





# BANNED BOOKS

Banned Books Week was launched in 1982 in response to a sudden surge in the number of challenges to books in schools, bookstores and libraries in the USA.

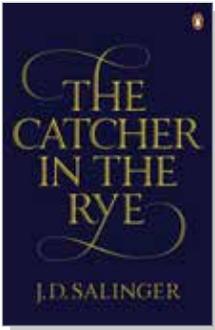
Since then, according to the American Library Association, more than 11,000 books have been challenged.

Banned Books Week UK mirrors the United States initiative and aims to highlight the importance of ensuring the freedom to read, write and publish. Libraries, book shops, schools and reading groups are encouraged to hold events celebrating the freedom to read and to challenge voices and ideas being silenced.

This list of young adult banned books have at one time or another been challenged for a variety of reasons like sex, drugs, or bad language. The list was compiled by freedom of expression campaign group Index on Censorship and Islington Council's Library and Heritage Service, who are part of the Banned Books Week UK coalition. As well as this book list, you can find out more in the banned books school's toolkit.

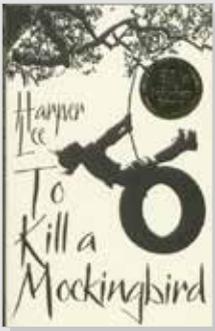
For more information visit [www.bannedbooksweek.co.uk](http://www.bannedbooksweek.co.uk)

Or to see a comprehensive list of banned and challenged books visit [www.ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks](http://www.ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks)



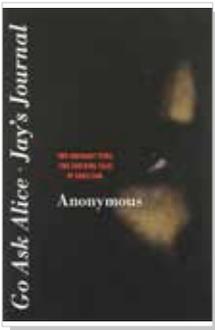
### **J. D. Salinger** *The Catcher in the Rye* **1951**

At one time in the USA, this was not only the most banned book in schools and libraries, but also the second most taught. Bad language, sexual references, blasphemy, undermining of family values and moral codes, poor role models, encouragement of rebellion, promotion of drinking, smoking, lying and promiscuity were all causes for challenge. It certainly seems to have had something for everyone.



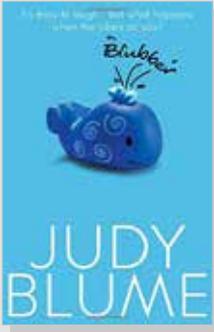
### **Harper Lee** *To Kill a Mockingbird* **1960**

Another standard title on the GCSE syllabus, this book has been challenged on numerous occasions for its use of derogatory racial terms, swearing and frank discussions. One challenge irritated the author so much that she sent \$10 to the local paper offering it as part-payment for the local school board to enrol in one of its own schools. As with *Huckleberry Finn*, it was the use of derogatory racial terms that caused the greatest upset.



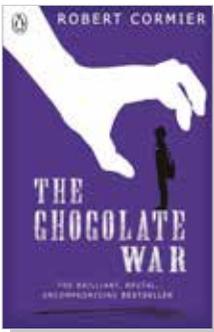
### **Anonymous** *Go Ask Alice* **1971**

Taking its title from the lyrics of Jefferson Airplane's drug-reference song "White Rabbit", this book with its coverage of runaway young people, drugs and sex, was banned in nearly a third of US states. The book has a tragic fate in store for the diarist and so could be seen as anti-drug abuse, but like so many challenged books, the outcome and inherent message were misinterpreted by those who equate discussing a problem with glamorizing it.



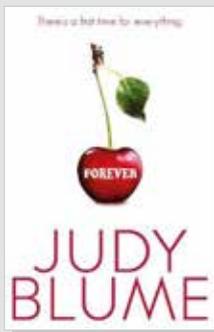
## **Judy Blume** **Blubber** **1974**

Linda is overweight so is called “Blubber” by her classmates. Alliances shift accompanied by abuse and bullying. The author based the book on her own experience but some felt the behaviour shown towards Linda is excessive and likely to back-fire.



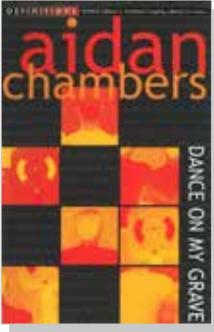
## **Robert Cormier** **The Chocolate War** **1974**

Considered to be one of the best ever young adult novels, it comes fourth in America’s list of banned books 1990-2000. Dealing with high school gang culture, the main challenges were on the grounds of sexual content, violence and bad language. While arguing the book should not be in the library, the school accepted it could be easily bought in any local book shop, which might have suggested that banning the book was pointless.



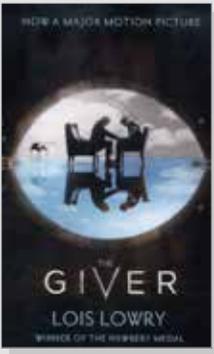
## **Judy Blume** **Forever** **1975**

This teen novel was not only just about the first to discuss sex but it still holds a punch even now. Not surprisingly, Blume’s frank language, depiction of sexual intercourse and the fact that the main character goes on the pill caused uproar amongst opponents of pre-marital sex.



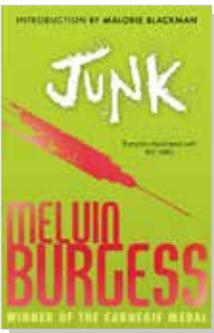
### **Aidan Chambers** Dance on My Grave 1982

For its positive portrayal of gay relationships, the book has fallen foul of complaints. One American library board revealed in its objection the extent to which it would avoid giving anyone grounds for further offence when it lifted a quote from the book and recorded it as “What the h\*\*!!”.



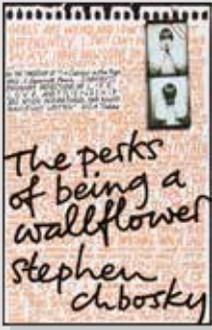
### **Lois Lowry** The Giver 1993

Jonas lives in world without war, violence, hunger or suffering, the trade-off being the lives of the citizens is pre-ordained by Elders. Individuality and freedom is sacrificed for a sense of security and happiness. Jonas discovers that his family and friends are part of much more sinister reality. The Giver was one of the most controversial books in American schools. The most common reason cited was “unsuitable for age group”, although controversial topics like sexual explicitness, religion, violence and suicide were also key.



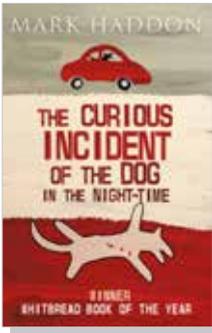
### **Melvin Burgess** Junk 1996

This story of a teenage couple living in a squat and whose lives descend into alcohol, drugs, prostitution, failed rehab and prison, while hopefully lifting the lid on the downside of some young people’s lives, for some it threw too many punches in one novel and laid itself open to criticism simply for daring to discuss these issues. The author said of its banning “Every single time a book gets banned is absurd. The only dangerous book is one that has a bomb in it, in my opinion. Junk wasn’t even the first book to be open minded about drugs, but it perhaps was the first where the characters made such bad choices and left it up to the reader to judge them.”



## **Stephen Chbosky** *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* 1999

The story of a teenager, “Charlie” who writes a series of letters to an anonymous friend, going to great lengths to describe his introversion, teenage sexuality, abuse, and his drug use, and these references gained the book many condemnations. But as one young reader commented “Many students do not have the complete support [they] should have. Most importantly, “Perks” serves as an unparalleled aid for students dealing with depression, mental illness, or suicidal thoughts.”



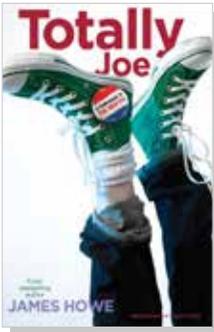
## **Mark Haddon** *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* 2003

Christopher Boone is 15 with Asperger’s syndrome. When he finds a neighbour’s dog murdered, he sets out on a journey which will turn his whole world upside down. The book contains a lot of swearing as well as characters expressing atheistic beliefs. One American newspaper counted around 50 mentions of various swear words. Author Mark Haddon said “I’m always entertained when it gets banned. But I never feel like I have to stand up for it. It’s like a sturdy 25-year old who can pick a fight and look after itself.”



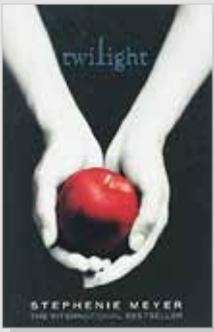
## **Lauren Myracle** *ttyl* 2004

...or “Talk to you Later” when translated back from IM – instant messaging language. The first novel to be written in IM, its main characters use it to discuss their lives which include sex, drinking and a lecherous Christian school teacher. Not surprisingly, the book has caused debate but has won plaudits for its willingness to take on teen issues, all while addressing the choices teens make.



### **James Howe** **Totally Joe** 2005

The victim of a homophobic school bully, Joe discovers himself when writing an assignment in the form of an “alpha biography” – the story of his life from A-Z. In the process he finds that it is okay to be Totally Joe and to “come out”. Unfortunately, the theme of the book has been enough to elicit complaints from parents to the point where the book has been removed from some libraries.



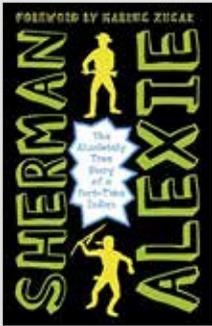
### **Stephenie Meyer** **Twilight (series)** 2005

The biggest phenomenon since Harry Potter and the most popular of all the vampire series, especially after the quartet of novels was turned into films. Not surprisingly the concept of immortality through vampirism is not embraced by all and the creation of “good” vampires has been seen by some as distorting the battle between what is traditionally good and evil. A key aspect of vampirism is sexuality and the relationship between Edward and Bella too has raised objections. One young person said of the criticism the book generated “Here is a top five list of the reasons that I think people wanting to ban these books are absolutely crazy: nothing naughty happens, they’re make-believe characters, the books champion not having sex before marriage, they provide an excellent platform to discuss faith issues and they get kids reading.”



### **David Levithan** **Two Boys Kissing** 2006

The two boys kissing are Craig and Harry, trying to set the world record for the longest kiss. They’re not a couple, but used to be. Peter and Neil are a couple. Their kisses are different. Avery and Ryan have only just met and are trying to figure out what happens next. As the marathon progresses, these boys, their friends and families evaluate the changing nature of feelings, behaviour and love. Much of the disapproval expressed came from the book cover image of two boys kissing. One other complaint was that the book “condones public displays of affection”.



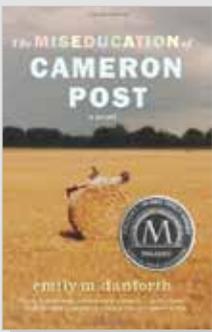
## **Sherman Alexie** **The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian** **2007**

A native American boy from a dysfunctional family attends an all-white school away from the reservation and encounters bullying and racism. Challenges came not just for raising those issues but it was accused of being anti-family, cultural insensitive, portraying addiction, using offensive language and being sexually explicit. One reviewer commented "If Arnold can overcome generations of poverty and bigotry, if he can lose his best friend over his decision to better himself and forgive a drunk driver for the death of his grandmother, then surely we can accept the use of the word 'f\*ck' every so often."



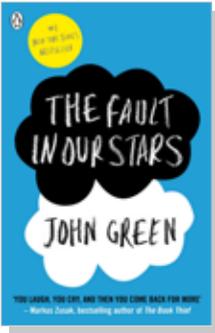
## **Jay Asher** **Thirteen Reasons Why** **2007**

Slated for its references to drugs, sex and suicide, the story tells of a boy who finds he's the owner of a box of cassettes recorded by his classmate, Hannah, who has committed suicide. Hannah explains that there are 13 reasons why she did what she did, and Clay is one of them. The author offered up this poignant response: "The very day I found out 'Thirteen Reasons Why' was the third most-challenged book, I received an e-mail from a reader claiming my book kept her from committing suicide. I dare any censor to tell that girl it was inappropriate for her to read my book."



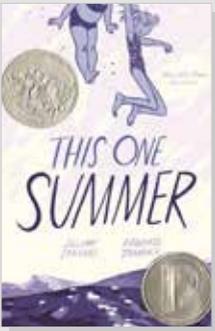
## **Emily M. Danforth** **The Miseducation of Cameron Post** **2012**

Criticised for its offensive language, drug/ alcohol use and gay sex, the story deals with a girl who is sent by her aunt to a "de-gaying" camp. The author commented "My experience of researching this conversion therapy was often upsetting and always baffling. There's absolutely zero credible scientific evidence to suggest that such 'therapies' are effective at changing attraction or desire or identity in the least. In fact, there is much evidence that such 'therapies' cause all kinds of harm to those who partake in them."



## **John Green** **The Fault in Our Stars** **2012**

Two teens, with cancer, Grace and Augustus, meet at a support group. After reading each other's favourite novel, they endeavour to find out the fate of one of the characters in Grace's choice. The book was not only slammed for its inclusion of offensive language and sex, but even for covering death and cancer. As one reviewer said "The thing that bothered me about The Daily Mail piece [which condemned the book] was that it was a bit condescending to teenagers. I'm tired of adults telling teenagers that they aren't smart, that they can't read critically, that they aren't thoughtful."



## **Mariko Tamaki** **This One Summer** **2014**

Rose meets her friend, Windy, every summer but one year, they start to explore their interest in boys and pay attention to the emotional lives of adults and other people their age around them. This graphic novel was challenged because it included LGBT characters, drug use and profanity, and it was considered too sexually explicit and dealt with mature themes teenagers could be expected to handle.

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