict sexual violence; teachers counter that such topics are best broached in the classroom. "The Bluest Eye" was the fourth-most-banned book in the school year ending in 2022, says PEN America, a free-speech body. (Ahead of it were two on LGBT themes and a novel about an interracial teen couple.) The American Library Association (ALA) says that its tally of ban requests from school boards and removals from library shelves has never been so high: 1,600 titles in 2021. The political stakes have grown. In 2016 Virginia's legislature passed the "Beloved bill"—named for another of Morrison's controversial novels—to allow parents to exempt their children from reading assignments if they consider the material to be sexually explicit. The state's Democratic governor vetoed the bill; his opposition to it was one reason he lost a bid for re-election to a Republican in 2021. "There is some hysteria associated with the idea of reading that is all out of proportion to what is in fact happening when one reads," Morrison said—more than 40 years ago.

China in Ten Words. By Yu Hua. Translated by Allan H. Barr. *Duckworth*; 240 pages; £8.99

China's government keeps tight control over printed matter: publication codes such as ISBNs are allocated, with rare exceptions, only to state-run publishers; censors scrutinise works before they go to print. But the boundaries for fiction can be more fluid. That let Yu Hua become a best-selling author in his native country of novels that depict China's journey from the brutality of the Cultural Revolution to the dislocations wrought by materialism. But Mr Yu saw commonalities between history and the present, and to expand on these he turned to non-fiction: "China in Ten Words", a collection of essays each built around a Mandarin term, is a mixture of memoir and meditation on past and contemporary China. It could not be published there. The first chapter, "People", refers to the bloodshed at Tiananmen Square in 1989. Mr Yu refused to excise it. In expounding on words from "Revolution" to "Bamboozle" he offers a view of how China got to where it is.

Piccolo Uovo. By Francesca Pardi. Illustrated by Altan. *Lo Stampatello*; 22 pages; €11.90
And Tango Makes Three. By Peter Parnell and Justin

Richardson. Illustrated by Henry Cole. *Little Simon*; 36 pages; \$8.99 and £7.99

What harm could one small, anthropomorphic egg do? A lot, if you ask the mayor of Venice. In 2015, within days of being sworn in, Luigi Brugnaro ordered **Venetian nursery schools** to ban 49 children's books deemed a threat to "traditional" families. Uproar ensued, and Mr Brugnaro agreed to reinstate all but two of the books. One still off-limits is "Piccolo Uovo", a delightful tale inspired by the real story of a penguin egg adopted by two male penguins in New York's Central Park Zoo. Piccolo uovo ("Little egg") is afraid to hatch because it wonders what its family will look like. It goes on a journey to meet families of many compositions and colours, and is satisfied that all are magnificent. Readers old and young who do not speak Italian might instead seek out an American children's book about the same penguins that makes the same point: "And Tango Makes Three" has appeared on nine occasions in the ALA's annual list of top-ten books banned from **American libraries**.

The Bible. By various authors. Translated by various people. *Various publishers*; *varying numbers of pages*; *various prices*

Parts are deemed by some religious traditions to be the word of God. Others bring the good news of Jesus. But the two-volume work has its first murder in its fourth chapter. And there is no mistaking the erotic charge of the Song of Songs. In June 2023 a school district in **Utah** removed the King James version of the Bible from the shelves of elementary and middle-school libraries under a state law that permits the ban of "instructional material that is pornographic or indecent". But this petition was brought by a parent frustrated with bans of other books, including "The Bluest Eye". Upset by the stunt, conservatives accused the parent of seeking to undermine Utah's efforts to protect children from pornography. The Bible banner seems to share the perspective of Leviticus 24: "eye for eye, tooth for tooth". ■

BOOK REVISION

Document 9 - Roald Dahl books rewritten to remove language deemed offensive

Augustus Gloop now 'enormous' instead of 'fat', Mrs Twit no longer 'ugly' and Oompa Loompas are gender neutral
The Observer (with the Daily Telegraph), Sat 18 Feb 2023

Roald Dahl's children's books are being rewritten to remove language deemed offensive by the publisher Puffin. Puffin has hired sensitivity readers to rewrite chunks of the author's text to make sure the books "can continue to be enjoyed by all today", resulting in extensive changes across Dahl's work.

Edits have been made to descriptions of characters' physical appearances. The word "fat" has been cut from every new edition of relevant books, while the word "ugly" has also been culled, [the Daily Telegraph reported](#). Augustus Gloop in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is now described as "enormous". In *The Twits*, Mrs Twit is no longer "ugly and beastly" but just "beastly".

Hundreds of changes were made to the original text – and some passages not written by Dahl have been added. But the Roald Dahl Story Company said "it's not unusual to review the language" during a new print run and any changes were "small and carefully considered".

In *The Witches*, a paragraph explaining that witches are bald beneath their wigs ends with the new line: "There are plenty of other reasons why women might wear wigs and there is certainly nothing wrong with that."

In previous editions of *James and the Giant Peach*, the Centipede sings: "Aunt Sponge was terrifically fat / And tremendously flabby at that," and, "Aunt Spiker was thin as a wire / And dry as a bone, only drier."

Both verses have been removed, and in their place are the rhymes: "Aunt Sponge was a nasty old brute / And deserved to be squashed by the fruit," and, "Aunt Spiker was much of the same / And deserves half of the blame."

References to "female" characters have disappeared. Miss Trunchbull in *Matilda*, once a "most formidable female", is now a "most formidable woman".

Gender-neutral terms have been added in places – where Charlie and the Chocolate Factory's Oompa Loompas were "small men", they are now "small people". The Cloud-Men in *James and the Giant Peach* have become Cloud-People. The words "black" and "white" have been removed: characters no longer turn "white with fear" and the Big Friendly Giant in *The BFG* cannot wear a black cloak.

The changes were made by the publisher, Puffin, and the Roald Dahl Story Company, now owned by Netflix, with sensitivity readers hired to scrutinise the text. The review began in 2020, when the company was still run by the Dahl family. [Netflix acquired the literary estate in 2021](#) for a reported £500 million.

Puffin and the Roald Dahl Story Company made the changes in conjunction with Inclusive Minds, which its spokesperson describes as "a collective for people who are passionate about inclusion and accessibility in children's literature".

Alexandra Strick, a co-founder of Inclusive Minds, said they "aim to ensure authentic representation, by working closely with the book world and with those who have lived experience of any facet of diversity".

A notice from the publisher sits at the bottom of the copyright page of the latest editions of Dahl's books: "The wonderful words of Roald Dahl can transport you to different worlds and introduce you to the most marvellous characters. This book was written many years ago, and so we regularly review the language to ensure that it can continue to be enjoyed by all today."

Sensitivities over Dahl's stories were heightened when a 2020 Hollywood version of *The Witches* led to a backlash over its depiction of the Grand Witch, played by Anne Hathaway, with fingers missing from each hand.

Warner Bros was forced to make an apology after Paralympians and charities said it was offensive to the limb difference community.

That same year, the Dahl family and the company apologised for the author's past anti-Semitic statements.

Matthew Dennison, Dahl's biographer, said that the author - who died in 1990 - chose his vocabulary with care. "I'm almost certain that he would have recognised that alterations to his novels prompted by the political climate were driven by adults rather than children," he said.

Dans un essai paru chez Verdier, l'écrivaine Laure Murat entend poser calmement des termes clairs au débat sur la réécriture des classiques.

Intitulé "*Toutes les époques sont dégueulasses*", citation d'Antonin Artaud, l'essai de Laure Murat, écrivaine et professeur aux États-Unis, entend faire le bilan provisoire et dépassionné d'un grand débat de notre temps : la question de la réécriture des œuvres classiques. Un débat dans lequel volent en escadrille des tas de mots pièges, souvent anglais : la *Cancel culture*, le "wokisme", les *sensitivity readers*, la pensée décoloniale, l'intersectionnalité, le "totalitarisme d'atmosphère", bref des tas de termes minés et passionnels, que Laure Murat dispose avec sang-froid et pragmatisme, non sans, peut-être, les simplifier un peu trop.

<https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/le-regard-culturel/le-regard-culturel-chronique-du-jeudi-05-juin-2025-6901569>

Document 11 - Sujet IEP - Yes, Road Dahl was a bigot. But that's no excuse to rewrite his books

By Francine Prose, *The Guardian*, March 6th 2023

Recently it was announced that the novels of Roald Dahl, the notoriously bigoted but gifted and enduringly popular children's author, had been edited to eliminate words, phrases and sentiments that readers might find upsetting. Novels have been cleansed of negative references to a character's appearance, race or gender. "Enormously fat" had been changed to "enormous", "mothers" and "fathers" to the more gender-neutral "parents". The adjective "black" was eliminated, even in reference to objects. (...)

Dahl died in 1990. The changes were made by his estate in partnership with Inclusive Minds, an organization that promotes diversity in books for children. Plans were made to market the doctored books as providing a more reader-friendly experience. (...)

Just to be clear: I think it's wrong to rewrite the words of an author, living or dead, without the author's permission. Writers work hard to get their sentences right. Maybe Dahl preferred the sound of "enormously fat" to the sound of "enormous". (...) If the writer has used language that has, for all the right reasons, gone out of use, it's important to tell young readers that people used to say things and think about other people in ways that were wrong. We no longer use those words, we no longer subscribe to those stereotypes. If Dahl says a character is ugly, it's a teachable moment. (...)

Let's not ask if "enormous" is really less hurtful than "fat". Let's ignore the question of whether a child will become a bully, a misogynist, a racist or a serial killer after reading a Roald Dahl novel. If I were looking for where trouble starts, I'd check the families before the bookshelves. (...)

What was behind it, anyway? Several writers (...) have pointed to that rarest of motives: money. The tidying up of Dahl's work was a kind of rebranding, a marketing ploy designed to protect valuable intellectual property, and a wise move for Netflix, which has acquired the rights to Dahl's work. (...)

We don't want our children and grandchildren exposed, before they need to be, to the horrors of the not-nice world. But we also don't want them to get accustomed to being lied to. Why not trust our kids with the truth?

QUESTIONS

I. Reading Comprehension (6 points):

Instructions: In your own words, answer the following questions about the text using complete sentences. Concise answers are expected.

1. What has recently happened to Road Dahl's books? (1 pt)
2. What does "Inclusive Minds" (paragraph 2) try to achieve? (1 pt)

3. According to the author, what attitude should be adopted when it comes to children and reading? (2pts)
4. What does the author mean when she writes: "If Dahl says a character is ugly, it's a teachable moment" (paragraph 3)? (1 pt)
5. What does the author imply when she writes: "If I were looking for where trouble starts, I'd check the families before the bookshelves"(paragraph 4)? (1 pt)

II. Writing (14 points):

Instructions: Write an essay on the topic below (300 words, +/- 10 %). Feel free to provide examples from other countries or other historical periods.

Should children be protected from the horrors of the world?

BookTok

Document 12 – VIDEO - How [#BookTok](#) is giving authors and booksellers a much-needed boost



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPY0t7wppI0>

Document 13 - 'I can't stress how much BookTok sells': teen literary influencers swaying publishers

TikTok recommendations are driving sales and launching authors' careers as the social media app continues to reshape the industry

[David Barnett](#), *The Guardian*, Sun 6 Aug 202 08.00 CEST

The famous Waterstones in London's Piccadilly is a modernist/art deco building. It started life as a menswear store and has the feel of that sort of traditional shop that is fast disappearing. But this bookshop, like many others, is enjoying a very modern sales boost from social media.

Groups of teenage girls regularly gather here to buy new books and meet new friends, both discovered on the social media app TikTok. Recommendations by influencers for authors and novels on BookTok – a community of users who are passionate about books and make videos recommending titles – can send sales into the stratosphere. But while very much an online phenomenon, BookTok is having a material impact on the high street, with TikTok now pushing people to buy their books from bricks-and-mortar booksellers through a partnership with bookshop.org, which allows people to buy online and support independent bookshops at the same time.

Last year, Waterstones Piccadilly hosted a BookTok festival. One sales assistant told the *Observer*: "I can't stress how much BookTok sells books. It's driven huge sales of YA [young adult] and romance books, including titles such as *The Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller and authors such as Colleen Hoover.

"The demographic is almost exclusively teenage girls, but the power it has is huge. We have a 'BookTok recommended' table – and you can tell which books are trending by the speed at which they sell."

Caroline Hardman, a literary agent at the Hardman & Swainson agency, says: "It's driving the appetite for romance and 'romantasy' in a really big way, so it's having a strong effect on what publishers look for too."

BookTok was established in 2020 but this year brings new developments to a community which has so far been an organic phenomenon. This month, the winners of the inaugural TikTok book awards will be unveiled.

Users of the platform voted on a shortlist announced in May, with contenders for BookTok Book of the Year including *Honey & Spice* by Bolu Babalola, *Lies We Sing to the Sea* by Sarah Underwood, *Young Mungo* by Douglas Stuart and *Maame* by Jessica George.

There are also awards for BookTok influencers, independent bookshops, books to end a reading slump, and crucially, Best BookTok Revival, which has brought older novels to a new audience. The finalists in the revival category include *One Day* by David Nicholls, *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

James Stafford, a general manager at TikTok UK, calls the shortlist "a true celebration of the variety of literature that resonates with the TikTok community".

Book awards typically boost authors' profiles and can lead to higher sales. As BookTok is already providing remarkable publicity, it will be interesting to see how these awards affect the shortlisted authors' sales.

In April, TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, also filed a trademark for a book publisher – 8th Note Press. The company has appointed Katherine Pelz, formerly from Penguin Random House, as acquisitions editor. Her specialist area is romance. Nothing is yet known about plans for 8th Note Press, although some self-published romance writers have said they have been approached about book deals.

According to the *New York Times*, the new publisher will focus on digital books until TikTok launches an online retail platform – something the company plans to do in the US later this year.

There is concern in the publishing industry that BookTok could become focused on books from ByteDance's own publishing house. If the company can also sell the books direct to its users, that has repercussions for bookshops as well as publishers.

But could TikTok replicate the magic it has wrought in influencing book sales with its own products? Alice Harandon, who owns the St Ives Bookseller, isn't sure. Her small but busy shop in the Cornish seaside resort regularly gets shoppers coming in to buy BookTok recommendations. *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt is a frequent request, as is *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J Maas and *Daisy Jones & The Six* by Taylor Jenkins Reid.

"When traditional publishers try to muscle in on the BookTok market, it never seems to work out quite the same way as an organic, viral recommendation," she says. "It works best when a good book that has already been out in the world for a while – and is genuinely good – finds a natural following rather than trying to write books for the market. It starts to look very commercial, and will turn some people off."

Rhea Kurien is editorial director at Orion Fiction, one of the biggest traditional publishers in the UK. She's interested to see if TikTok can become more than a marketing tool for authors. "If the BookTok effect on consumer buying behaviour wears off, what will they be offering their authors that other publishers aren't?"

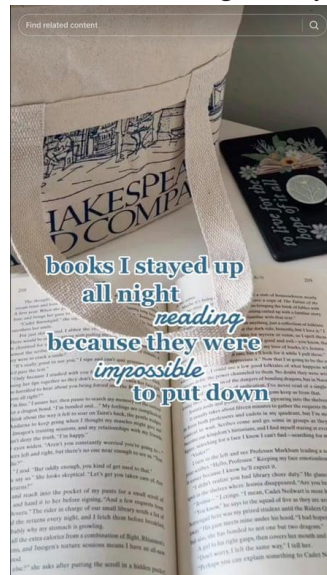
"What has been interesting for me is looking at the self-published authors who are doing incredibly well because of TikTok. They've established demand for their books and, as traditional publishers, we can then get them out to even more readers. This is especially the case for authors whose books are very big in the US but less so in the rest of the world. That's where UK publishers can help. I'm also just not sure the TikTok generation is one that wants to be steered this much by publishers."

The reaction of BookTok's key market will be crucial to success. The most recent Publishers Association research says that BookTok is overwhelmingly a factor in Gen Z reading habits. In a poll of more than 2,000 16- to 25-year-

olds, almost 59% said that BookTok had helped them discover a passion for reading.

The report says: "BookTok and book influencers significantly influence what choices this audience make about what they read, with 55% of respondents saying they turn to the platform for book recommendations."

One in three use it to discover books they wouldn't otherwise hear about. It encourages diversity, with one in three readers polled saying they discovered books by authors from different cultures, and almost 40% being introduced to new genres by the app.



An image from a BookTok influencer. Photograph: raynaslibrary/TikTok

Bluemoose Books, based in Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, is an independent publisher that first put out *The Gallows Pole* by Ben Myers, recently made into a BBC drama. Founder Kevin Duffy thinks that a new publisher entering the market is a positive step, but sounds a note of caution.

"My concern is that a bigger slice of the publishing pie will go to celebrities who already have huge social media profiles, and further reduce the opportunities of talented but under-represented writers to see their work published." BookTok has had a major effect on how the traditional publishing model works, and while Kurien acknowledges the fears of the creation of a small, elite group of celebrity TikTok authors, she thinks it's a challenge the industry needs to rise to. "The disadvantage to TikTok's influence is simply that it's taking up so many slots on our bestseller lists, tables in bookshops and spaces in supermarkets," she says.

"The rise of BookTok titles has meant less visibility for other titles, whether they're longstanding authors or debuts. But I think it's good for our industry to be shaken up at times, for us to reconsider what we think our readers want and to make way for these new trends."

Judging by Waterstones Piccadilly, BookTok has created both online and real-life communities that warm the hearts of the booksellers. Waterstones says: "Girls are meeting up

and having bookshop days out. They save up their money and come into the shop in gaggles, getting really excitable about what they want to buy. Their energy is amazing and

their friendships are really strong. They've bonded over books and the things they love, and that's awesome."

"Libraires" and librarians

Document 14 - 'The Librarians' Review: An Enlightening Doc Follows Nationwide Effort to Fight Against Book Bans

Director Kim A. Snyder's feature, debuting at Sundance, introduces the workers fighting against censorship and speaking for the leaves.

By [Lisa Kennedy](#), Variety, January 31, 2025

"The Librarians" begins with a quote: "It was a pleasure to see things burn. It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed."

Filmmaker Kim A. Snyder's illuminating documentary — premiering at the Sundance Film Festival — offers a rattling look at coordinated efforts to ban books. More importantly, it introduces viewers to the everyday and increasingly vital heroes pushing back: the librarians who sound the alarm to both legislative and grassroots attempts to pull books from school and public libraries.

The opening quote comes by way of "Fahrenheit 451," Ray Bradbury's dystopian classic about the ways that book burning and censorship are instruments of authoritarianism. The scene that follows that incendiary opener features a woman sitting in a chair, her back to a window, her face in the shadows. She's the spitting image of an endangered whistleblower or a witness against a cartel. Only, she's a librarian in a Texas school district targeted by Gov. Greg Abbott.

In 2021, Texas state representative Matt Krause sent a list of 850 titles that he wanted schools to confirm were on their shelves. The list appeared to target LGBTQ books and titles concerned with race and racism. But just in case, Krause added a blanket sentence that sounds mighty snowflake, advising schools to be on alert for books that "might make students feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress because of their race or sex."

A few weeks later, Gov. Abbott went further, sending a letter to the Texas Association of School Boards stating, "I'm calling for the immediate removal of this graphic, pornographic material."

The use of that anonymous speaker quickly comes to feel like an unnecessary device, though still an effective one. The librarians featured by Snyder have been subjected to verbal harassment and threats of physical harm. The documentary brims with women who are willing to put themselves on the line, facing legitimate fears for their security. The anonymous librarian at the start is not even the most compelling of these civic stewards of the stacks.

Instead, there's Army veteran Suzette Baker, who lost her job as head of the Llano County library system, when

she refused to remove books from the shelves. Among them "How to be an Antiracist" and "Between the World and Me." ("I have to show you to the children's library, because that's where our porn is," she says with no small amount of snark.) Amanda Jones of Louisiana even wrote a book that winks at how she's been treated by adversaries. It's called "That Librarian: The Fight Against Book Banning in America." When she spoke up at a Livingston Parrish school board meeting, her photo was uploaded to conservative websites. (...)

Much of the film covers local fights in Texas and Florida. But the implications are nationwide, as New Jersey librarian Martha Hickson discovered — or rather uncovered. You've got to admire librarians who, among other humbling qualities, do their research. She gleaned a concerted strategy for parents to go after certain titles and followed its trail to **the conservative political organization Moms for Liberty**, whose mission on their website is to fight "for the survival of America by unifying, educating and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government."

In light of her work, Hickson has been slandered as a pedophile. Labeling queer content as obscene, and the librarians who advocate for those titles as pornographers, comes from the most dogeared pages in the censors' playbook.

"I couldn't remove a book because it has ideas we don't like," says Bette Davis's character in a "Storm Center," a 1956 drama about Communism and book banning. This little scene is among many gems of archival and film images interspersed throughout "The Librarians."

While the librarians are the leads in the documentary, students and other concerned citizens also speak out against the censorship. There are the high schoolers from the Texas' Granbury Banned Book Club. Rev. Jeffrey Dove, a pastor in Florida's Clay County who joined forces with librarian Julie Miller, says "to attempt to take Black history, to take a lot of our stories away from children is one of the most evil things I think a person can do."

And while the demographics of library science (and this documentary) aren't exactly diverse (more than 80 percent of librarians are women and approximately 89 percent are white), these librarians prove that you don't have to be part of marginalized groups to champion a diverse catalog.

“I do know that our story is still being written,” says Texas librarian Audrey Wilson-Youngblood. “But now it’s everyone’s story.” Wilson-Youngblood, her colleagues and filmmaker Snyder (whose doc short, “Death by Numbers,”

was nominated for an Oscar earlier this month) offers a gripping story of what is at stake when curiosity and thinking are endangered.

■ You can watch a very interesting though harrowing interview at the Sundance Festival of the director, producers of the documentary and two main librarians featured in it here

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTKBj9YemIg&ab_channel=IndieWire

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrZ21i82GtK>

Document 15 - « Les librairies deviennent les réceptacles de tous les débordements idéologiques. Or elles doivent demeurer des refuges pour le savoir et la création »

Tribune Collectif – *Le Monde*, 07 octobre 2025

Un collectif composé de professionnels des métiers du livre et de l'édition dénonce, dans une tribune au « Monde », les faits de dénigrement, de cyberharcèlement voire de menaces physiques dont sont de plus en plus souvent victimes les libraires.

Des vitrines brisées ou taguées à l'acide à Paris, Lille, Rennes, Périgueux, Nantes, Lyon, Rosny-sous-Bois (Seine-Saint-Denis) ou encore à Marseille. Des libraires injuriés ou menacés dans la capitale, à [Nice](#), à Vincennes (Val-de-Marne) comme en Ardèche. Des débats ou des rencontres avec des écrivains entravés ou empêchés à Bordeaux, Strasbourg ou Bruxelles...

Les librairies sont de plus en plus régulièrement les cibles de campagnes de dénigrement ou de cyberharcèlement particulièrement violentes allant jusqu'à des dégradations ou des menaces physiques, de la part de groupuscules ou d'individus se réclamant d'idéologies extrémistes. De telles agressions ne peuvent que nous interpellier et nous devons refuser leur banalisation.

Ces manifestations de violence, motivées par le seul fait que certains livres sont vendus, présentés ou débattus avec leurs auteurs en librairie, sont inacceptables. Elles n'ont d'autres buts que de provoquer de la peur et d'induire une forme d'autocensure au sein de librairies dont l'une des principales raisons d'exister est précisément de permettre l'exposition de débats qui traversent notre monde et nos sociétés.

Si cette pluralité déplaît à certains, elle demeure non négociable tant elle apparaît indispensable à la réflexion, aux débats et à la nécessaire compréhension d'un monde complexe, incompatible avec des visions univoques, voire sectaires, qui rejettent la contradiction comme l'altérité.

Liberté d'expression des créateurs

Jusqu'à preuve du contraire, les ouvrages incriminés et présents dans de multiples librairies n'ont fait l'objet d'aucune procédure judiciaire et ne contreviennent donc pas à la loi. Ils sont simplement l'expression d'une opinion ou le résultat d'un travail de recherche. Libre à chacun de les lire ou de les ignorer, mais en aucun cas de tenter de les invisibiliser par la menace. C'est à la justice d'interdire le cas échéant un ouvrage, et non pas à ceux à qui il déplaît. La liberté dont jouissent les libraires de défendre ou non un livre fait écho à la liberté de pensée et d'expression des créateurs, à la liberté de publication des éditeurs et à celle des lecteurs de lire ou de ne pas lire.

Les librairies deviennent les réceptacles de tous les débordements idéologiques, là où elles doivent demeurer des refuges pour le savoir et la création, dans un esprit de tolérance. Selon l'idéologie des agresseurs, en fonction des livres présentés sur table ou de l'auteur, l'autrice, invité(e) ce jour-là, une librairie peut se voir tantôt accusée d'être antisémite, tantôt complice du gouvernement israélien, queer ou pro-patriarcat, d'extrême gauche puis d'extrême droite...

Dans ce contexte de crispations grandissantes, les libraires ne peuvent se satisfaire de devoir demander une surveillance accrue de lieux qu'ils animent avec leurs convictions et leurs sensibilités. Leur travail, mené en toute indépendance et dans le respect de tous, doit continuer à s'exercer librement et sans menaces. Il en va également de l'intérêt des créateurs, des éditeurs et des lecteurs.

Veillons ensemble à l'existence de ces lieux singuliers et précieux que sont les librairies, toutes différentes mais ouvertes sur le monde, sur la création, sur la diversité et sur une certaine idée de l'ouverture à l'autre que porte le livre.

Liste des signataires : **Hélène Brochard**, présidente de l'Association des bibliothécaires de France ; **Alexandra Charroin-Spangenberg**, présidente du Syndicat de la librairie française ; **Christophe Hardy**, président de la Société des gens de lettres ; **Vincent Montagne**, président du Syndicat national de l'édition ; **Séverine Weiss**, présidente du Conseil permanent des écrivains.

Document 16 - L'écrivaine Lauren Groff crée un sanctuaire des livres bannis en Floride, un des Etats les plus réactionnaires des Etats-Unis

Par [Annick Cojean](#) *Le Monde*, 10 septembre 2025 (extraits)

Récit- « L'Amérique des "résistantes" » (3/5). La romancière à succès a fait de sa librairie, située dans le premier Etat censeur du pays, un lieu de résistance à Donald Trump.

Lauren Groff n'a jamais autant pleuré que cette nuit du 5 novembre 2024 et le jour qui s'en est suivi. « *C'était terrible*, se souvient-elle, lors d'une rencontre à Paris au début de l'été. *Je crois que j'ai fait peur à mes enfants qui ne m'avaient jamais vue dans un tel état d'abatement et d'effroi.* » Mais comment ne pas s'effondrer, lors de cette nuit d'élection présidentielle si cruciale ? Comment ne pas frémir à l'idée que s'ouvrirait alors une page funeste de l'histoire des Etats-Unis ? « *Car je savais ! Je savais le racisme, le sexisme, la cruauté et la soif de vengeance du camp qui arrivait au pouvoir. Je savais les attaques contre le droit, la science, la connaissance, la libre expression. Je savais la prévarication et la corruption généralisées. Il y avait vraiment de quoi être catastrophée.* »

L'écrivaine accomplit – cinq romans à succès, trois fois finaliste du National Book Award, classée par le magazine *Time* parmi les 100 personnalités les plus influentes de l'année 2024 – avait voté quelques jours à l'avance, impatiente de faire entendre sa voix. Et le week-end précédent, elle avait animé, au centre de Tampa Bay (Floride), à deux heures de route de chez elle, une rencontre avec Hillary Clinton, venue présenter son dernier livre.

L'ancienne candidate à la Maison Blanche avait longuement détaillé les conséquences prévisibles de l'élection de Donald Trump, et Lauren Groff était rentrée chez elle extrêmement angoissée. Mais elle gardait espoir. Les Américains avaient déjà expérimenté un premier mandat de Trump, ils n'allaient tout de même pas se jeter à nouveau dans la gueule du loup. Quant à ses amis progressistes qui faisaient la fine bouche devant la candidate démocrate, accusée de complaisance à l'égard d'Israël, ils comprendraient que Trump était la pire des solutions et qu'il ne fallait en aucun cas boudier les urnes. « *C'est pourtant ce qu'ils ont fait* », dit-elle aujourd'hui amèrement.

L'esprit de bataille

La soirée du 5, donc, avait été tourmentée. Puis, à mesure que les sondages et les résultats annonçaient la victoire probable de Trump, carrément dramatique. Alors, après une nuit blanche, Lauren Groff s'est dirigée vers le seul endroit où elle savait trouver du réconfort :

la librairie qu'elle et son mari, Clay Kallman, avaient ouverte quelques mois plus tôt dans le centre de Gainesville, une localité de 140 000 habitants située dans le nord de la Floride, siège de sa plus grande université, entourée de forêts, de marais et... d'alligators.

Une librairie conçue « *comme un phare de tolérance et de liberté* » dans l'un des Etats les plus réactionnaires des Etats-Unis et qui s'était donné pour mission d'accueillir les milliers de livres bannis des écoles et bibliothèques publiques de Floride. Son nom : The Lynx, du nom de ce chat sauvage répandu dans la région et qu'elle a aperçu une fois au cœur de la ville. « *Je voulais quelque chose de féroce*, dit en souriant la mère de deux grands adolescents. *Et j'aimais le jeu de mots avec "links" ["liens" en français], car notre projet est de bâtir autour de la librairie une véritable communauté.* »

Cette communauté a pris tout son sens, ce 6 novembre, quand ont débarqué à la librairie amis et sympathisants de toutes parts. « *On se réconfortait, se prenait dans les bras. Le coin salon était pris d'assaut, le café coulait à flots, on naviguait entre détresse et affliction. Je ne pense pas qu'on ait vendu un seul livre ce jour-là, mais au moins, nous étions ensemble.* » Gainesville, il est vrai, est un havre de libéralisme et de « coolitude » dans la Floride où Trump aime à passer ses week-ends. Mais après deux jours de torpeur, la rage et l'esprit de bataille ont pris le dessus. Le slogan de la librairie n'est-il pas « *Watch us bite back* » (« regardez-nous mordre en retour ») ?

Pression de parents

« *Une seule possibilité devant le désastre annoncé : la résistance*, explique l'autrice de 47 ans. *Nous avions la librairie. Elle deviendrait le socle, le fer de lance et l'étendard du combat. Un lieu de ressources pour réfléchir et débattre. Une vigie et une terre d'accueil. Le pivot d'une communauté de résistants.* » Ses valeurs ? « *L'opposé des leurs ! Ils diffusent la haine ? On promeut l'amour. Ils professent l'exclusion ? On prône l'ouverture. Ils exècrent la diversité ? On l'encense, la protège, la revendique.* »

Cette riposte pourrait paraître dérisoire dans l'Amérique de Trump, marquée par la violence. C'est sous-estimer l'organisation du Lynx et la détermination de sa propriétaire. « *J'ai bien compris que je ne peux pas tout changer au système en place, mais je peux transformer*

radicalement de petites choses en y concentrant mes forces. Et dans la guerre contre la censure littéraire, j'irai jusqu'au bout. S'il leur prenait un jour l'envie de s'attaquer aux librairies, après l'école et les bibliothèques, il faudrait qu'ils m'arrêtent et me jettent en prison. Je n'attends que ça ! Je dispose d'une bonne voix et d'un mégaphone puissant. »

C'est lors d'un séjour à Berlin, où Lauren Groff bénéficiait d'une bourse d'écriture, que l'idée de la librairie a germé dans l'esprit du couple en 2023. La Floride, gouvernée par l'ultraconservateur Ron DeSantis, était en train de bannir des milliers d'ouvrages et s'affichait, avec 45 % des mises à l'index du pays, comme le premier Etat censeur d'Amérique. Des livres aussi différents que *Le Journal* d'Anne Frank, 1984, de George Orwell, *Les Aventures de Tom Sawyer*, de Mark Twain, *La Servante écarlate*, de Margaret Atwood, *L'Œil le plus bleu*, de Toni Morrison, *Anna Karénine*, de Léon Tolstoï, mais aussi des pièces de Shakespeare, les romans de James Baldwin, la biographie de Beyoncé et même des dictionnaires étaient retirés des bibliothèques scolaires, sous la pression de [groupes de parents comme les Moms for Liberty](#), grands soutiens de Donald Trump.

En Allemagne, l'information faisait les gros titres de la presse. « *Nos interlocuteurs étaient sur les dents, se souvient l'écrivaine américaine. "Il faut arrêter ça tout de suite !" , nous disaient-ils, rappelant qu'ils en savaient quelque chose en matière d'autoritarisme et de fascisme. Et je pensais à la phrase du poète Heinrich Heine : "Là où l'on brûle les livres, on finit par brûler des hommes."* » Ce fut le déclic.

A leur retour aux Etats-Unis, Lauren Groff et son mari se mettent en quête d'un local capable d'accueillir une librairie qui mettrait en valeur les livres bannis de Floride. Tous. Ils avaient déjà rêvé d'ouvrir un tel commerce – Clay Kallman est issu d'une famille de libraires. Mais la carrière de l'écrivaine décollait, elle voyageait beaucoup à travers les Etats-Unis, leurs enfants étaient très jeunes. Bref, ce n'était jamais le bon moment. Cette fois, il n'est plus question de tergiverser, il y a urgence. Un ancien salon de coiffure de 215 mètres carrés, situé au cœur de Gainesville, se révèle idéal. Le couple obtient les clés en janvier 2024, les travaux sont menés tambour battant.

La librairie se doit d'être « *splendide* », avec un coin café, un espace joyeux dévolu aux enfants, des canapés de velours pour inciter à entamer la lecture de livres glanés sur les étagères, des tables présentoirs faciles à déplacer pour accueillir lectures, conférences, projections, débats. Une fresque de 18 mètres représentant un lynx posant tel un sphynx est peinte sur la façade, tandis qu'un patio est aménagé pour servir

d'agora et de scène de concert. L'inauguration a lieu le 28 avril 2024, sous les yeux de 3 000 curieux, profs, étudiants, écrivains, artistes, qui y voient un message d'espoir. La chroniqueuse livres du *New York Times*, Alexandra Alter, a fait le déplacement. Plus de 1 000 livres sont vendus ce jour-là.

Depuis, Lauren Groff se bat. Tous azimuts. D'abord pour promouvoir les livres bannis dont la liste ne cesse de s'allonger, puisqu'il suffit à n'importe quel habitant de Floride, parent d'élève ou pas, de contester un ouvrage pour que celui-ci soit immédiatement retiré des bibliothèques en attendant une décision définitive du conseil scolaire. Les raisons n'ont pas besoin d'être développées, il suffit de se sentir offensé et d'en appeler à la protection des enfants. Sont systématiquement rejetés les ouvrages touchant au genre, à la sexualité, au racisme, au colonialisme, au féminisme et à la violence systémique.

L'homosexualité est l'ennemie numéro un, comme l'indique la disparition de tous les rayonnages de ce petit livre pour enfants, *Et avec Tango, nous voilà trois !*, de Peter Parnell et Justin Richardson (Rue du Monde, 2013), qui raconte l'histoire d'un couple de pingouins mâles qui couvent un œuf et adoptent un bébé pingouin. « *C'est un de mes livres pour enfants préférés*, dit Lauren Groff. *Ses détracteurs ont hurlé à la pornographie alors que c'est une merveille de délicatesse et de tendresse. Si l'objectif était réellement de protéger les enfants, ce sont les armes à feu qu'on supprimerait, pas les livres !* » Les ouvrages

C'est également le cas pour les livres mettant en scène des Afro-américains, des Hispaniques, des Asiatiques ou des Amérindiens, progressivement exclus des écoles pour [ne pas gâcher le récit historique glorieux de l'Amérique](#).

A chaque jour un événement au Lynx : lecture, book club, conférence, atelier, y compris sur les livres de cuisine, puisque la librairie ne vend pas, tant s'en faut, que les livres interdits. Mais Lauren Groff, l'hyperactive, fait aussi du lobbying et se rend fréquemment à Tallahassee, la capitale de l'Etat, pour rencontrer des élus et contrer, avec des avocats et diverses organisations, des lois encore plus répressives que voudrait faire passer le gouverneur. Depuis mai, l'entreprise a également une composante associative et soulève des fonds pour racheter un maximum de livres bannis afin de les distribuer dans des écoles, des foyers, des institutions. « *On vient d'en donner pour 40 000 dollars [34 000 euros], pas mal non ?* »

L'écrivaine, qui continue de se lever à 5 heures pour écrire, se dit volontiers utopiste. Et son regard intense trahit la force qui bouillonne sous son visage de jeune

filles rangées. Pourtant, c'est avec anxiété qu'elle scrute l'avenir des Etats-Unis. « Il y a des rafles dans les rues, des camps de concentration en construction, une réécriture de l'histoire en cours. Et la terreur règne parmi les profs. Une de mes amies qui avait coutume d'enseigner la Shoah en CM2 à travers le roman graphique Maus, d'Art Spiegelman, vient de le retirer de ses étagères par crainte de perdre son travail. »

Alors restent les librairies, « *par essence révolutionnaires* » et désormais « *en première ligne pour défendre la démocratie* ». Lauren Groff le pense avec ferveur. Comme elle croit dans le livre, cet objet insolent et précieux, puissant et facétieux, qui peut s'offrir et passer de main en main « *sans qu'Elon Musk et ses technologies féroces puissent jamais le traquer* ».

AI in publishing

Document 17 – AUDIO - **More than 70 writers send open letter about AI to literary publishers**

NPR July 3, 2025 - Heard on [All Things Considered](#)

<https://www.npr.org/2025/07/03/nx-s1-5454736/more-than-70-writers-send-open-letter-about-ai-to-literary-publishers>

More

- A very long but interesting piece: **Ignore the pessimists – we are living through a literary golden age**

Literature is booming. Literary culture needs to catch up.

By [Henry Oliver](#), *The New Statesman*, July 2 2025

<https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/books/2025/07/ignore-the-pessimists-we-are-living-through-a-literary-golden-age>

Extract: So, I think the overall situation is something like this: there is still plenty of good writing, plenty of literary energy, but it is not always in the same places it used to be, and the literary establishment isn't always well aligned to its audience. We are living through a significant disruption. Instead of responding with despair, we need to adapt. This is fully achievable.

As the world continues to evolve in the direction of uncertainty – caused primarily by AI and geopolitics – literature will only become more significant. It is no coincidence that people are turning back to literature now. The spread of AI will make the most “human” activities more valuable. The returns to taste will rise. That is what literature excels at. The best work stands out all the more starkly in a world of abundant slop. We have seen this before. People decide to watch less television, scroll less social media, and read classic literature and they are amazed at the benefits. Someone somewhere is always discovering that Tolstoy is gold compared to the tinfoil of Netflix. The literati are poised on the edge of a huge social change: there is no point in asking ChatGPT to read Frederick Douglass on your behalf. Discussing those works with ChatGPT, though, *is* very valuable. Reading literature will also be a means of connecting with other people.

We have to choose what side of this transition we are on. Do we want young people to read the Bible and Homer or do we want to complain about their choices on Twitter? *Middlemarch* just went viral on Substack. I see people there reading everything from the Mahabharata to JM Coetzee to Catherine Lacey. Elizabeth von Arnim was recently popular on TikTok. Can we be optimistic about that? If not, we may find ourselves left behind while literature carries on in its new forms of success.

The task for those of us who care deeply about literature is to make it relevant in this new world. Even now, people are trying to find their way to books that will matter to them. Readers from unexpected places are searching for the best. If they find us too often complaining about the state of things, they will turn elsewhere.

It is easy for us to see the dross that fills the shelves. But we ought to be searching as hard as we can for the best work, wherever it can be found. It is easy to regret the loss of the literary culture we all grew up with. But we are faced with the challenge of making something new. It is all too easy to see what we will lose with AI. But as [Hollis Robbins](#) told me, “You can't be pessimistic if you fully grasp the creativity of the human mind. So much sublime work has been lost; some of it will be found. How can anyone be pessimistic when there is so much rediscovery work that AI is helping us do?”