

## Can the Ban and Just Let Kids Read

By Shawnta S. Barnes – August 28, 2017



Best selling children's book *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak was once banned because the main character Max talked back to his mother. Books are banned for many reasons: sexual content, LGBTQ characters, offensive language, violence, etc. Every year, someone wants a book banned from a school. Recently, in Indiana, Hamilton Southeastern Schools board member Amanda Shera suggested *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini be removed as a reading option for Advanced Placement English classes because "rape and distrustful and lying adults" are in the novel. She had concerns about this book, that she has not read, when it was assigned to her daughter's class. Just because this book might not be

the best option for her daughter, who is she to say it will not be okay for other students to read? I believe schools need to provide as many options as possible to engage students in the curriculum and encourage them to read.

When books are banned, it limits educators. When students have the opportunity to read from a diverse selection of books, students learn more and grow to love reading. Unlike Shera, I have read *The Kite Runner* and I would recommend it as a book for students to read. When I was teaching middle school English, I was known for using novels that needed parental approval such as *Fallen Angels* (language), *Crank* (drug usage), *The House You Pass on the Way* (same sex relationship) and *13 Reasons Why* (suicide and sexual assault). My students were in literature circles and they chose from a selection of books and if the book contained sensitive topics, I would send home a letter to receive approval from parents. Only twice, in the eight years I taught middle school, did parents request another option.

Many times, the risky books are the ones that have powerful themes and great usage of literary devices. My students (*if they read this will probably roll their eyes*) have heard me say, "You can't get better at reading by not reading." I made it my goal to read a variety of books even books I wouldn't typically read so I could offer multiple selections to my students.

I am disappointed a school board member wants a book to be removed she has not even bother to read. I do believe parents should be given the right to ask for another selection because parents know what their children can handle, but banning a book for everyone takes away the power of parents to make a choice.

During the month of September, Banned Book Week is held. I always challenged my students to read as many banned books as possible during this month. This year, Banned Book Week will be held September 24-30 and the theme is Our Right to Read. I have found banning books tends to have a result people wanting the ban do not intend; it makes students more curious and increases their desire to read the book even more.

Click [here](#) to view the top ten banned books of 2016.