

# **The Day They Came to Arrest the Book Study Guide**

**The Day They Came to Arrest the Book by Nat Hentoff**

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## Overview

Of constant concern to every American is the First Amendment right of free speech. What should authors write, what should be published, what should be allowed in book stores, what should be studied in schools, and what should students be allowed to read — these are questions that are continually being argued by parents, teachers, students, ministers, The American Civil Liberties Union, and morality groups.

focuses on whether *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain should be on a required reading list in a high school history class.

Hentoff gives both sides of the question—that of the black father and son who object to it because of the frequent use of the word "nigger" and that of the history teacher and school librarian who want students to have the right to read and think for themselves. The book also deals with gender discrimination because of Twain's treatment of women in the novel and possible homosexuality because Huck and Jim are often naked and Jim calls Huck "honey."

This leaves readers to examine the evidence, follow the hearings, and decide for themselves whether justice was done. Hentoff describes himself as "an advocacy writer." As a member of the ACLU and a strong supporter of the freedom given in the First Amendment, Hentoff makes it clear that the history teacher and the former and present librarian should keep the book in the school.

Book censors are always at work looking at textbooks and reading lists.

The characters in this novel show that books may incur objections for many reasons. When censorship starts, it spreads over many different issues so that throwing out a book may please some extremists and infuriate others.

Students need to be able to read critically and make decisions for themselves, and *The Day They Came to Arrest the Book* will help them learn about the process.

## About the Author

Nat Hentoff was born in Boston on June 10, 1925. In an interview for Something about the Author he says that as a child he looked forward to his Saturday visits to the library even though it was a foreboding place. He called it a "cornucopia" where he marveled "at the continual surprises that came with [his] library card." "And unlike school, the library was—and still is—a place where one can find and keep on finding one's own surprises."

He suggests that children might profit more by an education in the library than in the school system.

He obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from Northeastern University with highest honors and did graduate work at Harvard University and the Sorbonne in Paris. After graduation, he worked in Boston as a writer, producer, and announcer for station WMEX for nine years. Then he became associate editor of Downbeat in New York City. He was a reviewer for the New York Herald Tribune Book Week, Peace News in London, Reporter, and Hi Fi Stereo Review, a columnist for Village Voice, and a staff writer for the New Yorker. Besides all his work with newspapers and magazines, he was an adjunct professor at New York University and a lecturer at many other schools and universities.

His strong interest in music is evidenced by books such as Hear Me Talking to Ya: The Story of Jazz by the Men Who Made It, The Jazz Makers, Jazz: New Perspectives on the History of Jazz by Twelve of the World's Foremost Jazz Critics and Scholars, The Jazz Life and Journey into Jazz. His study of jazz made him more aware of the racial problems experienced by the musicians who produced it. Other issues which interest him are freedom of the press, problems in education, police surveillance, the draft, and drugs.

Reflecting his strong social beliefs, he belongs to the Authors League of America, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, the New York Civil Liberties Union, and the Freedom to Write Committee of P.E.N.

He served on the steering committee of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

He has two daughters, Jessica and Miranda, by his first marriage, and two sons, Nicholas and Thomas, by his second marriage. He presently lives in New York City.

His book, Jazz Country, earned him the Nancy Bloch Memorial Award, the New York Herald Tribune Spring Book Festival Award, and the Woodward Park School Book Award. He received the Golden Archer Annual Book Award for This School Is Driving Me Crazy and the Hugh M. Heffner First Amendment Award for The First Freedom: The Tumultuous History of Free Speech in America.

won the Action Public Library Cranberry Award. This book was also an American Library Association Notable Book.



## Plot Summary

*The Day They Came to Arrest the Book* is a thought-provoking and entertaining account of censorship in a small high school. As both sides of the issue fight for their own beliefs, the town is transformed into a virtual battlefield, where old friends and co-workers are set against one another. Those wishing to ban *Huckleberry Finn* claim the novel to be sexist, racist, immoral, and dangerous, while those fighting to keep the novel stress the irony, morality, and historical significance of the novel. Through careful plotting, national news coverage, and the dedication of several students, *Huckleberry Finn* is allowed to remain in the school. Through the process, the individuals within the novel learn the power and danger of freedom, the value of independent thought, and the importance of standing up for what one believes in.

The novel *The Day They Came to Arrest the Book* is a highly engaging account of attempts to censor the book *Huckleberry Finn* at a small high school. Barney Roth, the school newspaper editor, the history instructor Nora Baines, new school librarian Deirdre Fitzgerald, and many other students are shocked when their school principal, Mike Moore, pushed by local black parents and others in the community, attempt to ban *Huckleberry Finn* from the school. These four individuals begin to fight against the censorship, and find their loyalties tested. Fellow student and friend to Barney, Kate Stevens fights to censor the book, and finds her friendship with Barney and Luke Hagstrom, another student, in jeopardy, as many students also discover.

According to school policy, the book is required to go before a review committee, which makes a recommendation for action to the School Board. During the "hearing" of the review committee, individuals on both sides of the argument speak their minds. Those in favor of banning the book cite the apparent racism, sexism, and immorality within the novel, as shown by the frequent use of the word "nigger," the stupidity of the female characters, and the apparent homosexual relationship between Jim and Huck. Those against censorship speak of the value of independent thought, the importance of irony in the novel as Huck acts against society to save his black friend, and the priceless right to freedom.

When Deidre discovers the review board has voted to ban the book from required reading lists, Barney decides to interview the previous librarian, Karen Salters, to learn the truth behind rumors of her departure as librarian. When Barney uncovers a history of hidden censorship at the school at the hands of Principal Moore, he prints a story in the school newspaper, which is picked up by state and national newscasts, bringing unwanted notoriety to the small town, and embarrassment to Principal Moore. As residents argue about morality, freedom, sexism, and racism, the Holy Bible is brought into question as an "immoral" book, due to stories of rape, murder, and immorality within the pages. As the townspeople hear of the attacks on the Holy Bible's content, and discover Principal Moore's past efforts to tear pages from the Bible to make the book "fit for students," the tide of censorship begins to shift, and members of the School Board begin to fear for their reputation with the rest of the nation. In the end, freedom of speech prevails as the School Board votes four to one to keep *Huckleberry Finn*,

without restriction. The youth learn vital lessons of the price for freedom, the danger of censorship, and the power that lies within their own voices. Further, the adults learn education is more than regurgitation of fact, but is instead an active process aimed not at protecting the youth, but at expanding their minds to allow for the formation of independent thought.





# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

*The Day They Came to Arrest the Book* is a thought-provoking and entertaining account of censorship in a small high school. As both sides of the issue fight for their own beliefs, the town is transformed into a virtual battlefield, where old friends and co-workers are set against one another. Those wishing to ban *Huckleberry Finn* claim the novel to be sexist, racist, immoral, and dangerous, while those fighting to keep the novel stress the irony, morality, and historical significance of the novel. Through careful plotting, national news coverage, and the dedication of several students, *Huckleberry Finn* is allowed to remain in the school. Through the process, the individuals within the novel learn the power and danger of freedom, the value of independent thought, and the importance of standing up for what one believes in.

The school year is just beginning at George Mason High School and students Barney Roth and Luke Hagstrom are bracing for Principal Mike Moore's standard greeting as they enter the school. As the boys mock "Mighty Mike" as he welcomes them by claiming to have been possessed through the summer, fellow student Kate Stevens approaches. Kate informs Barney, who has befriended librarian Mrs. Salters in the past, that Salters has quit her position. Kate tells the boys her mother has spoken with Salters, and claims Salters was angry with Moore over some altercation, but Kate does not know the context of the argument. The boys learn the new librarian is "something Fitzgerald."

Deirdre Fitzgerald, the new librarian, cheerfully looks around the school library, sincerely looking forward to her new position. A tall, slender woman with a kind voice, Deirdre recalls her first experiences in a library with pleasure. As she reminisces, a short, heavy blonde woman in her forties enters briskly, noting her own feelings of dread at the new school year. The woman introduces herself as history teacher Nora Baines. When Deirdre offers her a seat, the woman refuses, claiming that to get comfortable would allow "them" to "ambush," and tells Deirdre about problems the previous year with assaults on certain library books. When Deirdre states that Principal Moore informed her that the complaints were dealt with smoothly, Nora laughs and tells her Moore's "resolution" of the issues was the reason for the previous librarian's departure. As she departs for her first class, Nora asks Deirdre if she is a fighter, to which Deirdre replies she is terrifying when her back is against a wall. Nora informs her as she leaves that, unbeknownst to Deirdre herself, the new librarian's back is already against the wall.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter introduces many of the key characters in the novel, as well as foreshadows problems later in the novel with censorship and relationships. Barney Roth, the new school editor, is introduced as a book-loving young man with a clear lack of respect for



Principal Moore. His friend, Luke Hagstrom, equally non-impressed with Moore, is taller and younger than Barney is, but the two are clearly good friends. Kate Stevens, also introduced in this chapter, is thin with jet-black hair and glasses. After overhearing her mother, Kate shares news of the librarian position with her friends. It is clear through their dialog that Kate and Barney are close friends, foreshadowing events later in the novel as their opinions cause a divide in their relationship. Principal Moore is described in this chapter as a man in his late forties with white hair and pale blue eyes. He is clearly disliked by students, as shown by their dread of meeting him in the hallway and in their mocking words and tone during their conversation with him. This uneasy relationship foreshadows the eventual problems between Barney and Moore later in the novel.

Deirdre Fitzgerald is also first seen in this chapter, and is described as a thin, slender, longhaired woman with a kind voice who adores libraries and is looking forward to her position. However, when Nora Baines, the history teacher, briskly introduces her to the cynicism and clear frustration of the school, it becomes clear that the situation is not as it appears. Nora's brief dialog with Deirdre foreshadows the story of prior librarian Salter's problems with Principal Moore, as well as the problems Deirdre will face as the new librarian. This dialog also briefly introduces the theme of censorship, as Nora hints to Deirdre of Moore's previous record of "resolving" issues about questionable books.



## Chapter 2

### Chapter 2 Summary

Nora speaks to her history class of the upcoming year, and asks if they know why she insists the students read novels in addition to the textbook. When Barney's answer includes several references to authors as "he," Kate dryly notes all authors are not male, and wonders aloud why Barney cannot use the word "she" to encompass all writers. Barney's response that "it doesn't feel right" leads to an outburst where Kate angrily notes sexism is comfortable, as is racism, and that this comfort leads no one to change. Nora explains that to avoid the issue, the students can use phrasing such as "the novelists," but warns the students to avoid "deformities of language" such as "clergyperson" or "policeperson."

Nora continues her lesson by introducing the class to Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. According to Nora, the Frenchman was impressed upon entering America to find the people truly ruled themselves. This brings another outburst from Kate, who exclaims that "male, white people" did the ruling. Nora continues, noting that Alexis was concerned about the apparent lack of individual differences in return for a grand rule of the people. Alexis noted the lack of dissent among the American population, and feared individual's freedoms were lost in an effort to assimilate. When Luke disagrees, believing Alexis to be incorrect, Barney notes his experiences that those who are alone in their thinking are often treated as criminals. Luke's comment that he simply would not allow others to treat him in such a way brings yet another outburst from Kate.

Nora tells her students to think about such issues as they read Alexis' book and the other titles on the required reading list, including that of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. After telling them the books are available in the library, Kate asks abruptly why Mrs. Salters, the old librarian, left. Nora hesitates, and tells the students she was offered a better position. Kate notes she has heard otherwise, and Barney mentions finding Mrs. Salters to interview her for the newspaper to discover the true reason for her departure. Nora tells him that the decision to reveal such information would be Mrs. Salters'.

### Chapter 2 Analysis

This chapter introduces individuals to many themes used throughout the rest of the novel, as well as develops the individual characters further. Nora, the instructor, appears passionate about her class, and clearly cares for her students and their independent thoughts. This obvious care for the students is vital to the later storyline, as critics of *Huckleberry Finn* accuse Nora of being insensitive. Kate, on the other hand, symbolizes the outspoken feminist of the group, whose thoughts consistently turn to the judgment of those around her. Although seemingly over-reactive, Kate's outbursts show her as a



strong young woman who fights for what she believes, foreshadowing her role in the fight against *Huckleberry Finn* later. Luke's own outbursts equally show his passion for his opinions, and Barney's thoughtful and respectful dialog show his concern for the feelings of other students. Again, these personality traits develop the character into a key player as the battle against *Huckleberry Finn* unfolds.

This chapter also introduces the themes of racism, sexism, and individual freedoms used throughout the novel. Kate, clearly of feminist, reacts against the apparent sexism of her peers without truly examining their intended meaning, symbolizing the stereotypical "feminist." Luke, also speaking without thought in some cases, symbolizes the innocent way in which many individuals offend others. Nora, seemingly caring about her students, shows some level of intolerance to radical feminism as she refuses to allow specific gender-free words, symbolizing the standard individual's acceptance of differences, within limits. However, her choices of books for the class clearly shows her loyalty to the concept of freedom, and her speech about individual freedoms foreshadows the debate on freedom, as well as actions during the trial of *Huckleberry Finn*. Finally, the discussion of Mrs. Salters' departure as librarian and Barney's determination to discover the truth anticipates the eventual interview of the librarian, and the secret that interview reveals.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

As Scott Berman walks down the hall, he is approached by Gordon McLean, a young black student outraged after reading *Huckleberry Finn*. He points out several references in the book to the word "nigger," and asks Scott how he would feel if he were assigned a book filled with the word "kike." When Scott explains he would simply tell his father, who would immediately file a complaint, Gordon admits this is precisely what he himself has done. Gordon's final words attack Nora's character, as he explains his belief that she does not care about how black students feel.

In a coffee shop down the street, Deirdre and Nora are discussing the truth behind Mrs. Salters' departure as librarian. Nora explains that within the last few years, several citizens began to complain about certain books within the library. According to Nora, those individuals included parents who did not want their own children reading certain books, parents who believed no child should read certain books, and an organization determined to clean up the entire library, such as Concerned Citizens, Parents for Morality in the Schools, and 'SOCASH', or Save Our Children from Atheist Secular Humanism. These individuals attacked such authors as Judy Blume, Kurt Vonnegut, and books such as *Catcher in the Rye* and *Go Ask Alice*. Nora explains that while review procedures are in place for such complaints, Principal Moore would often bypass these procedures by asking Karen Salters to remove the title from the shelves, or to place them in the restricted section. Eventually, according to Nora, Karen grew weary of constantly explaining to students why specific books were no longer available, and after a large fight, quit her position. Deirdre realizes she too will have to decide whether to fight Principal Moore, or accept his silent brand of censorship.

## Chapter 3 Analysis

This chapter introduces two main plotlines in the novel, those of the apparent racism seen by some within the novel *Huckleberry Finn*, and the silent censorship occurring at the hands of Principal Moore in the high school. Gordon's clear anger and outrage at the repeated word "nigger" in the book, and his revelation that his father has a conference with Principal Moore, when combined with the knowledge of Moore's censorship activities, foreshadows events to come as *Huckleberry Finn* comes under scrutiny. Additionally, Gordon's loss of faith in his teacher, Nora, symbolizes the power of interpreted racism, whether real, implied, or imagined.

During her conversation with Deirdre, Nora points out that Moore has never attempted to sway her into bypassing the review procedures, and thus has never been fought against. This statement foreshadows the fight between Nora and Moore later in the novel. Further, the information about Karen Salters and her eventual "agreement" with Moore foreshadows the interview she gives Barney later in the novel, and the discovery

of Moore's activities by the public. In addition, the character of Karen Salters, as described by Nora, appears to represent those individuals in society who are too frightened or too timid to fight against acts they know are wrong. Further, the information presented by Nora informs of the procedures in place for a book review, the history of complaints against books at the school, and the role Deirdre is presumed to play in these complaints. One can sense Deirdre's dread in dealing with these matters foreshadowing her difficult decisions later in the book.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

Barney, Luke, and Kate are discussing Gordon's reaction to the book *Huckleberry Finn*. While Luke believes Gordon is overreacting, since no one is personally attacking him, Barney believes he is simply misinterpreting the meaning behind the word "nigger" as used in the novel. Kate, on the other hand, not only sees Gordon's point as accurate, but also believes the novel to be sexist in its portrayal of women. As Luke and Kate argue, both say things against one another in an effort to prove their point, joking with one another. When Barney asks Kate if she feels they should burn all the copies of the book, Kate calls him crude, and walks away. As she leaves, Luke notes that Kate "never has any fun," to which Barney replies that her fun comes from "sticking pins into people."

Principal Mike Moore is waiting for Gordon's father, Carl, to arrive for their meeting. As he looks at his office wall filled with images of speakers that have come to the school, he realizes very few of them are of black individuals. He contemplates searching the school for an image of Martin Luther King, but decides the effect would appear phony. He thinks to himself that it will take some time to invite enough black speakers to make ten percent of the images on the wall of blacks, but believes he can achieve the goal.

When Carl McLean arrives in the office, he angrily reads from the book several passages he feels are racist. As he speaks, Moore is grateful he has not noticed the lack of black individuals in the wall of photographs. Carl states it is not only the constant reference to the word nigger that is offensive, but also the underlying attitude against blacks that prevails throughout the novel. Moore, making an effort to soothe the parent, points out that the idea occurs to him that Twain's references of racism in the novel are meant to be interpreted as disapproval of the racist attitude during that time period. Additionally, he states his belief that Nora, in class, will discuss the negative treatment of blacks in the novel and the prevalent racism in a manner consistent with anti-racism. Carl, however, is not swayed, and demands the book be pulled from the class, as well as from the school library. Moore assures him he will consult with the staff, but will be in touch within a week. On his way out, Carl notes the lack of black individuals in the photographs on the wall, and tells Moore to take photos of the kitchen and custodial staff at the school to balance the images.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

The scene between Kate, Barney, and Luke again reveals the personalities of these characters. Kate's agreement with Gordon is not surprising, considering her own beliefs as shown in previous chapters, nor is her belief in the apparent sexism within the novel. However, as Kate tries to prove her point, she calls Luke a Swede and tells the young men they will likely not see the sexism within the novel. As she leaves, she insults Luke



yet again. These types of statements show Kate as an activist with good intentions, but whose passion often causes her to say and act in ways contrary to her own position. Luke, on the other hand, continues to show his own lack of compassion or understanding of the issues at hand through his apparent light-hearted attitude. However, his point about Gordon taking the novel personally when the dialog is meant for the characters in the novel foreshadow events later in the book as a young black man points out the same issue during the School Board meeting. Additionally, these events also foreshadow Kate's eventual agreement with Luke and the young black man's viewpoints. Barney proves to again be the thoughtful, considerate young man whose beliefs stem not from a lack of concern or radicalism, but from truly well thought out opinions. Barney can see the irony in *Huckleberry Finn*, whereas the other characters appear oblivious. This concept symbolizes the power of well thought out opinions, and is a theme throughout the rest of the novel.

The meeting between Moore, Carl, and Gordon gives needed insight into the character of Michael Moore. Outwardly concerned for his students, the scene of Moore examining his office photographs show his true motivation for concern, that of self-image. His consideration of placing a poster of Martin Luther King on the wall, his thoughts of including enough black individuals to make up ten percent of the photographs, and his thoughts of the photographs again during Carl's rant show clearly Moore's lack of compassion, as well as his lack of concern. Although Moore does appear to attempt a resolution with Carl, his actions suggest his intent is to deal with this complaint as Nora described his previous actions, foreshadowing the argument between himself and Deirdre, as well as between himself and Nora.

This scene also describes Carl's character, and shows the true intent of Carl's complaint. Not content with banning the book for his child only, Carl uses threats and intimidation to achieve his intent to pull the book from the entire school. This character symbolizes those individuals in society whose passion for a topic causes them to not only attempt to censor their own family's information, but also the information given to others. Further, his parting comment concerning the photographs on the wall show his own stereotypical views of white individuals, in that his assumption suggests Moore has no images of blacks in his photographs because he is racist.





# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

As Nora walks down the hall, she passes Gordon, who proclaims *Huckleberry Finn* dead. Unaware of the meeting the day before, Nora is confused, but is quickly sidetracked upon meeting Maggie Crowley, a fellow teacher, in the hall. Maggie's new class, American Problems, was passed by Michael Moore through sheer determination on Maggie's part. The class involves several controversial topics, but each topic is presented from both sides, thereby ensuring objective coverage of the topics. Maggie is convinced that through hearing educated speakers on all topics, students can learn to think for themselves. Maggie invites Nora and her class to a debate being held at the school the following Thursday entitled "Is Individual Freedom Getting Out of Hand?" Maggie explains that the debaters will be a lawyer from the American Civil Liberties Union and Matthew Griswold from the Citizen's League for the Preservation of American Values. Nora accepts the invitation.

Later that day, Nora is sitting in Moore's office in disbelief as he explains the complaint over *Huckleberry Finn*. As Nora reacts angrily, Moore tells her to "calm herself," and explains that teacher burnout is caused by overreaction. He further states that the complaint against *Huckleberry Finn* is not new, and has resulted in other areas in banning of the book. Nora explains that she does not care what other areas have done, and quotes the founder of the school, George Mason, who claimed freedom of the press was vital. As Moore argues, claiming that the First Amendment does not mean all books must be available in schools, Nora defends her stance, pointing out that freedom of the press is useless without freedom to read what is printed. She also exclaims that all books offend one person or another, and accuses Moore of having no shame. Moore asks Nora to think of herself as a black child or a black parent, and Nora interrupts to point out Moore's assumption that all blacks think alike. Nora refuses to pull the book from her class, as Moore has requested, and instead insists on a book review, which Nora claims she will watch carefully, calling in the ACLU, if needed. Moore attempts to force Nora to remove the book from the class while it is being reviewed, and Nora vehemently refuses. Moore subtly implies that Nora's refusal could result in an acquisition of a "public reputation for creating controversy," and Nora again refuses to cooperate. Moore tells her to "take some hot milk" before she retires, and when Nora asks if Moore instructed Carl to fill out the proper complaint form, he claims to have forgotten. Nora slams the door leaving his office, and Moore asks his secretary to have Deirdre see him first thing in the morning.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

This chapter reveals much about both the characters within the novel, as well as about the fundamental theme throughout the book. Maggie Crowley, introduced in this chapter, is clearly a teacher who believes in free thought and the power of debate. Her

invitation of Nora and her class to the freedom debate, in the context of *Huckleberry Finn* being under review, foreshadows the reaction of students at the debate as they argue their own beliefs.

The meeting between Nora and Moore shows the strength of Nora's belief in her students' right to think freely, and engage in reading as they choose. Nora's arguments stemming from the First Amendment, the knowledge of Mason as a fighter for freedom of the press, and her commitment to the review process foreshadows her powerful role in the fight against *Huckleberry Finn*. In addition, Moore's actions in this chapter show his own lack of morals as he attempts to bypass the proper procedures, and threatens Nora's reputation. His final words to his secretary, combined with previous knowledge of Deirdre's commitment to freedom, foreshadow problems between these characters.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

Deirdre is watching Barney as he looks through the card catalog, and is wondering if he is shy, since he has not spoken to her, when he approaches the librarian's desk. Barney asks where a specific title regarding banned books may be found, and Deirdre replies that the book has been "removed," but that he is free to borrow her own private copy. Barney thanks her, and as the two talk, Barney asks if Deirdre had problems in previous positions with individuals wishing to ban books. Deirdre tells Barney of her previous employment in a private school for girls. According to Deirdre, the school was run by a headmistress who was solely responsible for choosing the titles used in the library and thus, titles were censored before any title ever arrived. Barney admits to wanting to be a writer, and tells Deirdre of his library at home. Deirdre asks Barney how he came to be named Barnabas, and Barney explains he is named after a comic strip character. Deirdre herself explains her own namesake, and as she and Barney begin to talk about his writing aspirations, Nora bursts in, asking Deirdre to speak with her about Moore, whom Deirdre realizes she is late to meet. She and Barney exchange pleasant goodbyes, and Nora explains there is going to be a "big explosion around here."

## Chapter 6 Analysis

This chapter, while short, shows the budding relationship between Deirdre and the students, particularly Barney. Deirdre is shown to be passionately against censorship, shown by her departure from her previous position due to such acts, foreshadowing her role in the trial of *Huckleberry Finn*. Further, based on previous information regarding Moore's style of censorship, one learns that the book Barney is attempting to locate has been quietly removed from the library. This presumption leads to an understanding of Karen Salters, the previous librarian, and her eventual decision to stand against such actions. This understanding assists later in the novel, when Barney interviews Karen for the newspaper. In addition, Nora's reference to a "big explosion" and her animated negative comments about Principal Moore foreshadow the conflict of later chapters.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

The debate is being held in the auditorium, and as the students begin to enter, Luke, Barney, and Gordon discuss their views on the topic, "Is Individual Freedom Getting out of Hand?" Luke explains that his mother is a near-warden, and thus, the word freedom does not apply to his life. Gordon agrees that his parents are also strict about their rules but Barney explains that his parents trust him, and are not constantly checking on his use of his freedoms. Gordon notes that Barney is a walking advertisement for freedom, since he is nearly unrestrained but still maintains his grades, is editor of the paper, and is never in trouble. Luke playfully bounces a book off Kate's head, and she laughingly retaliates.

Matthew Griswold, the debater from the Citizen's League for the Preservation of American Values, is watching the students as they enter when Maggie approaches, introducing Nora. Originally friendly, Nora turns colder as she asks Matthew if she can grade him on his Americanism, and on whether he agrees that the true danger in a democracy comes from the majority power. Matthew, slightly taken aback, notes his debate partner's tardiness as Kent Dickenson from the ACLU finally arrives.

Dickenson begins the debate by quoting several passages from Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, and his firm beliefs in the freedom of inquiry, and the freedom to discuss, deny, and investigate any topic. Dickenson also notes Black's belief that although that level of freedom is risky, the writers of the Constitution believed that such a risk was worthwhile, since true freedom is the enemy of tyranny. Dickenson also explains Black's strong belief that happiness and security within a nation lie in the ability of the people to explore, grow, and adapt in an environment free of governmental control. He also warns students of groups who claim to want to protect others, but in reality, want only to force every individual to think in uniform ways. When Griswold asks Kent if freedom does not also mean the right to persuade others, Kent replies that while it does, these groups are not content with one on one persuasion. According to Kent, these groups attempt to use the government to enforce their own beliefs on morality and decency. Kent tells the students stories of book burnings, and of these groups' attempts to force prayer into school. Kent notes that while the groups claim not to be forcing prayer, the simple act of deciding whether to pray, when in the company of peers, makes the choice not really a choice at all. Kent also discusses his belief that these groups, not individual freedoms, are getting out of hand. To prove his point, he tells students of life in 1919, when many states banned the flying of red flags. As a result, hundreds of law-abiding citizens were arrested for Communism, simply due to their flag. As Kent closes his argument, Maggie notes that she would not want to be debating Kent. Nora replies not to "engrave the winner's cup," since she has seen Griswold in action.



## Chapter 7 Analysis

This chapter introduces several important themes and concepts. First, the obvious friendship between Gordon and Barney, combined with the knowledge of their differences in opinion on censorship, foreshadows problems in these individual's relationships with one another. Additionally, the clear lack of understanding in the concept of freedom expressed by Luke symbolizes the limited focus of many individuals' thinking in terms of rights and freedoms. Finally, the playful relationship between Luke and Kate, again combined with previous knowledge of arguments related to censorship between the friends, foreshadows their own problems later in the novel.

This chapter also introduces Kent Dickenson, a speaker for the ACLU, and a passionate supporter of individual freedoms. His speech, reflecting on the freedom to inquire and investigate, the power of freedom over tyranny, and the freedom against control of thought all leads to a deeper understanding of the major theme in the novel, that of complete freedom. Additionally, Dickenson's clear disapproval of groups aiming to control other's thoughts and beliefs under the guise of "protection" foreshadows issues later in the novel, as these same groups appear to denounce *Huckleberry Finn*. Dickenson's most poignant comments during his debate revolve around the "forced choice" concept. Dickenson's point is that, if forced to make what should be a private choice in front of peers, many individuals will choose the path of the majority in order to avoid ridicule. Hugo Black, Dickenson's main reference throughout his speech, recognized this as well, and spoke against the moral majority. This concept is vital, in that one can now see Principal Moore's actions in agreement with such ideas. This realization will assist in evaluating Moore's sincerity later in the novel. Finally, Nora's comments about having to see Griswold debate foreshadow events in the next chapter, as Griswold effectively counter-debates many of Dickenson's points.



# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

Matthew Griswold begins his debate by telling the students of a speaker at Harvard University who was booed by students for his speech on the miracles of the mind. According to Griswold, the speaker claimed these mysteries were a sign of God, and the students, mostly anti-religious, reacted negatively. Griswold notes that many of the students probably believed themselves to be believers in freedom, but Griswold questions if those supposedly supporting freedom were really simply touting their own form of orthodoxy.

Griswold continues his speech by stating that although he is to be debating whether freedom has gotten out of hand, he instead is concerned that freedom is less individualized. He uses the example of sexual relations, noting that some of the female students in the audience possibly have sexual relations. Griswold wonders aloud if the decisions to engage in sexual relations are due to independent choice, or to pressure by peers to conform. When a student asks if Griswold would approve if the female had made the choice through independent thought, Griswold notes he would not approve, but would have more respect for her.

Griswold continues by noting his preferred title of the debate would be "Is False Freedom Giving True Freedom a Bad Name?" He notes that he supports prayer in schools, and asks if this makes him an enemy of free choice. He asks if the students believe they can be free without being given choices. Griswold uses the example of a child in kindergarten given two crayons, and told to color with whatever color they choose. He asks if that choice represents freedom. He notes that a child in a public school may not have ever known God, so cannot reject him by free choice, and states his belief that by not providing access to God, the schools are already indoctrinated to secularism. Because he believes the school to be a place of learning, Griswold believes schools should at least introduce the concept of religion.

Luke asks Griswold what would happen if he chose not to pray, and answers his own question by noting he would be "exposed as an atheist." Griswold, on the other hand, states his own belief that in introducing prayers into schools, those institutions would truly be preparing students for life, where their principles are consistently challenged. Rather than coddling students to protect them, Griswold states, schools should allow them the opportunity to learn how to fight for rights and exercise dissention.

Griswold also points out that, as Dickenson stated, the Supreme Court has upheld a separation of Church and state. However, he also notes the Supreme Court's upholding of slavery and racial segregation at different points in history. When asked his position on censorship, Griswold points out schools are places of learning, and as such, are responsible for the information given to students, and responsible for protecting their minds from pollution. He quotes Hugo Black as saying that students are not yet able to



gain wisdom enough to teach their elders, and thus, their elders should teach the students. If an instructor "miseducates," they must be corrected. When Luke asks who appointed him censor, Griswold notes that any taxpayer has a *right* to participate in the activities of public school systems. Dickenson notes a hole in Griswold's logic, in that he speaks of choices as freedom, but then limits choices by banning books. Griswold responds by pointing out that the choice to know God is far different from approved learning of books that teach discrimination, pornography, and blasphemy. When Dickenson notes that the two men may disagree on what these topics contain, Griswold asks if Dickenson would allow a title to be taught that denied the Holocaust. Dickenson states he would, since the best way to fight lie is by showing the truth simultaneously, and that Griswold's argument does not hold together, since Dickenson believes you cannot teach freedom without choice. Griswold ends his speech by noting that freedom is a learned behavior that should be taught in stages. These stages, he believes, do not include open, free choice for high school students, since they are not ready for such degrees of freedom.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

This chapter serves both to enlighten further on the freedom concept, as well as to introduce the character of Matthew Griswold. As foreshadowed in the previous chapter, Griswold is a tough debater whose arguments, while possibly not as sound as they could be, are easily identified with and extremely persuasive. Griswold, point by point, argues against Dickenson, giving the students an alternative viewpoint for each argument. This serves to add questions to their minds, and conceivably alter their opinions. Griswold's point on censorship, however, including his belief that parents are responsible for the non-pollution of minds and students are not ready to make decisions about their freedoms, is strongly argued against by Dickenson, and Dickenson's point that Griswold's argument is lacking serves to add even further doubt into the minds of the students. Griswold's character is shown to be an outstanding debater, foreshadowing his role in the trial against *Huckleberry Finn*. Clearly, Griswold believes in freedom within limitations, symbolizing the vast majority of those who believe freedom is to be taken seriously.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

As the debate continues, Deirdre is sitting in Moore's office, waiting as he finishes a phone conversation with a school board member who has been visited by angry black parents. Moore assures the member the book will be reviewed as soon as possible. Following his conversation, Moore asks Deirdre to remove any copies of *Huckleberry Finn* from the shelves, and place them under her desk, telling students who ask, that the books are out. Deirdre argues the book is, according to the review procedure, innocent until proven guilty, and is to remain on the shelves. Moore angrily states he knows whom Deirdre has been speaking with, then changes tactics, and tells Deirdre he only wishes to remove the title as a gesture of good faith to those complaining, and as a show of respect for their feelings. Deirdre points out Nora's feelings are also strong on the matter, as are her own, in terms of the "side-door censorship" method. Moore again tries to persuade Deirdre by explaining the gesture as kind and compassionate. Deirdre explains she did not become a librarian to hide books and lie to students. Moore states he is disappointed in her, and she replies that his "compassion" for the black students appears to be nothing more than an attempt to appear on the winning side of the argument, regardless of how it turns. She also reminds him that he should respect the procedures of the school. Moore gently states that while Deirdre is talking about abstractions, he is speaking about black individuals who are offended. When Deirdre accuses Moore of implying she is racist, he replies he is merely implying that humans should be worth more than pieces of paper. Moore tells Deirdre she is only a young woman, and that he looks forward to speaking of her on this topic in ten or fifteen years.

Later, Deirdre is arguing with Kate in terms of *Huckleberry Finn*. Deirdre explains that every book is offensive to someone, but Kate denies this by stating *Pride and Prejudice* cannot possibly be offensive. Deirdre objects, since she has heard conferences where individuals believe books without any minorities are worse than those degrading minorities. Barney explains that no one should have the right to stop someone else from reading a specific title, and Deirdre agrees. She points out that if *Huckleberry Finn* can be banned, anyone disagreeing with a concept presented can ban a title. Kate angrily states Gordon should not have to deal with a constant reminder of discrimination while in class, and Barney suggests she and Gordon could speak out in class, showing others why the word is immoral. Kate responds, "Why bother with that sort of thing?" when the students could focus on books that teach truths. Nora walks into the library, holding the complaint from Carl McLean. The group examines the complaint. Carl has written that the purpose of *Huckleberry Finn* is to perpetuate racism and show the inferiority of blacks, that reading such material will "reinforce the racial prejudice white students get with their mother's milk" and will inflict pain on black students, and that the material is only suitable for Ku Klux Klan members over the age of seventy. Carl's complaint requests the title be removed both for his child and from the school entirely. Kate declares slyly she would like to hear Deirdre debate Carl on the topics, and Deirdre, while not looking forward to it, believes she will eventually be called on to do so. Nora,





in response to Deirdre's clear, solid stance on the subject says "right on," and then notes she should not use that phrase in this particular context.

## Chapter 9 Analysis

The meeting between Moore and Deirdre again shows Moore's "side-door" censorship activities, allowing one to see the true nature of Moore's outward concern. Deirdre, though new, stands her ground, showing she is truly a fighter for freedom, foreshadowing her role in the trial of *Huckleberry Finn*. Moore, on the other hand, repeatedly shows anger and frustration at Deirdre's lack of cooperation in his attempts to hide the book, showing his own motivations. It is clear from this passage that Moore's attempts to conceal *Huckleberry Finn* come not from true compassion for students and parents, but from pride and a need to rise above the conflict, appearing to support whichever side wins the argument. Further, his insinuations that Deirdre is racist and his reference to her age reveal Moore as a manipulative man who places his own pride above all else.

This chapter also reveals more about the complaint from Carl, as well as furthering reinforces character development. Kate argues with Deirdre, but her points are not well thought out as she refuses to admit the benefit of being able to tell others her opinions of *Huckleberry Finn*. Her comment of "why bother" shows that while Kate clearly cares for those she deems harmed by the material, she is not willing to vocalize her concerns in front of her peers. Further, both Barney and Deirdre's points are well spoken concerning the risks in allowing a single book to be censored.

Carl's complaint also reveals several aspects of his character. First, Carl is not content with censoring his own child's reading, but instead wishes the book removed from all children in the school. Secondly, his phrasing in several areas of the complaint shows a flippant, defiant, and angry attitude not conducive to conflict resolution. His insulting tone and comments of white students further show his own racist attitude toward whites, and stereotypical white beliefs. Kate, on reading the form, also shows a vengeful attitude in her request to see Deirdre battle McLean. Finally, Nora's comments on her use of the phrase "right on" also show a flippant attitude toward the issues at hand, and foreshadow continued conflict in the school.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

Reuben Forster, the head of the School Board, is having a conversation with himself in the varied voices of those he intends to speak with during the review committee discussion. This is often his method of working through issues. On this day, Forster debates in his office with Carl Mclean and Nora Baines. He imagines Carl and himself discussing whether a book showing whites as inferior would be objected to, and imagines Nora defending *Huckleberry Finn* by pointing out its purpose as a novel against slavery and racism. Forster then imagines himself pointing out the word "nigger," and its effect on students. Finally, he acts out a conversation between himself and Moore, in which Forster decides the review committee meeting should be a public meeting.

Luke and Barney sit with Nora Baines in the library, waiting for the names of the review committee to be released. As Luke and Barney discuss the current censorship activities, Luke refers to *Fahrenheit 451*, and can nearly see the firefighters coming to burn the library down. He recalls the same activities last year, but notes he paid no attention to them, since they did not immediately affect him. Luke also questions Barney, since he also did not write any stories about last year's censorship, and asks if such a decision was done in order to become editor. Barney is offended, stating that he tried to follow up on the rumors, but could not gather any information from anyone. Barney also mentions his gratitude that the situation is occurring out in the open, and Nora interjects. She reminds Barney and Luke that *Huckleberry Finn* is not on trial, since any time a book is questioned, it is really the author's imagination, free speech, and feelings that are tried. Nora also states she does not think, even if the group wins, that the trial should be celebrated, since the entire idea of putting a book on trial should never occur.

Deirdre enters with the list of review committee members and the group examines the list. Helen Cook, head of the social studies department, is described as Nora to be a feminist, and almost certainly a vote for the other side. Frank Sylvester, according to Nora, is chairperson of the English department, and while he does not teach questionable materials, he does not censor other instructor's materials. Two parents, Evelyn Kantrow and Stanley Lomax, are also on the list, and Nora notes that Kantrow is a state committee member, and may vote on their side. She also notes Lomax is a black man, and thus, probably a vote against them. Deirdre asks, quite seriously, if Nora is stereotyping blacks, and Nora ignores her. The other two members of the review committee, those of Ben Maddox and Sandy Wicks, are townspeople. Nora describes Maddox as an undecided vote, but believes Wicks, who is the editor of the local paper, should vote on their side.

Deirdre also tells the group there have been two other complaints. The first, from Cynthia Morgan, the math instructor, complains of sexism in the novel, in that the women portrayed are foolish, subservient, and ignorant. Nora notes Kate is in Morgan's



class, and suggests there is a conspiracy. The second complaint is from the Parents for Moral Schools, which Nora correctly assumes are complaining of Jim and Huck's nakedness on the raft. Deirdre also states their complaint notes Huck as a liar, a thief, an atheist, one who makes fun of respected tradition, and one who uses bad grammar. Nora explodes, stating she will be sure to find anyone who tries to stay in the middle of this fight, and Deirdre, troubled, tells Nora she sounds as though she plans to do something to anyone who goes against their group. Nora replies that she will try, since eventually, those same individuals will try to finish her off. Luke agrees with Nora, and Deirdre, concerned, tells the group they should remain calm, and take the situation less personally. She reminds the group they are fighting for a principle, and that the other side has a right to their opinion. Deirdre also shows the group an article attached to the complaint from the Parents for Moral Schools written in 1885 that shows the Boston library banned *Mark Twain* for being immoral.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

This chapter introduces several groups important later in the novel during the trial of *Huckleberry Finn*, the characters within those groups, and several themes used throughout the novel. First introduced is Reuben Forster, who clearly attempts to work through his problems by stepping into the shoes of other individuals. Additionally, his imitations of other individuals, such as Nora Baines and Michael Moore, show his understanding of these individuals, and their personalities. This insight into others foreshadows Forster's eventual decisions regarding *Huckleberry Finn*, and his decision to investigate Michael Moore's censorship activities.

In the library, Luke's references to *Fahrenheit 451*, the story by Ray Bradbury about censorship and the burning of books, shows clearly that the issue of censorship is beginning to weigh heavily on his mind. This is further shown by his statements that events in previous years did not affect him, and his questioning of Barney's motives. These events symbolize the tendency of humankind to ignore things that do not directly affect their lives, and the equal tendency to blame others when one feels responsible for an issue. Nora's statement regarding the tragedy of placing a book on trial shows her strong feelings about censorship.

The discussion of the review members is enlightening in a number of ways. First, the discussion introduces the themes of immorality, homosexuality, values, racism, and sexism, as well as introduces the characters seen during the trial of the book. Further, Nora's comments throughout the discussion show her as a slightly racist and highly vengeful individual. Her stereotyping of Lomax and her spoken intention to "get" members on the other side symbolizes the irrational behaviors that be triggered by a strong belief in a principle. Deirdre, on the other hand, shows her ability to remain calm, and keep the situation in perspective. This foreshadows her role in the trial.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

While discussing *Huckleberry Finn* with the class, Gordon McLean, five other black students, and three white students stand up, object to staying in a racist class, and begin to leave the room. Barney calls after Gordon, asking which part of a book about two men who care for one another he is walking out on. Gordon replies that while Barney talks of anti-racism, he is simply "one of those whites" who refuse to take a stand. The single black student remaining in class, Steve Turney, explains he has not walked out because he is the only one able to decide for himself whether the book is racist, and he does not have enough information to make that decision. He tells Nora to continue class.

During lunch hours, Kate and Gordon attempt to convince students to attend the review meeting, as Luke and Barney do the same for the other side. Meeting in the hallway, Kate states that her side is rock solid, to which Luke jokingly replies she must mean thick. Karen tells Barney to let Luke know she will not stoop to his level. Barney, attempting to speak openly, asks Kate where the censorship will stop if *Huckleberry Finn* is banned, and compares it to Nazi actions. Kate asks if he, like Dickenson, would allow a book stating the holocaust did not occur, to be taught, to which Barney replies he would. Kate tells the young men the only way to fight a lie is not to allow it to infect people in the first place. Kate admits to being confused by Barney's feelings about teaching a book that denies the Holocaust, but states, "unless you're one of those self-hating Jews." Luke, offended, tells Kate he does not blame her for not wanting to stoop to his level, since she stoops so much lower. Barney, near tears, does not speak.

That afternoon, Maggie Crowley, faculty advisor of the school paper, tries to convince Barney to cut a portion of his editorial regarding *Huckleberry Finn*. Barney's article includes a section that questions Michael Moore's loyalties, and accuses him of simply sitting in wait for decisions, rather than fighting for his students' rights, as the founder of the school, George Mason, would have done. Maggie suggests Barney is asking for trouble, and notes Moore could easily write to colleges Barney applies to, suggesting they not accept such a controversial student. Barney accuses Maggie of asking him to sell out, to which she replies she is not only advising for his sake, but for her own as well. Maggie points out that Moore would no longer allow her to be faculty advisor, and would likely push Barney from the editor position. She also stresses her successes over the years in getting some issues past Moore, and tells Barney the new appointed advisor would likely not even attempt to do so. Barney explains that if Moore were ordering him not to print the article, he would sue for First Amendment restriction, but in this case, he will pull the offensive portion of the article. Maggie calls him brave, and Barney denies this, telling Maggie he wishes to print a picture of Moore next to the article. Maggie agrees, and informs Barney that Gordon has submitted his criticism to her rather than to Barney himself. Barney is offended at Gordon's lack of faith in him. Finally, Barney tells Maggie he feels the First Amendment is a personal issue now.



## Chapter 11 Analysis

The first section of this chapter stresses two important themes in the novel, those of peer pressure, and individual freedom. Gordon is alone when he stands against Nora, but when he asks if anyone will join him, other students rise. Whether those students would have had the courage to stand alone, as Gordon did, is questionable, symbolizing the power of a leader in a group of individuals. Simultaneously, Steve Turney shows a great amount of individualistic thought and freedom as he chooses to stay, and make up his own mind about the book. This chapter also shows the divide growing between students, as Gordon accuses Barney of being one who simply talks of anti-racism. This symbolizes the power controversial subjects such as racism can have on even the most loyal friendships.

The second section of this chapter again shows the power of controversy over friendships. Kate's comments to Barney regarding his Jewish heritage are cold and insensitive. While Luke's joke of the thickness of his opponents is inappropriate, Kate's comment is much more harmful, because it is sincere.

The final section of the chapter shows the choices some individuals must make in order to make a difference. Maggie knows the consequences of Barney's article, and convinces him to pull the offensive section. It is clear Maggie does not do this by choice, but rather, out of necessity in order to make the largest difference. She knows Barney is acting on principle, but also knows that pride and principle must sometimes be given up in order to continue in a role that is generally free. Barney comes to recognize this, and shows his experiences are teaching him valuable lessons as he takes pride in his First Amendment rights.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

As Luke and Barney watch many parents, and few students, enter the auditorium for the review hearing, Moore approaches, commending Barney on his balanced presentation of issues in the paper. Kate passes the boys, and simply nods. Forster introduces the proceedings, and for the next hours, many critics of *Huckleberry Finn* speak, some of whom wish to ban the book entirely, some who feel the book should be restricted, and some who want their children not to read the title. Luke comments they should just take *Huck* out and shoot him, and Carl McLean stresses the importance of this flippant comment made by a white student. Carl sees Luke's statement as proving that white students are insensitive to black issues.

Kent Dickenson speaks on behalf of *Huck*, noting the students' rights to read and discuss controversial subjects, the instructors' rights to disseminate information, and Mark Twain's rights to express his opinions and ideas. Kate objects, noting the students' rights to be free of racism and sexism, and states that if the First Amendment means they are to be subjected to these discriminations, then perhaps they should have less of these rights. Professor Lomax asks Kate who is to decide which freedoms are acceptable, and when Kate replies that in this case, the review board are the decision makers, Lomax points out Kate has no reason to trust his decision, other than that he is a black man. When Kate agrees she trusts him to understand racism, he questions what would occur if the book in question were a feminist novel, and he was a secret male chauvinist. His point, he states, is that one a group is given the power to censor, that group can easily turn on those who appointed the group. Lomax then tells a story of his youth, in which the governor of Georgia restricted all books critical of the South. Two years later, the same governor attempted to have all books supporting integration burned. When Carl objects to the story, claiming Lomax is only ranting, and should stick to the book at hand, Lomax points out censorship is never just about one book. Carl argues that absolutism is not an option, and that the citizens know which books are right for the youth.

Nancy Dennis, a representative for Parents for Moral Schools, stands up and claims the main reason for *Huckleberry Finn's* immorality is the clear suggestion throughout the novel that to do "right" is too much trouble, and one should do whatever he or she pleases. Deirdre points out the passage Nancy is referring to is actually in reference to Huck's moral dilemma involving Jim. According to law, Huck should turn Jim in, but Huck knows he will feel badly. Thus, he decides that either way, he will not feel right about the situation. Nancy, undeterred, insists the novel is teaching children to decide for themselves what is right and wrong, and that such teaching is immoral. Mr. Dennis, Nancy's husband, also feels the book is immoral, due to common occurrences where Jim and Huck are naked on the raft, suggesting homosexuality. Matthew Griswold speaks, and notes that *Huckleberry Finn* is not a bad child, but simply struggling in a world where he disagrees with the morality placed on him by society. However, Griswold



also believes the novel should be placed under restraint, due to the word "nigger" placed throughout. Griswold notes he is not in favor of censoring the book, but instead, believes children are not old enough to make decisions about right and wrong and thus, should be protected.

Instead, Griswold suggests the book be removed from required reading lists, but placed on suggested lists so mature students can learn the valuable lessons contained. He feels this does not equate to censorship, which Nora strongly objects to, stating that by removing an instructor's right to assign specific titles, he is handcuffing that instructor from teaching students. Further, Nora asks if Griswold is "an agent of the Soviet Union." Forster, angry at Nora's outburst as well as her insinuation of Griswold's ties to Communism, adjourns the meeting. On hearing the committee would meet and vote soon, Carl asks that the committee disclose the voting of each member, since the citizens "will remember how each member voted." As Barney and Luke leave the auditorium, they hear Ben Maddox complaining of the thought of banning *Huckleberry Finn*. When they speak with Deirdre about the positive outlook on the vote, however, Deirdre notes she is unsure they will win.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

This chapter divulges more information about pertinent themes throughout the novel. First, one can again see the changes between Kate, Barney, and Luke as the trio does not even speak in the auditorium, symbolizing the strain of conflict on personal relationships. Further, Carl's comment about Luke's remark, noting the comment was virtually expected from a white person, and assuming Luke has no sympathy for black issues, shows again Carl's own racist beliefs.

The argument between Kate and Lomax introduces a number of concepts important to the novel. Kate's attempts to explain why censorship by an elected group of individuals fall short as Lomax points out he could easily be a closet chauvinist. His point, used by others throughout the novel, is that censorship in any light is inexcusable, since those making the decisions may not know what is best for all individuals. This point, individualistic freedom, is a major theme throughout the novel. However, Carl's point is also valid. While Lomax is stressing an absolutist policy of anti-censorship, Carl points out that a community "knows" what is best for their community. While this is arguable, Griswold's later point is not: students should not be allowed to read whatever they choose, since a school is a place of learning. Teachers, administrators, and parents have a responsibility to students to provide them with an education, and choosing reading materials is a part of meeting that educational goal.

Mr. and Mrs. Dennis, in this chapter, symbolize those individuals whose own imagination appears enough reason to censor a piece of literature. Mrs. Dennis, convinced the novel is immoral, ignores the points of Deirdre, unswayed in her conviction that Huck is an immoral character. Mr. Dennis, convinced of Mark Twain's implied homosexuality, also ignores the reason of others. These characters represent those in society whose passion for their own opinion disallows the extension of other



viewpoints. Unwilling to even consider alternate explanation for the passages in question, these characters close their minds completely, and continue to believe as they do. Nora's reaction to Griswold's suggestions, insinuating ties with the Soviet Union, also shows the irrational behaviors individuals can exhibit when opinions are strong enough to overcome common reason.

Deirdre's comment to the boys at the end of the chapter foreshadows the loss those supporting Huckleberry Finn face at the hands of the review committee later in the novel.





# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary

Two days later, Barney, Luke, Nora, and Maggie are devastated as Deirdre walks into the library with the news that they have lost. The review committee has voted four-to-three to ban *Huckleberry Finn* from required reading lists, and to place the book on the restricted shelves of the library. Only Deirdre, Lomax, and Maddox voted to keep the title free. Nora angrily asks if the others commented on their reasoning for banning the title. According to Deirdre, Helen Cook and Frank Sylvester feel it is important not to offend the black students of the school, Evelyn Kantrow believes the Dennis' are correct in their assumptions about implied homosexuality, and Sandy Wicks feels that to do nothing would be insensitive, and would insinuate one is a racist. Deirdre tells the group they need to organize in order to sway the final decision of the school board, and Barney reveals he has made an appointment for an interview with Karen Salters, the previous librarian, to discuss her departure and the secret censorship of Michael Moore.

As Barney sits on Karen's sofa, it is clear she is nervous about the interview. She reveals to Barney that it has taken quite some time to find a new position, and that the new position is in another state. Karen states she did not intend to become involved in a controversy so close to her departure, but feels it is necessary in light of the situation. Karen tells Barney they must use ridicule to attack the opposition, and that Michael Moore is the fundamental problem. Karen tells Barney that for two years prior to her departure, there were several incidents of parents complaining of novels in the library. According to Karen, Moore would approach her in these cases, and request that she remove the titles. Unwilling to stand up to Moore and afraid for her position, Karen had agreed. However, Karen states that toward the end, it had become difficult to follow orders to censor titles without the proper procedures. One day, Moore had come to Karen and requested she remove *Our Mutual Friend*, a novel by Charles Dickens. One of Karen's favorite authors, Karen could not bear to see Dickens' work censored. Karen admits there is violence in the book, but those who are violent are punished. She also notes there are lustful characters, but points out that those characters die a terrible death as a result. Karen attempted to explain this to Moore, who refused to listen. In response, Karen wrote to Moore referring to a title in the library she had found offensive. Karen described a story of concubines, homosexuality, rape, sexual abuse, slavery, murder, and mutilation. When Barney asks what novel this "sick story" is in, Karen replies the story comes from the Holy Bible, Chapter Nineteen of the Book of Judges.

According to Karen, Moore was furious. When Karen threatened to go to the media with a comparison of the Bible and *Our Mutual Friend*, Moore threatened to fire her. Karen angrily replied to Moore that she would also tell the media of Moore's secret censorship activities. Moore, seeing his defeat, clearly still wanted to rid the library of *Our Mutual Friend*, and suggested both that and the Bible be kept in a locked closet. On her refusal, Moore decided to remove Chapter 19 from the Bible, and proceeded to rip it from one copy. Karen told Moore of other passages one could consider immoral, and Moore



decides he has no choice but to allow both books to stay. Moore, however, began to scrutinize every book and magazine ordered by Karen, and eventually, she grew weary of the battle and resigned. She and Moore agreed on beneficiary terms of resignation provided Karen did not reveal the occurrences at the library. Barney notes she is defying that by talking with him, and Karen replies that she realizes now she was wrong to keep quiet in order to save herself. She also knows Moore is now free to revoke any positive recommendations he has given, and that she is taking a large risk. When Barney points out she will become a heroine on publication of his story, Karen states she will also become controversial, which employers frown upon. Still, she firmly believes she is right in coming forward, and tells Barney to "write it strong, young man, and write it accurate."

## Chapter 13 Analysis

This chapter is the turning point of the novel, as the vote of the review committee is learned, and the situation between Karen Salters and Michael Moore is finally revealed. The responses of the review committee show clearly the power of a persuasive speaker during controversy. Three of the four panelists who vote against the novel were persuaded by Griswold that to do otherwise would imply racism. Kantrow, a parent, was clearly influenced by the Dennis' argument of implied homosexuality.

Barney's interview with Karen Salters finally gives insight into the happenings of the library at George Mason, foreshadowed throughout the novel. With the revelations Karen brings forth, one sees clearly the true character of Michael Moore, and the true intentions behind his censorship activities. If Moore were merely attempting to censor on behalf of students, the Holy Bible would never have been questioned. Further, the revelation that Moore has, in the past, actually defaced school property in order to avoid confrontation with parents shows clearly his lack of concern for the First Amendment, or for the law. Further, Moore's aversion to appearing foolish foreshadows his actions later in the novel.

One is led to feel sympathy for Karen as she reveals her story. Frightened for her position, Karen knowingly acted immorally, and against school policy. However, when pitted against a favorite author, Karen finally fights back. The tactic used, that of exposing the immorality within the Holy Bible, is a strong argument against censorship, and foreshadows events later in the novel. Additionally, Barney's comments on the publishing of his story foreshadow events later in the novel, as he fights against Moore to publish the piece.



# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary

Barney and Maggie Crowley sit in Principal Moore's office, arguing with him for the right to publish the interview with Karen Salters. Moore stresses the interview would cause the school to look foolish, and that any disagreement between himself and Karen was resolved peacefully. Barney, in defense, asks if the story is obscene or libelous, as those are the conditions under which a story cannot be printed. Moore, furious, states it is not, but when Barney asks if the story would infringe upon anyone's rights, Moore shouts that the story is not to be published, and directs his gaze to Maggie. Maggie, looking directly at Moore, replies that the law states school authorities do not have control over what is to be published in school newspapers, provided the issues Barney has raised are not affected. She continues that the censorship of *Huckleberry Finn* has divided the community, and by printing the article, she feels she is acting responsibly. Moore begins to warn Maggie, but she continues, noting that there comes a time when self-respect must rule decisions, and in light of this, she cannot be a part of killing Barney's article. Moore coldly states her resignation as faculty advisor is accepted, and reiterates that the story will not be published.

When Maggie replies she knows individuals working on the local newspaper, Moore screams that he will not be blackmailed twice, referencing his situation with Karen. Maggie, hands shaking, calmly replies that Moore should ask himself whether he wants just the single interview about his censorship activities published, or two stories, including his current attempts to kill the interview story. When Barney offers to allow Moore to write a reply, Moore states Barney is too smart for his own good, and tells Barney and Maggie to leave. Barney asks Maggie what she thinks will happen, and Maggie replies she is unsure, but knows they have made an enemy in Moore.

Moore allows the story to run, and two days later, when the newspaper hits the hallways, Moore's secretary begins telling individuals Moore is in a meeting indefinitely. Shortly, two television crews descend on the school, and Barney rises from Maggie's office to greet them. When asked if she believes the story will become national, Maggie replies it certainly may. That evening, Barney and his parents watch the news, and see Barney giving his interview. Moore is also interviewed, and claims not to have even thought of keeping Barney's article from going to press. When asked about the allegations in the article, Moore smoothly notes Karen Salters' passion for books, and her clear "misunderstanding" at some issues between them in the past. He claims to wish her well, and, on further interrogation about the article from reporters, Moore again smoothly replies that Karen is not used to such a fuss over her, and he does not wish to place further burden on her. Barney, furious at Moore's lies, asks his father if he believes Moore will get away with his actions, and his father knowingly replies that men such as Moore, who clearly avoid the issues when asked for details, often find themselves under further scrutiny.



The following day, Barney's story, as well as interviews with Moore and Carl McLean, dominates the local newspaper and a fury of letters breaks forth from the community. Three days later, national news stations NBC and CBS appear at George Mason, after editors read Barney's story, which has been picked up by the wire service and thus transmitted, to Los Angeles, New York, and other major cities. When ABC's *Nightline* interviews Barney, he makes the statement that if *Huckleberry Finn* is denied to students, other books such as the Holy Bible are in jeopardy. When asked if he is a reader of the Bible, Barney replies he is unsure if his parents will allow it, since the book is now under scrutiny. When Barney returns home, his parents are furious at his remark, and note his actions are similar to those of Moore when placed under pressure. Barney promises not to make such a mistake again.

The following evening, Kate appears on television, asking if students should learn racism and sexism in the name of free speech, and noting her belief that freedom can be dangerous. She believes firmly that educational institutions should guide students on the difference between right and wrong, and should have the power to disregard information deemed wrong or immoral. Deirdre also appears, agreeing with Kate that freedom is dangerous, but notes the alternative, that of censorship and government control are far more dangerous. Deirdre asks viewers to think of the nations around the world whose citizens are punished for speaking their minds. She also points out that the most dangerous part of freedom is the assumption that citizens can be trusted to remain free, even in disagreement. She finishes her statement by stating that while Kate believes government should have the right to dictate what students learn, Deirdre herself believes this idea to resemble dictatorships. Deirdre believes the educational institution should provide both sets of concepts, and allow students to form their own opinions, thus enabling them to form patterns of independent thought conducive to life in the real world.

## Chapter 14 Analysis

The primary focus of this chapter is to show the media circus Barney's article has created, and to show again the true character of Michael Moore. Faced with possible ridicule, Moore attempts to force Barney and Maggie not to print the article. In the face of opposition, Moore yells at his student and faculty and responds cruelly to Barney. This type of action, particularly from a school administrator, is abusive and unprofessional. Again, Moore is shown to be a cruel, self-centered man whose primary focus is not the rights or safety of his students, but instead, only himself. This is again shown later in the chapter as he attempts to belittle Karen and her story to news reporters. These personality traits, combined with the knowledge of Moore's previous censorship activities, foreshadow decisions to evaluate Moore's abilities as principal later in the novel. Further, Maggie's refusal to give in to Moore and Barney's calm yet persuasive way of arguing show both characters to be effective and articulate speakers.

The effect of Barney's news story as a national headline is clear in this chapter, as the primary players in the trial of *Huckleberry Finn*, those of Barney, Moore, Deirdre, Kate, and Carl, are all interviewed by one network or another. Their arguments for and against



the banning of *Huckleberry Finn* allows one to further understand the various issues involved. In particular, the debate between Kate and Deirdre on *Nightline* is extremely telling. Kate uses her natural ability to create hypothetical situations to prove a point, whereas Deirdre uses her own logical force to show the flaws in Kate's argument. These factors foreshadow arguments at the school board meeting later in the novel. Finally, Barney's statement about the Holy Bible symbolizes again the irrational behaviors individuals often display in their passion to prove their conceptual ideas. Barney's parents, furious at his lack of thought for their feelings, are disappointed in Barney, who promises not to make such a mistake again. This situation shows clearly that Barney is learning throughout this journey.



# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary

The national news coverage of the censorship of *Huckleberry Finn* at George Mason begins to take its toll on the citizens of the town. Many, including Reuben Foster, believe the town is being portrayed as a backwater village that "arrests books." When his wife accuses him of being silly, Foster states his realization that to ban a book is to arrest it, and take away its own freedoms. Similar statements are seen in the local newspaper, and editor Sandy Wicks, who originally voted to censor the book, publishes an editorial recanting her decision. Deirdre tells Nora that Frank Sylvester and Helen Cook plan to write similar letters, recanting their votes, partially due to other faculty members' refusal to speak to the two individuals since the vote. When Nora admits she is one ignoring the two instructors, Deirdre points out it is hypocritical to tout free speech, then dissolve friendships over disagreements. Deirdre also admits her own belief that the school board may vote to free *Huckleberry Finn*. Nora replies that she firmly believes the best way to fight darkness is to tell the whole truth. She hopes the nation has learned, through their experiences, the actions of individuals such as Moore only continue because others have remained silent in the face of controversy.

In his office, Reuben Foster is again having a conversation with himself in the varied voices of those he intends to speak with at the school board meeting. Following a dialogue about a man dressed as Mark Twain coming to the meeting, Foster asks his secretary to phone Moore, and have him come to the office immediately. When he arrives, Foster explains that he believes the board will overturn the review committee's decision. Moore immediately assumes he has won, only to find Foster is speaking of overturning the decision by allowing *Huckleberry Finn* to remain free within the school. Foster continues by telling Moore the board will be having a closed session with Moore in a few days, to review his informal policies regarding censorship in the past. Foster also tells Moore he is not to recant any positive words, nor write any words against Karen Salter for her participation in Barney's story. Finally, Foster tells Moore to keep the news of the school board's reversal to himself. As Moore leaves, Foster knows Moore will begin telling everyone in an effort to appear knowledgeable, and congratulates himself on his cunning plan to avoid controversy at the meeting. Foster also thinks to himself of his dislike for Moore, and reminds himself to review Moore's contract.

## Chapter 15 Analysis

This chapter shows the ramifications of Moore's actions, as well as of Barney and his group's fight to save *Huckleberry Finn*. However, it also shows the logic used to decide a moral dilemma among many of the townsfolk of the area. First, in response to national news coverage and of appearing "backwater," many individuals come forth to denounce the censorship of *Huckleberry Finn*. For many, this choice stems not from a belief in the



First Amendment, but in a concern for appearances. Even Reuben Foster, head of the school board, appears to be far more concerned with the way the town appears to others than with the students of George Mason.

This point speaks volumes in support of Lomax's point in Chapter 12. As he stated, censorship by individuals more concerned with appearances than with the well-being of the student body would indeed be a tremendous tragedy. As a few townspeople and parents noted, it is clear the only individuals most concerned with the well being of students are the students themselves, hence the reason they alone should control the materials they read. Even Nora, who has remained on the side of non-censorship from the beginning, appears somewhat hypocritical, a fact Deirdre points out. It is perhaps only Deirdre and Barney that truly understand the effects of censorship, and choose to fight such actions without secondary reasons. Nora refuses to speak with those she disagrees with, Carl consistently uses his own form of stereotypical comments for whites, and Kate shows a severe lack of respect for friends who hold opinions contrary to her own.

Ruben Foster's comments to Moore pertaining to his actions in the past, his treatment of Karen Salter, his future actions concerning any censorship activities, and his requested silence in the matter of the school board decision, show clearly Foster's dislike of Moore, and his mistrust of the man. Further, his comments at the end of the chapter prove this dislike. Foster's knowledge of Moore's character allows him to manipulate Moore as he pleases. While this is immoral in principal, it does foreshadow the events at the school board hearing.



# Chapter 16

## Chapter 16 Summary

The school board meeting is being held at the town hall to accommodate the anticipated crowd. As Foster watches the national news stations set up equipment, he believes the nation will stop laughing at their community, since he believes the board will vote to keep *Huckleberry Finn*. The crowd overflows the town hall, and several individuals are moved to a smaller room to watch the proceedings on a closed circuit television. The crowd is somewhat subdued, since many in the audience have spoken previously at the review committee meeting. Carl speaks, reminding the board if they wish to remain as school officials, they should vote to ban the novel.

Steve Turney, the young black student who chose to remain in Nora's class, stands to speak. He tells the board he is there to speak on behalf of his rights to not have individuals outside of the school interfere with his education. He admits to having read *Huckleberry Finn*, and notes his belief that many who have complained about the novel have not read it in its entirety. He continues to state that while some seek to "protect" him from the word "nigger," he himself has already heard such phrasing outside of school, and thus knows when the words are directed at him as a person. Turney believes Mark Twain did not intend the word to offend either him or any other black individual, but instead are used to bring scorn to those white persons in the novel that use such words. When Carl shouts out that *Huckleberry Finn* himself uses the word, Turney admits to this knowledge. However, he points out, Huck does so not out of evil or hatred or bigotry, but instead out of nature. Turney notes, "A lot of evil comes natural, sir," and argues that Huck is only acting the way society has told him to behave. Turney believes Huck sees Jim as a man who deserves to be free, rather than as an inferior "nigger" as Carl would like to believe. Turney also states his belief that *Huckleberry Finn* can teach everyone in town a lesson about being better than what society has taught one to be. Turney finishes his statement by admonishing those wishing to ban the book, and by expressing relief that regardless of the outcome of the trial, he has had the opportunity to read and remember *Huckleberry Finn*.

Carl responds by criticizing Turney as a brainwashed black child who is not even aware he is being stereotyped. The debate continues until McLean offers the board time to make their decision. Foster declares enough time has been spent, and orders the board to vote. In the final decision, one member votes to keep the review board's recommendation, while the remaining four members vote to keep *Huckleberry Finn* free of any restrictions.

The following morning, Moore is in his office, talking to a picture of John Wayne on the wall. Moore thinks many of those who won the argument against censorship do not truly care about the topic, but were simply carried away by the media. He continues thinking aloud, noting that if McLean, Griswold, and the others quietly organize, they could elect a new school board at the next election. Moore believes that the newly elected school





board would appreciate and approve of his previous censorship activities, and may even appoint him superintendent.

The following day, Kate, Barney, and Luke are talking in hallway. Kate and Luke playfully banter with one another, and Luke asks if any of their points got through to Kate. She replies that Turney's speech makes her question her original beliefs, since she believed she was fighting for black individuals, and Turney believes otherwise. She points out that while she is still unsure of what she believes, she has learned much in the process. As they talk, Moore comes over to join them, joking about the apparent truce between them, and noting that the situation is now behind them all. Moore smiles, and states, "I'm sure there are no hard feelings," to which Barney replies, "Against whom?"

## Chapter 16 Analysis

This chapter, built up to throughout the novel, shows *Huckleberry Finn* being freed from any restraint. Foster's thoughts on the news media, as well as comments of citizens throughout the chapter, show that many in the audience were simply unwilling to have the nation scorn them for banning books.

Stanley Turney's speech is perhaps the highlight of this novel, as his words sound out against the censorship of *Huckleberry Finn*. Unlike other individuals in the novel, Turney has read the entire book, thought through his reactions, and has come to the realization that the novel is intended to scorn racism, rather than support it. Through independent thought and analysis, Turney is able to come to his own conclusion about the novel. This moment symbolizes the power of independent thought, and the clear benefit of examining a situation in its entirety before coming to conclusions. Additionally, Kate's comments on Turney's speech altering her thoughts show a fundamental problem with activism. While Kate believed she was defending the black students of the school, Turney's words convinced her she was in fact actually interfering with his right to learn. While she and others of her opinion act in kindness, their actions actually demean black students by suggesting they are unable to make their own decisions about this novel, and others similar to *Huckleberry Finn*.

The scene between Kate, Luke, and Barney in the end of the novel symbolize the rapid changes deflation of conflict can produce. Very recently at extreme odds with one another, these individuals are again friends. Kate notes she has learned many things, and one can sense the others have, as well. However, Moore's thoughts in his office as he prepares to coerce others to replace the existing school board, in an effort to keep his position, show he has not learned, but instead, is still thinking only of himself. This idea is confirmed at the end of the novel with his statements to Barney. In the end, the students who were, according to some in the community, unable to make their own decisions about right and wrong have learned valuable lessons, while those in power continue their path of self-interest and manipulation.



# Characters

## Barney Roth

As the newly appointed editor of the *George Mason Standard*, Barney Roth is a considerate, thoughtful young man who aspires to be a writer. A favorite of librarian Karen Salters, Barney is disturbed to learn she has resigned her position under questionable circumstances. Her departure, however, is soon overshadowed by a concerned parents' move to ban the novel *Huckleberry Finn*. As Barney, his friend Luke, new librarian Deirdre Fitzgerald, and history instructor Nora Baines organize to ensure the novel's position in the school, Barney learns Principal Michael Moore has been secretly censoring novels for several semesters. Following a personal interview with Karen Salters, Barney learns Principal Moore has not only censored several books, but has also torn pages from poetry anthologies, and even the Holy Bible. In an effort to stop Moore, Barney and his faculty advisor, Maggie Crowley, write a report for the newspaper detailing the accusations of Karen Salters. Moore, furious at the thought of being ridiculed, attempts to censor the piece by threatening to fire Maggie. Undeterred, Barney goes to press, and the story is soon picked up by the national news wire. When national media arrives, Barney finds himself the center of attention, and unknowingly embarrasses his own family during an interview. When *Huckleberry Finn* is allowed to remain in the high school, Barney knows he and his fellow organizers have won this fight, but certainly not the war on censorship.

Barney Roth's character in the story struggles between standing up for his and other students' rights and his own personal relationships. Several times throughout the novel, Barney finds himself at odds with loved ones, such as his friend Kate, his associate Gordon, as well as his parents. Further, as Barney continues to fight for *Huckleberry Finn*, he finds the First Amendment becoming a personal issue which he is intent on fighting for. While Barney does not always do the "right thing," he, much like *Huckleberry Finn*, always does what he believes is best at the time. Even when criticized for his views, such as when Kate accuses him of being a "self-hating Jew" and when Gordon accuses him of being a "typical white" person, Barney continues to fight for what he believes in, showing true courage and tenacity.

## Luke Hagstrom

As Barney's best friend, sixteen year old Luke Hagstrom is a bright young man, but slightly immature. Convinced he is right in his opinion about *Huckleberry Finn*, and having recently seen *Fahrenheit 451*, Luke is nearly certain the citizens of the town will "arrest" the novel. Although Barney seems to be aware of censorship issues, Luke appears to be having his first taste of such a concept, and learns to appreciate his freedoms. His comments to Kate throughout the novel, however, show his lack of maturity. In attempts to lighten her mood, Luke often puts Kate down or makes fun of



her ideals. By the end of the novel, Luke appears to have learned valuable lessons both in terms of his relationships with others, and his First Amendment rights.

## Principal Michael Moore

Principal Michael Moore is described as a large man in his forties with a mane of long white hair and pale blue eyes. Often disrespected by his students behind his back, Moore is the target of several derogatory words and actions throughout the novel. Moore has, in the past, censored novels quietly with the unwilling assistance of his librarian, but his new librarian, Deirdre Fitzgerald, refuses to cooperate. Convinced of his righteousness, Moore appears to be unconcerned with the well-being and safety of the students, but instead, is more worried about how he appears to others. Throughout the novel, Moore attempts to manipulate, threaten, and order individuals to do as he pleases. Although he claims to be passionate about racism and sexism, his remarks about the photos on his walls not being in accordance with affirmative action and his remarks towards and about women show differently. Moore's character is described, inadvertently, by Professor Lomax in Chapter 12 as he asks Kate if anyone in power should have the right to censor books. Clearly, Moore's outward appearances are betrayed by his inner opinions, but if appointed to do so, individuals such as Kate would trust him to censor their learning materials. Such faith in persons of authority, as shown in the book, is clearly unwarranted, and Moore's actions and words throughout the novel show this accurately.

## Deirdre Fitzgerald

As the new librarian, Deirdre is optimistic about her new position. With long brown hair and kind eyes, Deirdre's sharp features are in contrast to her gentleness. Shortly after her hiring, however, Deirdre finds herself in the midst of a censorship battle. Having left her previous position partially due to censorship issues, Deirdre is not new to the debate. While not a fighter by nature, Deirdre is committing to allowing free speech and free thought. Further, Deirdre believes students should be taught to think independently, and to so, must confront controversial issues. When Deirdre refuses secretly to censor *Huckleberry Finn* at Principal Moore's request, she finds herself at odds with her new employer. Yet Deirdre is firm in her stance and refuses to back down. Throughout the novel, Deirdre shows respect and faith in her students, and a genuine interest in their well-being and their education. Further, at each debate on censorship, Deirdre attempts to convey her point effectively, without personally attacking her opponents as others often do. Further, her arguments, often based in logic, are persuasive in their honesty. Deirdre's compassion for her students and her passion for the enormous benefits of books make her an excellent ally for Barney and his supporters.



## Nora Baines

A history instructor at George Mason, Nora Baines is a highly opinionated, extremely vocal woman in her forties with blonde hair and a sharp tone. When faced with criticism of a book on her reading list, *Huckleberry Finn*, Nora is furious at Principal Moore for suggesting the book be pulled without the appropriate procedures. Throughout the novel, Nora is clearly concerned with her students' rights and learning, shown by her classroom discussions, support of her students' right to dissent, and her frequent comments regarding their ability to think freely. However, her care and concern is somewhat dimmed by her frequently angry, violent, and vengeful remarks toward their opposition. Her tactics, much like those of Principal Moore, are aimed at gaining allies, even through aggressive tactics. Her frequent outbursts in public meetings, though clearly stemming from her passion, tend to offend others, and therefore may make them less likely to listen to reason. Additionally, while she speaks out for free speech and free thought, Nora's tendency to ostracize and criticize the speech and thought of others who disagree with her make her at least marginally hypocritical.

## Kate Stevens

A liberal feminist, Kate considers herself an activist, and conscious of the needs of other individuals. When Gordon and other black students are offended by the word "nigger" in *Huckleberry Finn*, Kate jumps to their defense and begins speaking out about the racism in the novel. Further, Kate and others find the novel to be filled with sexist attitudes. Kate's passion for her causes are clear throughout the novel, as shown by her dedicated effort to convince individuals to fight for their opinions. However, like Nora and Barney, Kate often betrays her intended cause by resorting to low tactics to prove her points. Throughout the novel, one can see Kate calling Barney a "self-hating Jew," Luke a "primitive," and those who support *Huckleberry Finn* racist and sexist. While Kate is well intentioned, she discovers at the end of the novel that there is a limit to what others should do "to support and stand up for" the rights of others. In this case, Kate comes to realize that some black students were actually offended by her "support," in that they wanted to decide for themselves whether the novel portrayed racism in a positive or negative light. Kate learns that she must think and act simultaneously, and that to support someone does not necessarily mean to fight on his or her behalf.

## Karen Salters

As the previous librarian for George Mason School, Karen assisted Principal Moore in secretly removing numbers of books from the library in an effort to censor them without proper authority. During an interview with Barney, Karen admits to being ashamed at this behavior, but notes her fear of losing her position. When Principal Moore asks her to remove *Our Mutual Friend*, by Charles Dickens, however, Karen cannot comply. She explains to Barney that Dickens is a favorite author, and she cannot bear to treat his novels with disrespect. In an effort to prove to Moore her firm belief that other titles containing far more graphic and immoral behaviors existed within the library, Karen



writes to Moore of a book containing a story of rape, homosexuality, murder, mutilation, and slavery. Moore immediately asks for the book to be removed, and Karen informs him the book is the Holy Bible. Rather than ban the Bible, Moore instead tears out Chapter 19 of the Book of Judges. Once Barney hears of the situation, he uses it in his article against censorship, and succeeds in saving *Huckleberry Finn*.

Karen's character in the novel symbolizes the breaking point existing in all individuals. Karen is too frightened to go against Moore, but when pushed against a wall, so to speak, Karen stands up for what she believes. While it takes the potential banning of a beloved author to force her hand, Karen nonetheless fights back against what she feels is an unwarranted act. While she does use blackmail to convince Moore to keep *Our Mutual Friend*, threatening to go public with his previous secret censorship, Karen does so not in revenge, but in desperation. One is left feeling as though Karen is a hero is revealing the truth, despite her previous actions.

## Gordon and Carl McLean

As father and son, Gordon and Carl are the original reasons for the hearing of *Huckleberry Finn*. When Gordon reads assigned chapters of the novel, he finds the word "nigger" occurring often throughout the book, and reads several passages in which white men demean blacks in the story. Feeling discriminated against and outraged at his teachers for selecting such a book, Gordon objects to his father, who takes matters into his own hands. Carl forces Moore to bring the book for a formal review committee, and then to the school board. Carl recommends the book be banned from the school, continuously noting the clear racism, bias, and discrimination within the novel. Gordon, exercising his right to protest, refuses to participate in class until the book is removed, and leads a walkout of Nora's class.

However, both individuals also seem to use their own form of racism throughout the novel. Carl, on several occasions, references whites in general as though all are biased and discriminatory. His comments even toward other blacks are often filled with bias, such as his reference to Stanley Turney as "brainwashed" and to Luke as "insensitive" to black issues. Additionally, Gordon refers to his friend, Barney as "one of those white people" who refuses to stand up for blacks. In both cases, the characters tout their right to avoid racism, and yet consistently use a form of it to prove their points.

## Steve Turney

As the only black student not to leave Nora's class following the assignment of *Huckleberry Finn*, Steve admits to being curious about the novel. While others are persuaded by Kate and Gordon of the novel's racist content, Steve believes he must read the entire story and think about the novel in order to decide for himself. At the school board meeting, it is Steve's comments that make many alter their original opinions on banning *Huckleberry Finn*. Steve believes strongly that only he has a right to decide what offends him, and that to assume the word "nigger" is always a personal



attack is unfair. Steve sees the word in the novel as an attack on the whites within the story, and on their way of life. Steve's character clearly represents the power of freethinking, as an individual looking at an entire situation before making a decision, and thus being able to decide rationally and with conviction.

## Stanley Lomax

While appearing only briefly in the novel, Lomax makes a powerful point about censorship in his discussion with Kate during the review committee hearing. Stanley Lomax, a professor of Sociology at the local college, is a black man appointed to the review committee. During the meeting, he and Kate discuss censorship, and who gives individuals the power to censor what others read. In his discussion, he asks Kate if she feels more comfortable in his decisions since he is black, and she replies yes. However, Lomax points out that he could easily be a male chauvinist whose views completely disagree with Kate's. Lomax continues to point out that by making authority figures responsible for censoring materials, one is allowing another person to control freedom of thought.

## Judy Blume

The author of such titles as *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, Judy Blume is mentioned in this book as another author often criticized for the content of her novels, which frequently include frank discussions of sexuality and self-image.

## Kurt Vonnegut

Perhaps the most controversial writer in recent history, Kurt Vonnegut is another author mentioned in this novel as a prime target for censors. Vonnegut's work, often seen as violent and immoral, often attacks societal norms in an effort to show the hypocrisy and irrationality of many social concepts.



# Objects/Places

## George Mason High School

This school is the locus of confrontation for censorship in the story. Founded by George Mason, who was himself a crusader for freedom of the press, the school becomes a center of news media as they report on the censorship debate regarding reading materials for high school students.

### *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

*Huckleberry Finn*, written by Mark Twain, is the primary book of concern in the novel. Believed to be racist, sexist, and immoral by some, the community and students of George Mason become divided in the fight to either ban or save the book. Those who believe in the principles of the novel, point out the moral character of Huck, the main character, and his innocent use of the word "nigger" because of his upbringing. Further, these individuals point to the clear friendship between Huck and Jim, the novel's black character, as a testament to the concept that Mark Twain was speaking out against racism, rather than upholding the principle. In the end, the book is freed. Instructors are allowed to require the title in classes, and the book remains on the library shelves.

### *Go Ask Alice*

Briefly mentioned as a book criticized by parents and concerned citizens in previous years, *Go Ask Alice* is a novel about a young teenager who becomes addicted to drugs, and eventually becomes a prostitute to support her habit. The novel, said to be her diary, has been banned in numerous school systems across the country for its "promotion" of drug use and sexual promiscuity.

### *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury

Mentioned by Barney in the novel, *Fahrenheit 451* is set in the future, and revolves around a group of concerned citizens who eventually burn down libraries and homes in an effort to rid the world of "dangerous" reading materials.

## American Civil Liberties Union

An organization dedicated to the preservation of individual civil liberties, the ACLU is referenced several times in the novel. Deirdre, the librarian, threatens Principal Moore by stating that, if needed, she will contact the organization to defend the First Amendment, since Moore is attempting to pull *Huckleberry Finn* before the review is complete. Kent Dickenson, a speaker at the Freedom debate and a pivotal character at both the review board meeting and the School Board meeting, is a representative of the ACLU. Dickenson speaks animatedly of the value of freedom, separation of church and state, and the wrongs of censorship.



## Citizen's League for the Preservation of American Values

An organization dedicated to preserving the morals and values of "traditional" societies, the CLPAV plays an important role in the novel. Matthew Griswold, a member of the organization, speaks first at the Freedom debate against Kent Dickenson, and again at both the review board hearing and the School Board meeting. His speeches include comments on the need for protection of students, the responsibility of educators, and the need for prayer in schools.

## First Amendment

A major theme in the novel, the First Amendment guarantees the right to freedom of the press. Over many years, this amendment has been interpreted, as Nora Baines points out to Moore in the novel, also to mean freedom to read what is printed.

## Parents for Moral Schools

Another group in the novel wishing to ban *Huckleberry Finn*, this organization finds fault in the book by claiming a condoning of easy, immoral behavior, and an apparent homosexual relationship between Jim and Huck. The speakers for this group, Mr. and Mrs. Dennis, extrapolate the homosexual behaviors from the scenes in which Huck and Jim are naked together on the raft.

## Holy Bible

Used by Karen Salter to prove a point, the Holy Bible, often read by younger students with the approval of parents, contains stories of rape, murder, and many other violent and immoral acts.

*Our Mutual Friend* by Charles Dickens

The final straw for Karen Salters, *Our Mutual Friend* provoked an argument between Karen and Moore prior to her resignation. As Karen explains to Barney during her interview, Moore, in response to a complaint from a parent, wanted the novel removed from the library. According to the complaint, the novel contained references to violence, lust, and anti-Semitism. In response, Karen points out the same references in the Holy Bible, leading to Moore's defacing of the holy book, and his eventual demise.



## Setting

Most of the action takes place in the library, history class, the auditorium, and the principal's office in a high school. Brief scenes occur in student Barney Roth's home, the former librarian's home, and the town hall. The unremitting thrust of the book is on book censorship, so all the action happens in connection with that decision. There are no subplots or social events that would take the action elsewhere.

Hentoff does not say where the school is located. It could be a high school anywhere because the problem comes up everywhere; however, it could be in Virginia since the school is named for George Mason who drafted Virginia's Declaration of Rights.



## Social Sensitivity

Is a high school supposed to provide stimuli for critical thinking or is it supposed to protect its students from thought that someone feels is unsuitable? A fundamental way society passes its values on to the next generation is through books and schools.

What goes on in the schools is of vital importance. Some people want complete freedom while others want limitations for a variety of reasons. *The Day They Came to Arrest the Book* deals with the furor that can arise when controversial material is used in a school. It is a problem that never is resolved to everyone's satisfaction; however, students can learn to think for themselves and make up their own minds.

Hentoff's book brings up a variety of societal problems and biases—racial difficulties, feminist concerns, sexual preference, school prayer, and school administration problems. In dealing with these, the author has characters present several different sides to the problems. Although he does not say which side is right, the main characters—Barney, the librarians, and the teacher—seem to win. Nobody changes his or her original opinion except Kate who wants more time to think things over more carefully.



# Literary Qualities

Hentoff's purpose was to get young people to look at both sides of the question of censorship, to think about the issue, and to make up their own minds. In order to accomplish this aim, he wrote this story about conflict over *Huckleberry Finn*. There are no subplots or other diversions in the book. All the action and dialogue are directed to the trouble stirred up by the book.

As the story progresses, there are explanations of Mark Twain's aims for the novel, including why Huck thought the way he did about right and wrong.

There are also quotations from wellknown authorities about censorship that Nora Baines and the two librarians can recall verbatim at exactly the right moment.

Hentoff has his characters tell the readers what he wants them to know.

For instance, Barney recites: Because fiction . . . is sometimes more real than facts. I mean, it can tell you more than facts. It can tell you more about what ordinary people were like in certain times and places than laws and battles and things like that. [And]. . . fiction is imagination. The novelist can suppose, and so he can get inside people's heads. Like, if he's writing about the past, and he knows a lot about the past, he makes you become part of it because you get all involved with the story and the people in it.

Sexist language is discussed in Mrs. Baines's class. Kate objects to the use of the pronoun "he" to cover both genders, but her teacher does not recognize it as a problem. She says that she has always considered herself part of mankind and that she will not tolerate words like "clergyperson," "policeperson," or "chairperson."

There is very little humor or small talk to make the characters seem like real people. In the midst of a very serious conversation, Karen Salters asks Barney if he would like a coke, but there is very little dialogue that is not pointed straight at the issue of censorship. Sometimes the dialogue seems unnatural. For example, Barney tells the librarian that her name, Deirdre, is "a lovely name." Luke uses the pronoun "whom" properly in ordinary conversation on the school grounds.

Hentoff's choice of descriptive words helps to define the characters. For example, Mrs. Baines carries on her class with "staccato energy." There are word plays in the writing. In talking about Kate, Barney says, "Sticking pins in people. And sometimes she has a good sharp point." The word "yo-yo" is used throughout as a term of derision. Kate, the feminist, uses "yo-yo" sometime during most of her appearances in the book. There are some other slang terms such as "wimp," "rock the boat," and "right on." The word "damn" is used every once in a while.

An irony of the book is that the name of the school which has no freedom is George Mason, and the school newspaper is called *The George Mason Standard*. When George Mason drafted Virginia's Declaration of Rights, he wrote, "Freedom of the press

is one of the great bulwarks of liberty and can never be restrained but by despotic governments."



# Themes

## Censorship and Independent Thought

Censorship is the primary theme throughout the entire novel, connecting all and plot lines. Whether a character is in favor of or against censorship, the topic of censorship alone has the power to create and destroy personal relationships, employment positions, and reputations. At the center of the censorship theme is the novel *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain. Barney believes the novel aims not to spread racism but to defy it. More importantly, however, Barney believes in the right to decide for one's self the fundamental point of a piece of information, whether that information is in the form of a book, a film, or a newspaper. Barney exercises his own rights by rationally discussing his beliefs with others. Kate, on the other hand, believes the novel to be both sexist and racist. More importantly, Kate believes strongly that the administration of the school is responsible for their learning, and thus, should provide learning materials that teach right from wrong. Deirdre, the librarian, counters this idea by pointing out that young people have to learn how to think for themselves, and to form their own ideas of morality and justice.

Some of the strongest arguments for and against censorship come from Steve Turney and Stanley Lomax. Turney, a black student, stands up and speaks out for his right not to have his education tampered with. His point, well made in the novel, is that only he can decide what is right for him, since the opinions of other individuals may not agree with his own morality. After reading the novel, Turney believes the racism is actually intended to scorn the white individuals of the novel, and the way Huck's society raised him. Turney believes the novel, when read completely, speaks volumes for free thought, since Huck defies society, and in doing so, saves his black friend. Such an act by a white boy in the novel clearly shows the author's point, that only through free thought can individuals act according to his or her own moral principles.

Lomax also has a strong argument against censorship in the novel. Stanley Lomax, a professor of Sociology at the local college, is a black man who is appointed to the review committee. In a discussion, he asks Kate if she feels more comfortable in his decisions since he is black, and she replies yes. However, Lomax points out that he could easily be a male chauvinist whose views completely disagree with Kate's. This point is well made, and again suggests the danger in censorship. By allowing others to choose materials deemed "suitable" for certain individuals, one allows those other individuals to shape one's mind. If, as Lomax points out, he were against feminism, and were choosing titles for students to read, those titles would likely consist of information against the beliefs of Kate, but likely in agreement with others' beliefs. Lomax's point is that regardless of the issue, there is likely to be two sides, and by presenting each side equally, individuals are given the opportunity to make informed decisions based on their own belief systems.



## Racism

Another key component of the novel is the concept of racism. While superficially, racism is clearly the reason for the objection to *Huckleberry Finn*, the theme of racism is present in far more ways throughout the novel. Nearly every character in the novel makes a comment at one point or another that could be considered racist, if taken out of context. For example, Kate calls Barney a "self hating Jew," Nora mentions Lomax's vote will likely be against *Huckleberry Finn* since Lomax is black, Luke makes comments insensitive to black individuals, and Moore's thoughts about the lack of black representatives in photographs on his wall hint at racism. At the same time, Carl's comments throughout the novel clearly stereotype white individuals, as do Gordon's comments to Barney.

The point by the author throughout the novel is that, on the surface, *Huckleberry Finn* uses racial words and situations to mock the racism of his own time. Taken out of context, however, these phrases certainly appear to demean black individuals. Hentoff appears to be stressing that unless one is given the entire story, and takes the time to consider all angles, one cannot form an independent thought. Further, even those who claim to be acting on behalf of other individuals must take care to truly represent and understand the persons they are attempting to assist. Without knowing all of the facts, information is easily manipulated and misrepresented, as is pointed out by Dickenson in the novel. While racism is a sensitive issue, it must be explored, Hentoff suggests, in order to combat the problem for future generations.

## Homosexuality / Relative viewpoints

Although an underlying theme in the novel, the concept of homosexuality is important in the novel, as it shows the power of relativity in conceptual understanding. First introduced by Deirdre and Nora in Chapter 10, the theme is expanded on by Mr. Dennis of Parents for Moral Schools in Chapter 12. Mr. Dennis and his organization express concern over the passages showing Jim and Huck naked on the raft together. Mr. Dennis suggests these passages indicate a homosexual relationship between the two individuals. Deirdre attempts to rationalize with Dennis, as does Matthew Griswold, to no avail. Helen Cook, a member of the committee, is moved by Dennis later in the novel to agree with his viewpoint that such passages suggest homosexuality. Clearly, as Deirdre points out, how one chooses to interpret the writings of another individual is vital to one's understanding of the novel. In this case, Deirdre and Griswold read the same passage as Mr. Dennis, but interpret it to mean something entirely different. Hentoff seems to be stressing the importance of relative thought. Every piece of information in the world is subject to the interpretation of the individual, and such interpretations are what allow individuals to form opinions. Since opinions, as well as conceptual knowledge, are relative, each person must decide for his or her self how to interpret information. This is vital to the learning process, and by censoring the information given to individuals based on the opinions of a select view, one is denying individuals the right to form informed opinions.

## Themes/Characters

The theme deals with whether high school students should have unlimited access to controversial reading materials so that they can make up their own minds about the merits of such materials or whether they should be protected from "ugliness" of one kind or another by book censors.

The main character is the book *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain. All conversation and action revolve around it, and readers will learn a great deal about Mark Twain's and Huck's intentions, beliefs, and social condition. Aside from that, the main character is Barnaby Roth, a very intelligent Jewish student with a great love for books and the library. As editor of the school newspaper, he is able to give his own opinions power and must decide whether to pursue his beliefs no matter who might be hurt or to make concessions. His best friend is Luke.

Kate, another student, is a strong feminist who sides with those who want to restrict the book because of pain it could cause black students. Her own objection to the book is its portrayal of women: "This book is just going to reinforce your ignorance about women." Gordon McClean and his father represent blacks who want the book banned because they believe it is racist and has the word "nigger" used repeatedly. Their last name "McClean" is significant to the story.

The student who really turns the tide at the public meeting of the school board is Steve Turney. Early in the book he is the only black student who does not walk out on the history class.

He does not want anybody to tell him what to think. At the end of the book he tells the audience that he always knows when the word "nigger" is directed at him and when it is not. He also says that he is glad that no one can protect him from *Huckleberry Finn* because he has already read and benefitted from it.

Strong characters in the book are the history teacher, Mrs. Baines, and the two librarians. It is Nora Baines who defies the principal and demands a review board for the book. The former librarian, Karen Salters, has in the past given in to the principal's demands to take books off shelves because she loved being a librarian. Finally, however, she could not stand having a Dickens book removed. She was so adamant that she lost her job because of the censorship. Her exposure of past censorship and the ridiculous, but vicious, conduct of the principal helps to defeat the effort to censor *Huckleberry Finn*. The new librarian places herself at risk when she speaks out against censorship. All three women are extremely intelligent and quick thinking.

They can quote from historical sources freely.

The villain of the book is Mr. Moore, the oleaginous principal, who goes so far as to cut a chapter out of the Bible because it is offensive. In his office he is surrounded by pictures of celebrities shaking hands with him when they visited the school. His favorite



is a picture of John Wayne. His main concern is to avoid controversy with the public no matter what trouble it causes his school internally. He uses threats and makes deals. Even when it appears that he has lost the whole battle, he is able to twist the truth in an effort to make himself seem amiable, caring, and worthy.

Fortunately, for the sake of the librarians, the students, the history teacher, and Mark Twain himself, a very good choice for the chairman of the review board and member of the school board is made. He is Reuben Forster. A fair and thoughtful man, he thinks through procedures, orally develops the arguments each party is likely to present and plans how the meetings should go. He is also a strong man who can insure that the principal does nothing to hurt librarian Karen Salters in her new position.



# Style

## Point of View

This novel is written in a third-person point of view, but often divulges information from an individualistic perspective. This style is vital to conveying the vast amount of information presented from each character's perspective. Since the novel is based on individualistic thinking and free speech, this method achieves the goal of providing the thoughts and emotions of all characters. Each side of the issues is clearly explained in detail, and the presentation of particular characters' thoughts throughout the novel allows one to see not only what is being said, but the underlying reasons for the characters' statements. Barney's emotions, such as his frustration at Gordon's comments, and his clear hurt at Kate's comments, allow a full understanding of him, lending a sense of authenticity and honesty to the novel. Further, the underlying thoughts of Moore are clearly explained, allowing one to see his true nature as a human being. This third person narrative is the only possible way to convey these necessary elements.

## Setting

The entire novel is set in an unnamed town in an unnamed state within the United States, and focuses on the individuals within George Mason High School and the community surrounding the school. The setting is significant, in that it shows censorship can exist anywhere. By not naming a particular location, the author gives the impression that such events can occur within any part of the United States, and allows the imagination to supply particulars about the area surrounding George Mason. For example, while the author supplies local establishments, such as the office of Reuben Foster, and his chain of convenience stores, they are not described in detail. This lack of detail forces one to imagine his or her own local convenience store, making the story far more personal. This style, while unique, supports the author's point that independent thought and imaginative reading fosters understanding.

## Language and Meaning

The novel uses a non-formal English and is easy for even younger individuals to comprehend. The language is suited to the character speaking, in that the young individuals of the story often use slang terms, contractions, and informal phrasing such as "aint" and "naw." Adults, on the other hand, often speak more formally, but still use a casual speaking style that is easy to understand. This change of speaking style allows one to switch between student and teacher effectively, even when the author does not indicate who is speaking. Further, the casual structure allows the novel to be far more accessible than a novel of a more formal tone, and conveys the thoughts and emotions of characters effectively, without being overburdening.



The themes used throughout the novel, while deep in meaning, are explained easily through a series of opinions expressed by characters. For each side of the censorship argument, at least one student, one parent, one school authority, and one professional speak during the novel. In the fight for censorship, Kate, Gordon, Matthew Griswold, Michael Moore, and Mr. Dennis speak, whereas Luke, Barney, Deirdre, Kent Dickenson, and Kate Salters speak out against censorship. By providing a variety of characters for each side of the argument, and by allowing those characters to speak at different language levels, the author represents each side equally and in different ways, ensuring comprehension.

## Structure

The 169-page novel is divided into sixteen chapters of unequal length. Each chapter focuses on a separate event or separate piece of event, breaking the novel effectively into chapters focusing on a single point or major plot change. The chapters occur in chronological order, allowing one to follow the story from beginning to end. This style is effective in the development of the themes vital to the novel's plot.

The novel covers a period of several days, with unequal attention given to each day. In some cases, events throughout the day are detailed as they unfold, providing a deeper understanding of the situation, whereas other periods are explained in a more general way. This structure allows the novel to center on vital information effectively, which assists in the development of the novel's complex themes.



## Quotes

"I don't think it's as simple as Luke says," Barney broke in. "There are a lot of places in this country, and I bet there always have been, where if you're all alone in what you think, and you say what you think, you get treated like a leper or criminal." (Barney Roth, Chapter 2, page 10.)

"Mr. Moore was wondering whether anyone in the social studies department had a large photograph of Martin Luther King, but he dropped the idea. It would look phony - the only photograph on the wall without himself in it. Maybe he could say he'd been sick that day. No, too curious a coincidence. Well, he must invite more black speakers. There was certainly an imbalance on that wall. It would take a while to make it ten percent black, but that was a sound goal." (Narrator, Chapter 4, page 23.)

"Now listen...I have no doubt that the teacher will say the right thing about how badly those white folk treated blacks. But let me tell you something, sir. What is going to stay in the minds of these kids, white and black, is: "nigger, nigger, nigger." And they are also going to remember the ignorance and superstition of the so-called sympathetic black character, 'Nigger Jim', as well as the ignorance and superstition of every other black, without exception, in this book." (Carl McLean, Chapter 4, page 26.)

"You know damn well what I'm talking about. Freedom to publish is useless if people are not allowed to read what is published. And that certainly includes students. I still can't believe what I'm hearing. We're not talking about trash, we're not talking about a piece of pornography. We're talking about preventing our students from reading *Huckleberry Finn*! And why? Because it offends some people. Show me a book that offends no one, and I will show you a book that no one, in the whole history of the world, has ever willingly read. Mr. Moore, think of what you are asking of me! I am supposed to throw *Huckleberry Finn* out of my classroom. Have you no shame, sir? At long last, have you no shame?" (Nora Baines, Chapter 5, page 34.)

"But the people I'm talking about are not content to see if their ideas can prevail in the free marketplace of ideas. They are trying to get GOVERNMENT to enforce their notions of morality, of decency, of Americanism. You see, they do indeed believe that individual freedoms are getting out of hand, that they must be controlled. But by whose standards? By their standards! And Government will be the policeman to make sure that everybody else falls in line with what these groups want." (Kent Dickenson, Chapter 7, page 52.)

"Freedom does not come with any guarantees, you know. You can lose it just by not paying attention to those who are taking it away from you." (Kent Dickenson, Chapter 7, page 54.)

"It is one thing to say that students should know there is such a choice as religious faith - whether or not they elect to make that leap into faith themselves. But it is quite something else to say that students are entitled, as part of their formal education, to



absorb, under the authority of the school, pornography, tributes to sexual promiscuity among adolescents, books that talk about kikes or niggers...or books that contain blasphemies against God, who cannot speak for Himself, in the school. If students want any of that filthy stuff, they can still buy it outside of school, God help them; but to permit anything and everything, no matter how false and vile, in the curriculum and in the school library, defies every sensible definition of education." (Matthew Griswold, Chapter 8, page 66.)

"I did not become a librarian to hide books and lie to children looking for those books. What you call a small gesture would be a huge act of betrayal. Self-betrayal, among other things. Shoving books under a desk! Really, Mr. Moore!" (Deirdre Fitzgerald, Chapter 9, page 71.)

"Think, Kate. If *Huckleberry Finn* is going to be thrown out of school because it offends some black parents, what's to stop other groups of parents from getting up their lists of books they want out of here? Catholics, Jews, feminists, antifeminists, conservatives, liberals, Greeks, Turks, Armenians. Where does it end, Kate?" (Deirdre Fitzgerald, Chapter 9, page 73.)

"You can no more have a serious debate about whether the Holocaust ever happened than you can about whether blacks are inferior. Giving those so-called ideas the respectability of a debate helps them spread. So, if a book about the Holocaust being a fake ever came into this school, I would be leading the fight to keep it out, by any means necessary. And how a Jew, of all people, can feel differently, I don't understand. Unless" - Kate looked away from Barney - "you're one of those self-hating Jews." (Kate Stevens, Chapter 11, page 94.)

"Earlier in this program," Deirdre went on, "Kate was saying that the state must teach what is right and therefore must exclude from the classroom and the library all ideas that are wrong, that might poison students' minds. Well, with all respect to Kate, this is the educational philosophy of dictatorships. It must not be ours. In our system, it should not be the role of teachers or librarians or principles to restrict ideas but rather to illuminate and analyze them, good and bad, so that students learn how to do that for themselves for the rest of their lives. I mean, so that students will learn how to think for themselves. That is teaching what's right, because it's teaching independence of thought." (Deirdre Fitzgerald, Chapter 14, page 149.)

"And that is what makes this book so interesting. *Huckleberry Finn* uses that word [nigger] because the way he grew up, and where he grew up, it was the natural thing to do. A lot of evil comes natural, sir. That's why it's so hard to overcome evil in oneself. But *Huckleberry Finn*, he doesn't feel or mean the word 'nigger' the way the white grownups do. He doesn't even see black people as niggers, even though he does use the word. He sees Jim as a man, a man who should be free, and he tries hard to help keep him free."

"I think" -Steve Turney looked around the hall- "this book has a lot to teach everybody, even though it was written so many years ago. What it teaches is that a boy can be



better, a whole lot better, than what he's been taught to be. A lot of young people still need to be shown that. In this town too. At our school too." (Steve Turney, Chapter 16, page 163.)

"Steve Turney got through to me," Kate said as Barney listened intently. "When he told the school board he could tell when 'nigger' was meant for him. And that it wasn't meant for him in *Huckleberry Finn*. That bothered me. I thought I'd been fighting for Steve, for everybody black in the school. here was this black person telling me to butt out of his business. And he wasn't playing to the white folks, either. Steve doesn't let anybody mess with him, you know that." (Kate Stevens, Chapter 16, page 168.)

"Actually, my Grandfather had a twist to that. He once told me, "When someone plunges into the sea and drowns, you can't blame the sea. You must learn to swim." That's what I'm doing all the time. Swimming and thinking, thinking and swimming right along." (Kate Stevens, Chapter 16, page 169.)



## Topics for Discussion

1. In 1831 de Tocqueville wrote, "I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion as in America."

Do you think this observation is still true? Is open discussion more prevalent in schools and colleges than among the general population?

2. Why did some students protest John Wayne's appearance at the school?

Discuss his statement, "That's the American way . . . speaking your mind even if there's nothing in it."

3. What is affirmative action? What was the principal's decision in that regard?

4. Discuss Maggie Crowley's debate question, "Is individual freedom getting out of hand?" What should the limits of individual freedom be?

5. How do teachers obtain tenure?

What does that mean? One of the grounds for dismissal of a teacher with tenure can be insubordination. Reread pages 32-39. Did Mrs. Baines put her job on the line? Was freedom to read *Huckleberry Finn* worth it? What does it mean if the principal "keeps book" on an employee?

6. Kate's main concern is how women are treated in society. When Mrs. Baines gets upset about the book and Mr. Moore's threat, he says, "Take some hot milk before you retire, and we shall speak of this again." What does this response tell you about Mr. Moore's attitude toward women? This book was written in 1982. How much have attitudes and treatment of women changed?

7. James Madison said that "the real danger to liberty comes from the power of the majority." Explain what he meant by this.

8. Why did Hentoff make the ACLU representative seem bumbling and sloppy with the banana stuck in his newspaper? Was stereotyping at play there?

9. Can people be free if they are ignorant of the choices available? Reread pages 59-60.

10. Matthew Griswald says, "So long as the prayers are not of any particular religion and so long as no one is compelled to pray, God—as the Supreme Court will yet come to recognize—can lawfully coexist in our schools with Judy Blume." Why did he bring up Judy Blume when her books have been denounced or censored as much as or more than that of any other children's author?



11. What happens to Huck at the end of the book? Answer the question on page 90. Can someone like Huck fit into society and still be free?

12. Mary K. Chelton reviewed *The Day They Came to Arrest the Book* for *Voice of Youth Advocates*. Her comments are as follows: Unfortunately, this is a very boring book, because the story is hopelessly bogged down in pro and con First Amendment rhetoric.

The sheer talkiness of it all is inimical of the teen novel formula. .

. . As is common in all of Hentoff's YA novels except *Jazz Country* . . .

all the characters represent a point of view in the argument rather than real-life people. Despite the importance of the topic, by the standards set by Cormier and Arrick, for example, this is really minimal storytelling. It is doubly unfortunate that four courageous women who have defended intellectual freedom are immortalized in the dedication of such a bad book. John Neufeld's *Small Civil War* and Susan Pfeffer's *Matter of Principle* are both better books on the same theme, and intended for the same audience.

Explain why this very critical review is or is not justified.



## Essay Topics

Principal Moore uses a variety of tactics to attempt to censor materials without the proper procedures in the novel. Why do you think Moore attempts to avoid these procedures?

Nora Baines frequently voices negative opinions of those who support censorship. Do you think Nora's outbursts strengthen or weaken her own argument against censorship? Explain your answer, using examples from the novel.

During the debate on freedom, both Kent Dickenson and Matthew Griswold make compelling arguments about whether freedom is getting out of hand in the United States. After reading both arguments, which individual do you agree with? Use examples from the novel to justify your opinion.

Karen Salters makes a point regarding the violence and immorality in the Holy Bible in the novel. If the school board had decided to ban *Huckleberry Finn* from the library, do you feel the Holy Bible should also have been banned, or do you feel there is a difference in these titles? Explain your answer.

When Reuben Foster discovers the truth of Michael Moore's previous censorship activities within the school, he implies that the school board will be carefully monitoring Moore's actions. Do you feel, after Moore's actions, he should have been allowed to maintain his position? Explain your answer, using logic and examples from the novel.

Maggie Crowley originally asks Barney to censor a story about Michael Moore in the school newspaper, out of fear for losing her position as faculty advisor. Later in the novel, Maggie supports an even more critical article of Moore, in which Barney reveals Karen Salters' accusations about Moore's previous censorship activities. Why do you think Maggie supported the second article, but not the first?

One of the primary themes of this novel is censorship, and whether educators have a right to censor the learning materials of students. After reading this novel, do you believe school administrators should be allowed to censor the learning materials of students? Using reasoning given in the novel, explain your answer.

After reading the novel, you should have a clear understanding of what prompts some individuals to promote censorship of reading materials. Using "The Day They Came to Arrest the Book" as an example, please write one response indicating why some would wish to ban this book from required reading lists, and one response indicating why some would wish to require this novel to be read.





# Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Research sexism in the English language. What position has the National Council of Teachers of English taken on the subject? How can problems with the singular pronoun "he" be avoided? Mrs. Baines objected to being called "Ms." Where did the title come from and why?
2. Research and report on the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925.
3. Find out what the position of the American Library Association is regarding censorship. Students should check with their principal about whether there is a school policy on dealing with questionable books and what that policy is. A school supervisor or a librarian could explain the policy to the class.
4. What is a euphemism? Why do we use them? Make a list of euphemisms with the words that they are meant to gloss over, such as "pass away" for "die." See page 18 in *The Day They Came to Arrest the Book*.
5. Why were there laws against putting red flags in windows in 1919? Why would thirty-two state legislatures put such a law into effect? Why would fourteen hundred Americans break the red flag laws and get arrested?
6. Research the history of the ban on prayer in schools. The argument is still going on. After researching the subject and thinking about both sides of the question, students can formulate their own opinions.
7. Try to find out who Kathy Russell, Irene Turin, Susan Maasz, and Judith Krug were. What did they do that made Hentoff dedicate this book to them?
8. Research censorship. Make a list of books that have been in trouble with various groups of people and the reasons for the attempts to ban them. Why were books burned in Warsaw, Indiana? How can omission cause someone to reject a book? See page 72.



## Further Study

Bontemps, Arna. *Great Slave Narratives*.

Boston: Beacon Press, 1969. Carl McClean, the black parent, thought this a better book for high school students than *Huckleberry Finn*. Students may want to read this book, compare it to *Huck Finn*, and discuss whether every student should be required to read it.

Commire, Anne, ed. "Hentoff, Nat(han Irving)." In *Something about the Author*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1986.

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## Related Titles

Hentoff has actively pursued the subject of free speech since his first publication on the subject in 1980, *The First Freedom: The Tumultuous History of Free Speech in America*. *The Day They Came to Arrest the Book* is a fictional treatment of censorship in schools, a subject he developed more fully in his nonfictional work, *Heroes In and Out of School* (1987), which tells the stories of ten students who fought for their right to read books of their choice. Most recently, Hentoff's *Free Speech for Me— But Not for Thee*, analyzes the extreme positions taken by both the Left and Right wings in America.



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