

## Ideas for Celebrating Banned Books Week

Banned Books Week is an annual national event celebrating the freedom to read and the importance of the First Amendment. (The 2015 celebration will be held from September 27 – October 3, 2015.) Banned Books Week highlights the benefits of free and open access to information while drawing attention to the dangers of censorship by spotlighting actual or attempted banning of books throughout the United States. The ideas below can be used to celebrate Banned Books Week, or integrated throughout the school year to ensure student understanding of the freedom to read. (For more information about Banned Books Week, go to <http://www.bannedbooksweek.org/>)

For lesson plans on teaching about banned books, related themes, and numerous additional topics, visit the Carolina K-12's ([www.carolinak12.org](http://www.carolinak12.org)) Database of K-12 Resources at: [k12database.unc.edu](http://k12database.unc.edu)

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## Banned Books Trading Cards

Each year, the Chapel Hill Public Library celebrates Banned Books Week by hosting an art contest in which local artists submit small scale (trading card size) works of art inspired by a banned/challenged book or author. The cards contain interpretive artwork on the front and the artist's statement and information about the highlighted book and/or author on the back.

- **Utilize the cards as discussion pieces for learning about the freedom to read:** Provide a trading card to each student (or to each pair/group of students), instruct students to only view the art (do not flip it over to read the description yet), and discuss (as a class or in pairs/small groups):
  - What do you see/first notice?
  - What book or author do you think this card could represent? What makes you think this?
  - What message might the artist be trying to convey and what evidence makes you think this?

After students have discussed, they can flip the card to find out more information regarding the book and/or author why it was challenged/banned. (Teachers can also project the trading cards. Digital images are available at <https://chapelhillpubliclibrary.org/banned-books/>)



Teachers might have students analyzing different cards that they then trade, or all students can analyze the same card, with a new card being presented for discussion each day of Banned Books Week. After students have had the chance to examine more than one card, students can discuss:

- Which trading card interested you the most and why?
- Did you see any similarities, repeated themes, common opinions, etc. among any of the trading cards? Were there any outliers in terms of themes or opinions represented?
- What most surprised you about what you've learned regarding book challenges/bans, censorship, etc. and why?
- If a book is challenged and you don't want it banned, what can you do?
- Why should every person care about the freedom to read and related issues of challenging and banning books?

- **Create Banned Book Trading Cards:** Either as a class assignment or as a schoolwide contest, have students create their own trading cards on banned books and related themes (i.e., freedom to read, First Amendment, censorship, etc.) see page 19 of the Consortium's lesson "The Right to Read: Exploring Book Challenges and Bans" for an assignment sheet.
- **Creative Writing Prompts:** Based on the art and/or information presented on the Trading Card, provide students with a creative writing prompt that requires them to engage with the card and/or themes of the freedom to read. (For example, "Write a dialogue between the two people pictured.")
- **Mixed Media Boards:** Have students create [mixed media boards](#) using their Trading Card as inspiration. Canvases can be textured with crumpled-up tissue paper, stones, or beads. Once painted over, all manner of stamps, stencils, magazine pages, toys, and any other found objects can be added. Student work might recreate their trading card, be based on the trading card, or illustrate themes related to the trading card (i.e., illustrate the inner life of literary characters from the book the card represents.) (Source: <http://www.takepart.com/photos/art-projects-for-kids-best>)
- **Acrylic Skins:** [Acrylic skins](#) are dried sheets of acrylic paint. Once peeled away from the paper, the skins can be decorated and fashioned into art or cut up and turned into mosaics and ornamental jewelry recreating, based on, and/or inspired by the Trading Cards. (Source: <http://www.takepart.com/photos/art-projects-for-kids-best>)
- **Use the cards in a game:** Students should break into groups, with each group given a set of the Trading Cards. Students will randomly pull a card and describe facts about the book and/or author (without giving the title or author away) that leads the rest of the group to guess the title or author. Whoever guesses correctly gets a point. At the end of the game, each group member with the most points wins a prize.
- **FREE BANNED BOOKS TRADING CARDS FOR NC TEACHERS & CLASSROOMS!**
  - Thanks to a 2015 Judith Krug Memorial Grant from the [Freedom to Read Foundation](#), Chapel Hill Public Library is able to send out FREE classroom sets of its 2015 [Banned Books Trading Cards](#) to educators across the state (while supplies last)! If you'd like to order up to 25 sets (7 cards per set) for use in your classroom, please fill out this form: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1E5n-E0J6iTyl\\_cyK40fiA6uFIHEu1oIoICJGC03rkZU/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1E5n-E0J6iTyl_cyK40fiA6uFIHEu1oIoICJGC03rkZU/viewform)
  - If you have any questions about the Banned Books Trading Card project, are interested in past years card sets, or have trouble placing your order, please contact Susan Brown at [sbrown2@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:sbrown2@townofchapelhill.org).



## Banned Book Displays

Create displays, have students create displays as an assignment, or have a school wide display contest for students based on the theme of banned books and the freedom to read. For display ideas/examples, go to <http://www.ala.org/bbooks/bannedbookweek/ideasandresources/display> or do an image search on the Internet for "Banned Book Displays."

## Poster Assignment or Contest

Instruct students to design a poster advertising Banned Books Week, advertising a specific banned book, or that makes a statement regarding themes such as the freedom to read, banned books, censorship, etc. Final posters should:

- Include visuals such as art work, pictures, symbols, etc. that represent the topic chosen (can be literal or abstract)
- Contain text or phrases that teach or interest the viewer regarding the topic
- Be creative, colorful, and show that the creator of the poster put forth thought, time, and effort into the design

Poster examples can be seen at:

<http://www.ala.org/bbooks/bannedbookweek/ideasandresources/freedownloads>



### "Caught Reading Banned Books" Mug Shots

Take mug shots of faculty and staff, students, family and community members, etc., who have been "caught" reading banned books and post them around the school or in a display. Alternatively, have student's artistically recreate mug shots for characters from books that have been challenged/banned. See <http://www.buzzfeed.com/briangalindo/5-criminal-mugshots-of-characters-from-banned-books#.cdEO6Drlr> for examples.



### School Announcements

Each day of Banned Books Week, read quotes from banned books or quotes about banned books and related themes (freedom to read, freedom of speech, etc.) during morning or afternoon announcements. Quotes can be found via an Internet search, or at site such as

- <http://www.buzzfeed.com/simonschuster/11-quotes-from-authors-on-censorship-banned-book-cpw7#.tqYryqxAx>
- [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/21/quotes-banned-books\\_n\\_5759808.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/21/quotes-banned-books_n_5759808.html)

Another option is to pose daily questions about challenged/banned books (i.e., "I was banned in 1989 for criminalizing tree cutting. What book am I?") Schools may want to sponsor a contest, where student's enter their answer in a drawing each day. At the end of the day, the student whose name is drawn can be announced, along with the correct answer.



"Surprise" announcements throughout the day can also be made, detailing fictional events such as: "This just in! Principal Jones has been arrested after being caught with *Where the Wild Things Are*, a children's picture book banned in the late 1960s for being "too dark and frightening!" Or, volunteers can be solicited to pretend to be a character from a banned book and make an announcement as that character. Be creative and have fun!

### Create a Bumper Sticker/Book Mark

Instruct students to design a bumper sticker or bookmark advertising Banned Books Week that focuses on a specific banned book, or that makes a statement regarding themes such as the freedom to read, banned books, censorship, etc. Final bumper stickers or bookmarks should include:

- An original slogan, word, or phrase that expresses an attitude relating to Banned Books Week. The slogan must be an expression that is effective and convincing to its intended audience.
- An appropriate visual image or symbol.
- The overall work must be creative and clearly show to its viewer that great effort was put forth in creating and completing the bumper sticker.
- Students may also be required to write a paragraph explaining their work.



### Host a Read Out

Since the inception of Banned Books Week in 1982, libraries and bookstores throughout the country have staged local "read-outs"—a continuous reading of banned/challenged books. Host a similar event at your school, soliciting students, faculty and staff, parents, family members, and other community members to participate. Learn more at <http://www.bannedbooksweek.org/virtualreadout>

### Banned Books Club

Start a book club that specifically reads and discusses banned books. Members can do book "pitches" or book talks during classes or over the announcements to get other students interested in participating. Students might also start a blog, FaceBook page, or Twitter account regarding what they are reading and as a space for online discussion. Check out the NY Times Learning Blog for reading group suggestions:

[http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/28/join-the-club-supporting-independent-reading-with-book-groups/?\\_r=1](http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/28/join-the-club-supporting-independent-reading-with-book-groups/?_r=1)

### **“Don’t Ban Me!” Monologue**

Allow students to celebrate characters from banned books in creative ways. Students might write a monologue as their chosen character that they perform (in costume) describing who they are and why they shouldn’t be banned. Other creative options include:

- host a banned books party, in which students attend as their banned book character (they can dress as the character, introduce themselves in character, etc.)
- students write and/or perform a song they think represents a banned book character or as the character himself/herself
- students create a piece of art from the perspective of their banned character, etc.

### **Host a Banned Books Parade**

In partners or groups, have students create a float representing a banned book and/or related themes or topics of First Amendment rights, freedom to read, censorship, intellectual freedom, etc. Students will then educate others on their book/topic by presenting their float in a class or school parade. Students will need to research their book/topic then design a float that is:

(a) visually appealing (decorated and creative) and contains appropriate information about the book/topic. It is recommended that students think of a symbol or artistic structure for their float that will make it memorable. (Facilitate students in considering floats they have seen in parades as a starting point. Memorable inclusions might be a person in costume, an artistic recreation of a scene in a challenged/banned book, an abstract structure that illustrates the theme, etc.)

(b) moveable, so that students can present it along the parade route on its due date. Encourage creativity – students might use vehicle toys, wagons, tricycles, skate boards, etc. (Teachers can also assign this as a smaller-scale project, and instruct students to create shoe-box sized floats.)

Teachers can also add on additional components to the assignment, such as instructing students to create a short jingle or rap that teaches parade onlookers about the float topic/theme as they pass, marketing material to hand out during the parade (something small and “catchy” that represents the float’s topic that will make onlookers remember the float), and/or a designer’s statement, in which students summarize the topic/theme and describe the reasoning behind the design of the float. Schools may also want to consider hosting a contest in which the school and/or community votes on the best floats in various categories, offering a prize for the top choices.

### **You’ve Been Hired by Carolina Advertising!**

Students will assume the roles of advertising professionals who have been hired by the prestigious firm, Carolina Advertising, to launch an awareness campaign about Banned Books Week and related themes. Project options for students to be assigned include:

- **Billboard** - should be informational and educational. It must contain relevant artwork, descriptive text, and a tag line (a catchphrase, or small amount of eye catching/interesting text). It should also be artistic and creative.
- **Radio spot** - should be approximately 1-2 minutes when performed and should also educate and inform listeners regarding the assigned topic. Listeners should be so interested by what is shared that they are convinced to participate (i.e., read a banned book, celebrate Banned Books week themselves, etc.) Radio spots can make use of creative techniques such as humor, dramatic voices, song/music, reenactment, etc., as long as it contains accurate information about the assigned topic.
- **Television commercial** – should be a 2-3 minute performed commercial that summarizes the important information about the assigned book/topic. It can utilize acting, music/singing, dance, and any other creative techniques chosen. Teachers may consider filming the commercials and airing them (i.e., at a Banned Books event or during televised announcements) throughout Banned Books Week.

### **The “Living” Museum of Banned Books**

In partners or groups of 3-4, students will create a “living” museum exhibit that illustrates or explores a particular challenged or banned book. Instruct students that final exhibits should include:

- *A statue/visual representation:* Group members will create sculptures with their bodies that represent the characters, issues, scenes, commentary, etc. they want to highlight from their book. Groups should brainstorm and decide on a final visual representation that includes at least one, if not all, group members. Ensure students can hold themselves in place for a short period of time.
- *A verbal presentation:* When visitors walk up to the exhibit, the museum docent (tour guide) will tap one of the frozen sculptures, resulting in information about the exhibit being shared. This information will be shared by one or more people in the group (in character), and should be approximately 1-2 minutes long. (For example, a frozen book character might come alive to tell his/her story in first person, or the entire exhibit might launch into reenacting a scene from the book.) Once the information is shared, the exhibit returns to the frozen position it was originally in.

On the due date, teachers should split the class in two, asking half of the groups to set up and assume the position of their exhibits, and instruct the other half of the class to join you as museum tourists. The teacher should now assume the personality of a museum docent, taking half the class on a gallery tour. Lead students to each of their classmates' "living" exhibits and ask students to first discuss what they see. For example: What do you first notice? Why do you think the artist has placed the clay in this position? What might this represent? What message is the artist trying to convey? Once students have discussed the piece, the teacher should tap the exhibit to "bring it to life," at which point the student(s) will present their exhibit. Afterwards, the tour will continue on to the next exhibit. (Once a student's exhibit has been visited, they can join the tour as well. Also, students can relax their statue positions while they are waiting for the tour to arrive to their exhibit.) Afterwards, repeat the process with the students originally tourists setting up and presenting their exhibits.

### **The Tar Heel Players**

Pretending they are part of a successful theatre troupe, students will create a 5 minute performance that dramatizes a scene from a challenged or banned book, or creatively stages a response from book characters to the idea that they might be banned. Performances should:

- have clear characters
- have a beginning, middle and end
- be educational and creative, and provide the audience with intriguing information about the characters and their situation
- utilize theatrical strategies such as dramatic acting, music/singing, dance, etc.
- be approximately 5 minutes when performed; the performance (even if a comedy) should be performed in a serious and committed way and everyone should participate

### **Links for Additional Ideas Banned Books Week**

- [http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/09/23/10-ways-to-celebrate-banned-books-week/?\\_r=0](http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/09/23/10-ways-to-celebrate-banned-books-week/?_r=0)
- <http://www.teachhub.com/banned-book-week-activities>

For questions regarding these ideas or additional information, contact Christie Norris, Director of K-12 Outreach at Carolina K12, [cnorris@unc.edu](mailto:cnorris@unc.edu)