

more on censorship

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This from a reader:

I think I can pretty well confirm for you that "The Giver" has not been challenged in Canada, either in schools or public libraries. I'm no expert but I have tracked a lot of challenges over the past few years. I find the American conservative idea that somehow their children need to be "protected" from certain ideas and books hard to swallow. I work part time at the Pelham Public Library where I came up with the idea of having a "banned book club." Fearing calls, my boss cautioned me to call it "Freedom to Read." I am also a divinity student heading into ministry in the church. You may find my support (and my encouragement) of the right to assess materials without censorship a little strange. However, people do not grow without being confronted with many ideas. As we censor ideas that we don't like for other people, we also remove the opportunity for them to judge and discern on their own.

Of course the whole issue is in the front of the news again because of this year's Newbery winner, which I have not read so I don't feel qualified to comment, really. But I do have an email today from a retired teacher who reminds me that he wrote me back in 1986, when he was teaching fourth grade, about the use of a "bad word" in the first Anastasia book. (He didn't have a problem with it, read in context.) Of course the controversial word in today's news is not an expletive but a body part...a word my own grandsons, now 6 and 8, have known and used since they first began pointing to their own parts as toddlers and being told what each part was called, from "nose" on down to "toes" and everything in between. So it's a little hard to see what all the outrage is about. But I must read the book.

I am in Maine, where 16 inches of snow fell last Wednesday, and where tonight the wind chill is predicted to be 13 below zero. On the day of New England's snowstorm, I was headed by bus to New York and the trip, ordinarily 4 hours, took over 6. But at least I got there, missing one meeting because of my late arrival but able to make my other commitments in the next couple of days. Ordinarily I love being in Manhattan; I lived in New York as a teenager, went to high school there, and just roaming the city is always a pleasure for me. But not when it is bitter cold, with ice and slush everywhere!

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