

READ BANNED COMICS



**A Guide to Banned,
Challenged, and Controversial
Comics and Graphic Novels**



Comic Book Legal Defense Fund is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of the First Amendment rights of the comics art form and its community of retailers, creators, publishers, librarians, educators, and readers. CBLDF provides legal referrals, representation, advice, assistance, and education in furtherance of these goals.

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CBLDF thanks our Guardian Members:

Grant Geissman, Philip Harvey, and
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CBLDF's education program is made possible with the generous support of the Gaiman Foundation and supporters like you!



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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Happy Banned Books Week!

Every year, CBLDF joins a chorus of readers, advocates, and organizations to mark the annual celebration of the freedom to read! We hope you'll join us in the celebration by reading banned comics!

In the pages ahead, you'll see a sampling of the many, many titles singled out for censorship in American libraries and schools. Censorship has broad targets, from books that capture the unique challenges of younger readers, such as *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier and *This One Summer* by Mariko and Jillian Tamaki, to the frank discussion of adult identity found in *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel and *Maus* by Art Spiegelman. The moral, visionary realities of authors like Brian K. Vaughan, Neil Gaiman, and Alan Moore have all been targeted. Even the humor and adventure of *Dragon Ball* and *Bone* have come under fire. That's just for starters.

Read on for a jaw dropping collection of titles that have drawn calls for censorship.



Art by Tony Shasteen

The freedom to read means each of us has the right to decide for ourselves and our own children what books we wish to read. Thanks to supporters like you, we're able to protect that valuable right with legal aid, counseling, education, and other support.

This Banned Books Week, celebrate your freedom to read with banned comics!

—Charles Brownstein,
Executive Director



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COMICS & CENSORSHIP

ARE BOOKS REALLY STILL BANNED IN THE UNITED STATES?

Yes! According to the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF), which tracks challenges and bans and compiles an annual top ten challenged books list, 416 books were challenged in 2017. Since most challenges are not reported, the actual number is probably much higher. Most of these books were challenged in public libraries, and would-be censors cited several reasons for the challenges, including violence, profanity, sexual content, LGBTQIA content, racism, religious viewpoint, and allegedly un-American content.

WHICH COMICS ARE BANNED?

Comics are one of the most commonly attacked types of books, with challenges and bans happening every year. In 2017, *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier was the third most challenged book in the country, marking the third time the book has appeared on the top ten list in the last four years. Once again, the middle grades graphic novel was challenged for LGBTQIA content because it includes two gay characters and a chaste kiss between two boys.

WHY SHOULD COMICS BE IN SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES?

In addition to being an immensely popular format that appeals to readers of all ages, comics are a unique and powerful way to encourage literacy. Because of the synergy between art and text, comics are particularly good for reluctant readers, English learners, and people who have learning disorders, such as dyslexia. The skills readers develop from reading comics provide a practical foundation for other kinds of learning. From verbal and visual literacy to critical thinking and memory, comics are a great medium to get communities reading!

WHAT DOES CBLDF DO TO HELP?

CBLDF assists librarians and educators by providing access to resources and writing letters of support in cases in which comics and books are challenged. In the past year, CBLDF has opposed several challenges, and we stand ready to address new ones when they happen. CBLDF is also an active sponsor of Banned Books Week and the Kids' Right To Read Project, initiatives that create tools and perform activities that defend the freedom to read.

Visit cbldf.org
to learn more!



CENSORED SUPE



AMAZING SPIDER-MAN: REVELATIONS

J. Michael Straczynski, John Romita, Jr., and Scott Hann (Marvel, 2002)

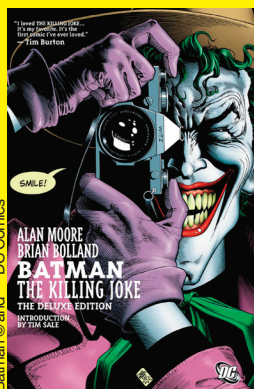
Your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man is the last character you'd expect to see swatted off of a school library's shelves, but that was exactly what happened in 2009 when a parent in Millard, Nebraska, protested the inclusion of *Amazing Spider-Man: Revelations* in a middle school library over a bikini-clad character.

The district library has a thorough selection process and review policy, and the title was in demand. An August 2014 search of the catalog shows that they still have a copy of *Revelations*, although it had a status of "out for repairs." If someone had put it in that status in 2009 just to get it off the shelf, it's unlikely the book would have been left in the catalog this long. More likely it's falling apart from use!

BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT STRIKES AGAIN

Frank Miller and Lynn Varley (DC Comics, 2001)

Batman: The Dark Knight Strikes Again is the sequel to *The Dark Knight Returns*, Frank Miller's popular and gritty take on the mythos of Gotham City's nocturnal superhero. Set three years after the events of *The Dark Knight Returns*, it has Batman and several other DC characters taking on a repressive U.S. government controlled by Lex Luthor. The book was challenged in Canton, Ohio, as being "unsuited to age group" and containing "offensive language" and "sexism." The challenge failed, and the book stayed on the shelf.



BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE

Alan Moore and Brian Bolland (DC Comics, 1988)

Batman: The Killing Joke depicts Joker's violent torture of Jim Gordon and his daughter Barbara. It had a profound influence on the Batman universe's continuity, introducing Barbara Gordon's shooting and subsequent paralysis and opening the door to her transition into the character Oracle.

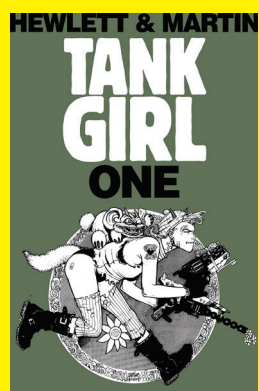
In May 2013, a patron of the public library in Columbus, Nebraska, requested that the book be removed from the collection, claiming that it "advocates rape and violence." Three out of five library board members were present at the meeting during which the challenge was considered, and they voted unanimously to retain *The Killing Joke* on shelves.

TANK GIRL

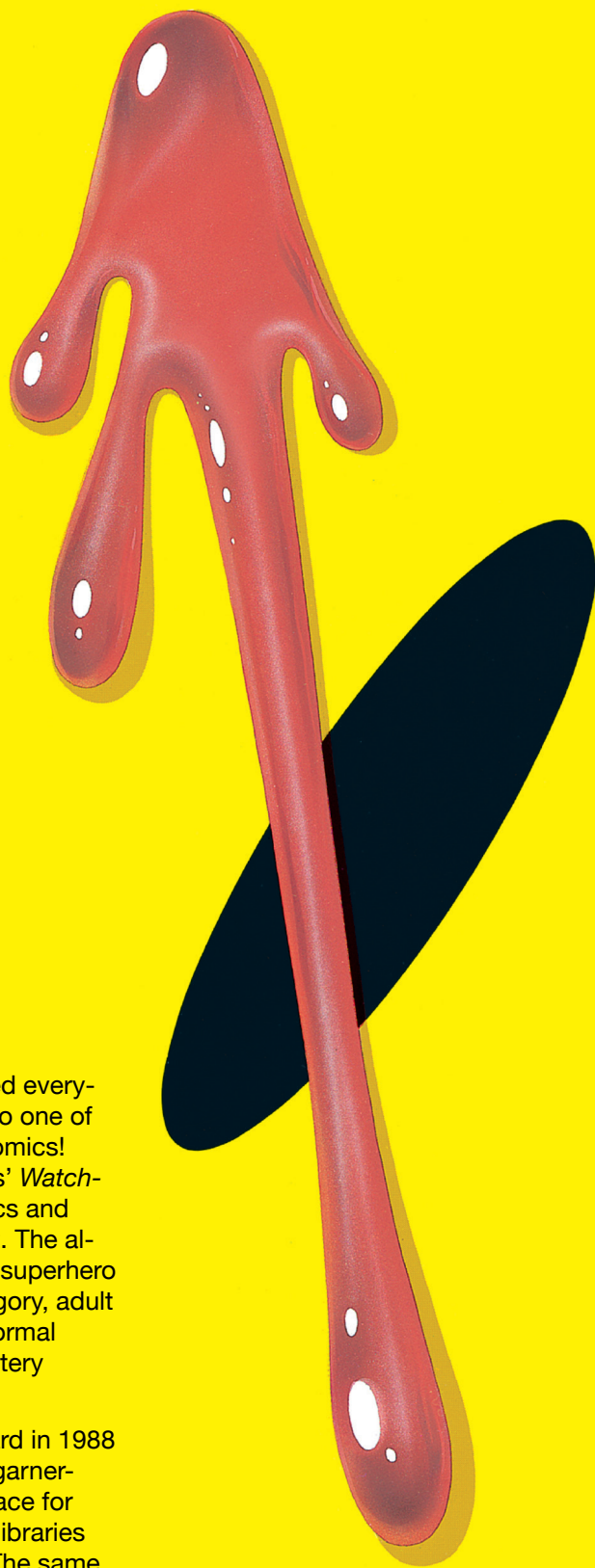
Created by Alan Martin and Jamie Hewlett (Titan, 2002)

Tank Girl first saw print as a comic strip in 1988. The British series, originally set in post-apocalyptic Australia, follows the adventures of Tank Girl, her mutant kangaroo boyfriend Booga, and a varied cast of heroes and villains. The series has also been drawn by Ashley Wood, Rufus Dayglo, Philip Bond, Jim Mahfood, and more.

The *Tank Girl* books are meant to entertain an adult audience, frequently depicting violence, flatulence, vomiting, sex, and drug use. In 2009, the book was challenged at the Hammond Public Library in Hammond, Indiana. A library patron asked that the book be removed for the depiction of nudity and violence. The library chose to retain the book, and it remains on shelves today.



ERHEROES



WATCHMEN

**Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons
(DC Comics, 1987)**

The graphic novel that changed everything about superheroes is also one of the most frequently banned comics! Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen* has been praised by critics and fans alike since its 1986 debut. The alternate history reimagines the superhero genre, employing political allegory, adult themes, and unprecedented formal inventiveness in a murder mystery involving flawed heroes.

Watchmen won the Hugo Award in 1988 and has been instrumental in garnering more respect and shelf space for comics and graphic novels in libraries and mainstream bookstores. The same qualities that led to *Watchmen*'s massive acclaim also led to its challenge in school library collections.

NO KIDS ALLOW



BONE

Jeff Smith (Scholastic / Graphix, 2005)

Jeff Smith's *Bone* follows Fone Bone and his two cousins Smiley and Phoney on adventures that are humorous, mythical, and epic in scope. Although considered a modern comics classic that has delighted millions of readers all over the world, *Bone* is also one of the most commonly challenged books in American libraries.

According to ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, the *Bone* series has faced several challenges and at least one ban over the years. In 2013, it was the tenth most banned book in the country.

DRAMA

Raina Telgemeier (Scholastic / Graphix, 2012)

Raina Telgemeier's *Drama*, a graphic novel about the joys and tribulations of a middle school drama troupe, received universal critical praise upon its publication in 2012. Although most readers found *Drama* to be just as endearing and authentic as Telgemeier's other books, *Smile* and *Sisters*, a small but vocal minority have objected to the inclusion of two gay characters, one of whom shares a chaste on-stage kiss with another boy. The book was listed among the country's top ten most banned books in 2014, 2016, and 2017.



THIS ONE SUMMER

Jillian Tamaki and Mariko Tamaki (First Second, 2014)

This One Summer broke boundaries by becoming the first graphic novel to make the short list for the Caldecott Medal. Unfortunately, the Caldecott honor yielded an unforeseen negative outcome: increased calls to ban the book.

This One Summer addresses the challenges of adolescence in a sensitive and nuanced storyline that has achieved wide acclaim. It was named the most challenged book of 2016, and it has been among CBLDF's most frequently defended titles.

THE GRAVEYARD BOOK

Adapted by P. Craig Russell from the novel by Neil Gaiman
(HarperCollins, 2014)

In February 2015, CBLDF successfully defended the graphic novel edition of *The Graveyard Book* from a middle school library ban for violent imagery.

The Graveyard Book is a two-volume graphic novel adaptation of Neil Gaiman's Newbery Medal-winning prose novel of the same name. The full-color graphic novel tells the story of Nobody Owens, a boy raised by ghosts, and his adventures through the graveyard where he lives. *Publishers Weekly* called it "a vastly entertaining adaptation... It's a treasure worth having even if the novel is already on the shelf."

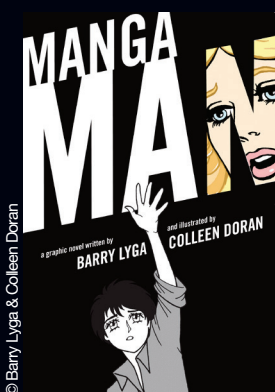


© Neil Gaiman & P. Craig Russell

MANGAMAN

Barry Lyga and Colleen Doran (HMH Books for Young Readers, 2011)

Mangaman tells the story of Ryoko, a manga character who falls through a dimensional rift into a real-world American high school. Ryoko has trouble fitting in at his new school because he involuntarily brought with him various manga conventions: heart eyes when he develops a crush on the beautiful Marissa Montaigne, speed lines when he moves quickly, and perhaps most embarrassing of all, pixelated genitals. On the page that led to the book's challenge, the nude Ryoko sheepishly cites Article 175 of Japan's Criminal Code to assure Marissa that "it's there, you just can't see it." In the next few panels, both Ryoko and Marissa admit with relief that they are not yet ready to have sex anyway. The book was ultimately retained after passing through a review committee, public forum, and the school board.



© Barry Lyga & Colleen Doran

SIDESCROLLERS

Matthew Loux (Oni Press, 2006)

The video game-themed graphic novel *SideScrollers* recounts the adventures of three teenaged slacker geeks who are roused to action when a female friend becomes romantically involved with loutish quarterback Dick. Along the way, the trio engages in mildly vulgar but realistic teenage banter and vandalizes Dick's car with anatomically correct graffiti. It was chosen as one of the Young Adult Library Services Association's Great Graphic Novels for Teens in 2008 and was praised by *Publishers Weekly* as "wholesome... but still entertaining for young teens or those with a sense of humor." It was removed from a Connecticut summer reading program after a parent complained of profanity and sexual references in the book.

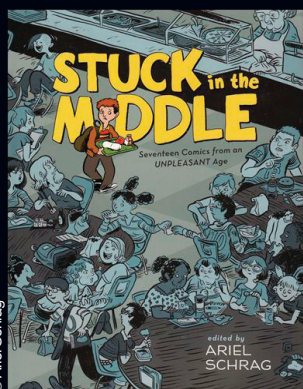


© Matthew Loux

STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

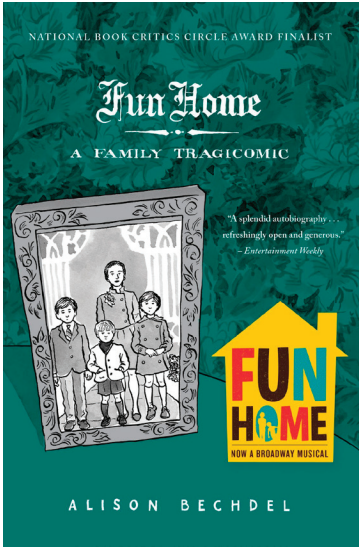
Edited by Ariel Schrag (Viking Juvenile, 2007)

Stuck in the Middle: Seventeen Stories from an UNPLEASANT Age is an anthology of stories about the challenges of early teen years, with contributions from Daniel Clowes, Dash Shaw, Gabrielle Bell, Lauren Weinstein, and more. Praised by *Booklist*, *The New York Times*, and *Publishers Weekly*, it was also selected for New York Public Library's "Books for the Teen Age" list in 2008. The book has been banned in multiple communities. Most recently, an Oklahoma middle school pulled the book from library shelves after one parent called it "trash" and complained of vulgarities, sexual references, and drug use in some of the stories, without noting that those references are there to address real-life problems facing teens.



© Ariel Schrag

DENYING REALITY



FUN HOME: A FAMILY TRAGICOMIC

Alison Bechdel (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006)

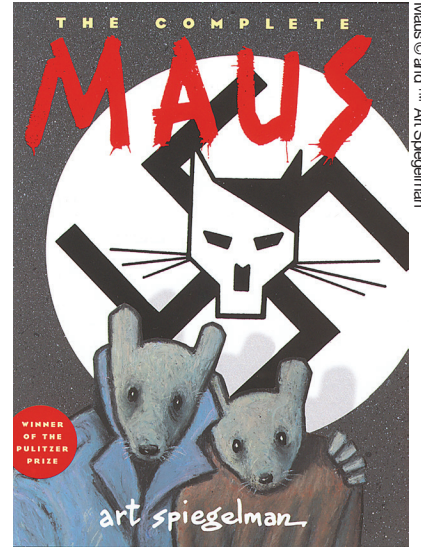
Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* examines the author's childhood, particularly her relationship with her closeted gay father Bruce. As Alison grows older and realizes that she is a lesbian, she and Bruce are both forced to confront how his repression may have affected her own self-image and the way that she dealt with her sexuality. The book was included on numerous "best of the year" lists and earned honors from the National Book Critics Circle Award and awards including the Eisner, the Stonewall Book Award, the GLAAD Media Award, and the Lambda Literary Award (lesbian memoir and biography). It was also adapted into a Tony Award-winning musical. Despite these extraordinary accolades, *Fun Home* has been singled out for bans and challenges in colleges, public libraries, and high schools.

MAUS

Art Spiegelman (Pantheon, 1996)

Art Spiegelman's acclaimed graphic novel *Maus* focuses on a son's quest to learn about his father's history as a Polish Jew who survived the Holocaust. It was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in the Special Awards and Citations-Letters in 1992, becoming the first graphic novel to receive a Pulitzer.

Despite accolades and critical praise, *Maus* has been challenged in the U.S. for being "anti-ethnic" and "unsuitable for younger readers." In 2015, despite a lack of formal complaints, several major bookstore chains in Russia pulled *Maus* off shelves and internet sites. The reason: The cover depicts a Nazi swastika. It comes as a shock to many that the book would become the victim of a law designed to separate modern Russia from the history of Nazism inflicted upon the world during World War II.



PERSEPOLIS

Marjane Satrapi (Pantheon, 2007)

Persepolis, Marjane Satrapi's graphic memoir of growing up during the Iranian Revolution, has received international acclaim since its initial publication in French. Although it was certainly controversial in the Middle East, there were no publicly reported challenges or bans of the book in U.S. schools or libraries until March 2013, when Chicago Public Schools administrators abruptly pulled it from some classrooms.

A cascade of bans and challenges followed, landing the book on the #2 spot on the American Library Association's Top Ten List of Frequently Challenged Books for 2014. In 2015, a 20-year-old college student and her parents said the book should be "eradicated from the system" at Crafton Hills College in Yucaipa, California. CBLDF stood up for the book numerous times in these cases, leading to its successful retention in most.

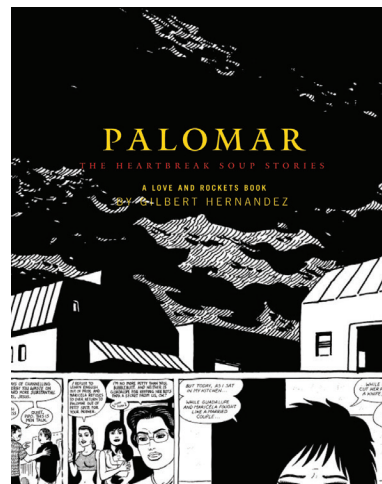
TY

PALOMAR (LOVE AND ROCKETS)

Gilbert Hernandez (Fantagraphics, 2003)

In early 2015, the critically acclaimed comic collection *Palomar* by Gilbert Hernandez was called “child porn” by the mother of a high school student in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. Needless to say, *Palomar* is not actually a collection of child porn—*Publishers Weekly* called it “a superb introduction to the work of an extraordinary, eccentric and very literary cartoonist,” and it often draws comparisons to the magic realism of novelists such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

CBLDF took immediate action to help defend the book, leading a review committee to agree to retain the book by a 5–3 vote. Although *Palomar* was slated to return to shelves, someone within the district has imposed a requirement for students under 18 to have parental permission to access it.



© Gilbert Hernandez



BLANKETS

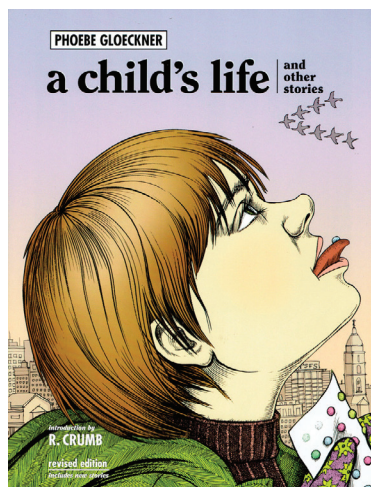
Craig Thompson (Top Shelf, 2003)

In 2006, Craig Thompson’s celebrated graphic novel *Blankets* was challenged in the Marshall, Missouri, Public Library. *Blankets* is the semiautobiographical story of Thompson’s upbringing in a religious family, his first love, and how he came to terms with his religious beliefs. The primary narrative in the book describes main character Craig’s relationship with Raina, a young woman he meets at a Christian youth camp. We get glimpses into Craig’s childhood and his relationship with his younger brother through flashbacks, as he wrestles with his views of religion and his relationship with God.

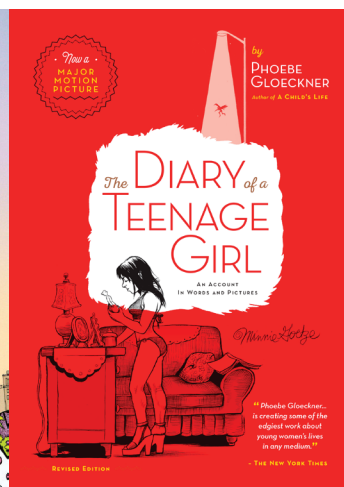
A CHILD’S LIFE AND OTHER STORIES • THE DIARY OF A TEENAGE GIRL

Phoebe Gloeckner (Frog Books, 2000 • North Atlantic Books, 2015)

Artist and comics creator Phoebe Gloeckner has never been afraid to show the raw and gritty bits of reality in her work, making her books frequent targets for censors. Gloeckner’s highly acclaimed work includes themes of coming of age and sexual awaking and contains references to sex, drugs, and STIs, so it is intended for mature audiences. In 2004, *A Child’s Life* was removed from public library shelves in Stockton, California. In 2015, CBLDF was involved in a confidential challenge against *The Diary of a Teenage Girl* over its sexual content, and CBLDF’s efforts kept the book on shelves.



© Phoebe Gloeckner

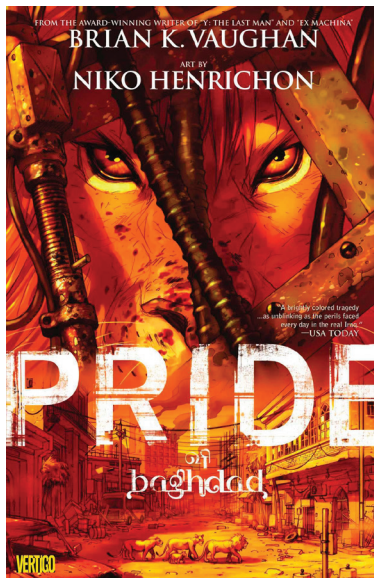


The Diary of a Teenage Girl © and TM Phoebe Gloeckner

FORBIDDEN FANTASY



Saga © and ™ Brian K. Vaughan & Fiona Staples



© Brian K. Vaughan & Nike Henrichon



Y: The Last Man © and ™ Brian K. Vaughan & Pia Guerra

Brian K. Vaughan has the “honor” of several titles on the list of banned and challenged comics...

SAGA

Brian K. Vaughan and Fiona Staples (Image Comics, 2012)

Vaughan and Fiona Staples' sci-fi epic adventure *Saga* has not only become one of the bestselling and most critically acclaimed comic series since its debut in March 2012, but it has also become one of the most controversial comics, holding the sixth spot on the ALA's Top Ten List of Frequently Challenged Books in 2014.

PRIDE OF BAGHDAD

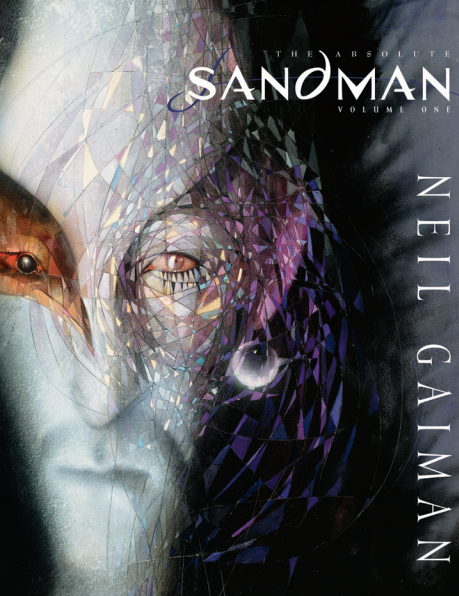
Brian K. Vaughan and Niko Henrichon (Vertigo / DC Comics, 2006)

Pride of Baghdad, a graphic novel that follows a pride of lions that escapes from a Baghdad zoo after an American bombing as they struggle to survive on the bombed-out streets of the city, is based loosely on true events. Despite making both YALSA's Great Graphic Novels for Teens Top Ten in 2007 and Booklist Editors' Choice: Adult Books for Young Adults, as well as featuring non-human main characters, *Pride of Baghdad* is frequently challenged for sexual content. Despite challenges, the book remains available in libraries around the country. It is often praised for the ways in which it comments on the effects of war on civilians and its commentary on freedom.

Y: THE LAST MAN

Brian K. Vaughan and Pia Guerra (Vertigo / DC Comics, 2002)

The post-apocalyptic series *Y: The Last Man* follows amateur escape artist Yorick Brown and his pet monkey Ampersand, the last males on earth after a mysterious plague wipes out the males of every species, including humans. In June 2015, *Y: The Last Man* was one of four graphic novels that a 20-year-old college student and her parents said should be “eradicated from the system” at Crafton Hills College in Yucaipa, California. CBLDF led a defense of the book, and it was retained.



Sandman © and ™ DC Comics

SANDMAN

Neil Gaiman and Various Artists (Vertigo / DC Comics, 1989)

Sandman was a 75-issue series launched in 1989 that chronicled the misadventures, struggles, and complex relationships among seven mystical siblings. The series was released by DC Comics, becoming the flagship title for DC's Vertigo line.

The comic series and graphic novel have been challenged and banned in libraries since its publication. Gaiman's graphic novel has been challenged and removed from some libraries because of "anti-family themes," "offensive language," and for being "unsuited for age group." Most often, opposition to the series has arisen when it has been shelved in the young adult section of the library.

SEX CRIMINALS

Matt Fraction and Chip Zdarsky (Image Comics, 2013)

Considered to be sexually explicit by library staff and administrators, this compilation of adult comic books by Matt Fraction and Chip Zdarsky was the seventh most frequently banned and challenged book of 2016 according to ALA. The series is acclaimed for its dissection of sexual taboo and frank (and frequently comedic) examination of sexuality. When the series ran afoul of Apple's content policies for iOS, Fraction responded: "Suppression always aims to inspire fear and intimidation. I hope no one changes a word or a single pixel because of this. It's the only way to fight back. Don't change a thing."



Sex Criminals © and ™ Matt Fraction & Chip Zdarsky



THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN: THE BLACK DOSSIER

Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill (WildStorm / DC Comics, 2007)

The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen: Black Dossier is a sort of meta "sourcebook" for the popular series of the same name. In 2009, two employees of the Jessamine County Public Library in Kentucky were fired after they took it upon themselves to withhold the library's copy of *The Black Dossier* from circulation, objecting to the book's sexual content. The library director endured a series of threats from the community over this decision, which was in alignment with the guidance of the Library Bill of Rights, ensuring equal access to contents for every member of the community.

NEONOMICON

Alan Moore and Jacen Burrows (Avatar, 2010)

Neonomicon, the Bram Stoker Award-winning series, was challenged at a library in Greenville, South Carolina. The book was shelved in the adult section of the library, which is generally restricted to minors unless they have parental permission. A 14-year-old girl who had permission from her mother checked out the book. After asking her mother about a profane word used in the book, her mother looked at the book and filed a complaint. CBLDF led the defense of the book, but the book was removed against the recommendation of the library's content review committee.

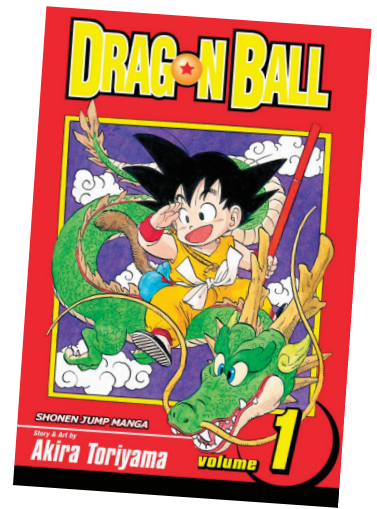


© Alan Moore & Jacen Burrows

MUZZLED MANGA

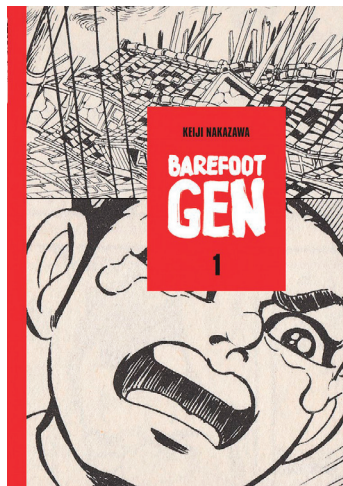
DRAGON BALL

Akira Toriyama (VIZ Media, 2003)



Dragon Ball follows the adventures of Goku and his friends from childhood through adolescence as he trains in martial arts and begins his exploits. Goku embarks on a quest for the seven mystical orbs called Dragon Balls, which summon a wish-granting dragon when gathered. Inspired by traditional Chinese storytelling and myths, *Dragon Ball* is a modern take on timeless classics and embodies themes of friendship, rivalry, victory and loss. The graphic novels are the basis of the popular media franchise and subsequent spin-offs.

In 2009, the graphic novel series was challenged in Wicomico County, Maryland, because the books depict violence and contain incidental nudity. The review committee recommended that the books in the *Dragon Ball* series, which were listed by the publisher for ages 13+, be removed from the entire public school library system, including at the high school level. School officials acknowledged the value of graphic novels in their libraries and indicated that they would embark on “instituting more focused and ongoing professional development training on the selection of media materials and additional procedures to handle student requests for media books and resources.”



BAREFOOT GEN

Keiji Nakazawa (Last Gasp, 2004)

Barefoot Gen, which depicts wartime atrocities from the perspective of the seven-year-old protagonist, has fallen victim to several challenges in its home country of Japan. *Barefoot Gen* is loosely based on Nakazawa's own childhood, as his father, two sisters, and brother were killed in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945.

The series was pulled from primary and middle school libraries in the Japanese city of Matsue. In response to media coverage and protests from educators and citizens, the school board returned the books to circulation, claiming that it had planned all along to only withhold the books for a limited time, after making “preparations to provide guidance to students regarding the problematic expressions.”

SWORD ART ONLINE: AINCRAID

Reki Kawahara and abec (Yen Press, 2017)

CBLDF took the lead in defending the manga *Sword Art Online: Aincrad* after it was challenged at a middle school in Jerome, Idaho, where the book was ultimately retained. The first volume in a manga series by Reki Kawahara and illustrated by abec was challenged by a Jerome Middle School teacher on behalf of a student who found both language and drawings in the book to be “inappropriate.” The images that perturbed the student were apparently “a female character wearing underwear and sharing a bed with a male character.”



A HISTORY OF CENSORSHIP



Comics censorship didn't start with library bans—the medium has been targeted from the very beginning, including by the United States government!

From the 1930s to the modern day, the comics medium has been stigmatized as low-value speech. Moral crusaders asserted that comics corrupted youth, hurt their ability to read and appreciate art, and even made them delinquents. This kind of public criticism spread in popular magazines and town meetings, and even led to public burnings of comic books!

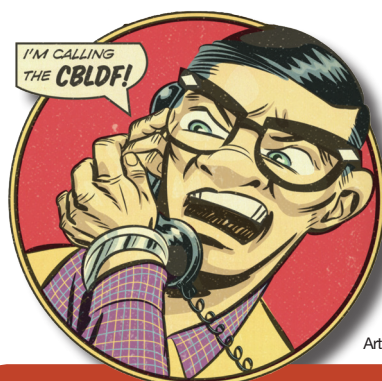
Fredric Wertham was the most prominent early critic of comics. A child psychologist who did groundbreaking work with underprivileged youth, Wertham wrote the 1954 anti-comics screed *Seduction of the Innocent*. He was the star witness in Senate hearings led by Senator Estes Kefauver, where he described comics as a cause of juvenile crime.

EC Comics publisher William Gaines voluntarily testified on behalf of the comics industry during the hearings, but his defiant statements ultimately added fuel to the anti-comics movement. After two days of Senate hearings and a deluge of bad press, compounded by an angry public and the threat of regulation by the government, the comics industry was backed into a corner. They responded by establishing the Comic Magazine Association of America, which instituted the Comics Code Authority, a censorship code that sanitized the content of comics for years to come. Almost overnight, comics were diminished, suitable only for the youngest or dimmest readers. Horror, crime, science fiction, romance, and other genres that appealed to older and more sophisticated readers were wiped out for a generation.

Until recently, comics were generally considered second-class literature, a legacy of Wertham and Kefauver's crusade against them. In 2013, Dr. Carol Tilley researched Wertham's papers and found that he falsified much of his evidence against comics!

Today, the Comics Code is no more thanks to the efforts of creators, publishers, and CBLDF to change the public perception of the medium. But while we're unlikely to see two days of anti-comics hearings take place on the Senate floor today, comics are still targeted by would-be censors, as you can see in these pages!

Whenever comics are threatened, CBLDF will be there to ensure your freedom to read them!



Art by J Gonzo

**Call 1-800-99-CBLDF
or email
info@cbldf.org
at the first sign of a
First Amendment
emergency!**



Art by Duncan Fegredo

CREATORS ON CENSORSHIP!

CENSORSHIP DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTS COMICS. WE GATHERED QUOTES FROM CREATORS ABOUT CENSORSHIP AND THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE EXPRESSION.

MY FATHER ONCE NEARLY CAME TO BLOWS WITH A FEMALE DINNER GUEST ABOUT WHETHER A PARTICULAR PATCH OF EMBROIDERY WAS FUCHSIA OR MAGENTA.



© Alison Bechdel. From *Fun Home*

ALISON BECHDEL

My first reaction [to being banned] is: What a great honor! My second reaction is, it's a very interesting situation, and it's all about the power of images, which I think is something people need to talk about. I can understand why people wouldn't want their children to accidentally think this was a funny comic book and pick it up and see pictures of people having sex. I can understand that. I think *banning* books is the wrong approach... I think it had everything to do with the fact that it was illustrated. I'm sure that library's got all kinds of gay material in it. But if they're just regular books with no cartoon illustrations, there's not the same kind of concern about it. (Source: *The Comics Journal* #282)

Alison Bechdel's acclaimed Fun Home is one of the most frequently challenged graphic novels.

NEIL GAIMAN

I don't think there is such a thing as a bad book for children. Every now and again it becomes fashionable among some adults to point at a subset of children's books, a genre, perhaps, or an author, and to declare them bad books, books that children should be stopped from reading. I've seen it happen over and over; Enid Blyton was declared a bad author, so was RL Stine, so were dozens of others. Comics have been decried as fostering illiteracy.

It's tosh. It's snobbery and it's foolishness...

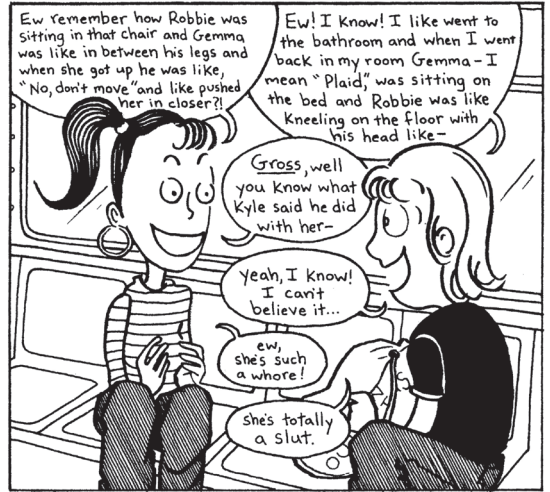
Well-meaning adults can easily destroy a child's love of reading: stop them reading what they enjoy, or give them worthy-but-dull books that you like, the 21st-century equivalents of Victorian "improving" literature. You'll wind up with a generation convinced that reading is uncool and worse, unpleasant.

(Source: *The Guardian*)

Neil Gaiman is the author of several award-winning novels and comics, including The Sandman, Neverwhere, and The Graveyard Book, all of which have been challenged.



Photo Credit: Kimberly Butler



© Ariel Schrag. From "Plan of the Number 7 Bus," *Stuck in the Middle*

ARIEL SCHRAG

Every parent has the right to monitor his or her child's reading (or TV watching, or movie watching, etc.), and if you don't want your child reading *Stuck in the Middle*, I completely respect that choice. However, there's a big difference between making that choice for your child and making it for every child, which is what banning the book does. (Source: CBLDF interview, <http://cblfd.org/?p=30305>)

Ariel Schrag's anthology Stuck in the Middle has been challenged several times over Schrag's commitment to authentic stories that accurately reflect the realities of middle school.

MARIKO TAMAKI

If you pull a book from a library shelf, it's not available to the kid who gets their books at the library. So, you're impacting that library as a resource to the readers who depend on it. (Source: *She Changed Comics*)

Mariko and Jillian Tamaki's This One Summer was the first graphic novel to earn the Caldecott Honor. CBLDF defended the graphic novel from censorship on several occasions.

You remember that time your mom made up that ghost story about the woman who "kissed" her heart around in her purse?

© Jillian and Mariko Tamaki. From *This One Summer*

RAINA TELGEMEIER

[The censorship of diverse content] sends a problematic message to readers. Every flavor of young person deserves to see themselves in literature, and the powers-that-be challenging content that isn't straight-white-cis-conservative tells everyone else that they're not worthy. The future is bright, though. The storytellers coming of age now have access to such a goldmine of diverse content, and they're already busy adding their own voices to the mix. I don't think anyone will be able to stop them.

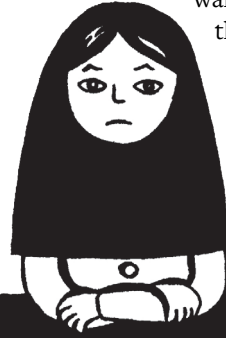
(Source: *She Changed Comics*)

Raina Telgemeier's Drama has been challenged for the depiction of gay characters.

MARJANE SATRAPI

The good thing is that these people who ban things, it's like they are completely unaware of what a human being is. If you want to make adolescents read a book, ban it! And then they all

want to read it. Because then they're rebellious. Why not just explain it? It's not like kids are dumb. (Source: *American Libraries Magazine*)



© Marjane Satrapi. From *Persepolis*

Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis is often challenged for the depiction of Islam.



© Raina Telgemeier. From *Drama*

G. WILLOW WILSON

Honestly, I don't know why anybody bothers to try to censor books anymore. Haven't they learned? Attempting to censor books sends sales through the roof. When you tell people a book is too risqué or dangerous to read, they will go out of their way to read that book, because now it has the appeal of something forbidden. You can't contain a story once it's out there. (Source: *She Changed Comics*)

G. Willow Wilson writes Ms. Marvel.

Ms. Marvel © and ™ Marvel Comics. Art by Jamie McKelvie.

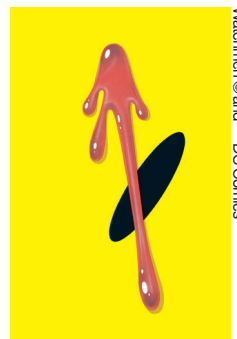


ALAN MOORE

If parents are making the decisions that their children can or cannot read this sort of book in the home, that's fair enough. The parents can take the consequences of that. It won't necessarily stop the children reading it, but at least it's a transaction between the child and the parent and it's the parent taking responsibility for their children... I prefer to let my children read anything, but I want to know what they're reading, and if there's anything they come across which might be disturbing, then I'm always on hand to talk about it with them. Which, to me, seems to be the responsible attitude.

(Source: *The Comics Journal* #118)

Alan Moore's Watchmen, League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, and Batman: The Killing Joke have drawn the ire of censors.



Watchmen © and ™ DC Comics



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