

Places I Never Meant to Be: Original Stories by Censored Writers Study Guide

Places I Never Meant to Be: Original Stories by Censored Writers by Judy Blume

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Censorship: A Personal View by Judy Blume

Censorship: A Personal View by Judy Blume Summary

As a child, Judy Blume was curious about the adult world. Since her mother forbade her to read "A Rage to Live" by John O'Hara in fifth grade, she was excited to see that her junior high reading list contained any book by John O'Hara. Unfortunately, when she went to the library, the librarian informed her that "A Rage to Live" was on the restricted list so that Judy could not borrow the book without her parents' written permission. Aside from that one instance, Judy's parents never dictated what she could read, and when she complained about the book being restricted, her aunt lent her a copy that led Judy to read everything she could find by that author. Judy began writing in her mid-twenties with "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret" about her feelings in sixth grade. The principal of her children's school refused to add the book to the library because it discussed menstruation, while one woman phoned Judy to call her a communist. Judy notes that the 1970s were a good decade because writers were free to write about real kids in the real world. However, the censor emerged after the 1980 presidential election with the intent of deciding what all children could read. Judy's books were constantly challenged and restricted due to the use of curses and topics deemed inappropriate. Her editor wanted her to remove the passage concerned masturbation in "Tiger Eyes" so it would reach as many readers as possible. Judy argued that the moment was important in her character's development, but she eventually caved and removed it. She recalls in the book how lonely she felt at that moment.

Judy began to speak out about her experiences and was surprised to find she was not as alone as she thought. Her life changed when she learned about the National Coalition Against Censorship and met Leanne Katz who was devoted to defending the First Amendment. Censors want to rate books, but individual families should decide what their own children read. This urge no longer comes solely from the religious right. It has spread across the political spectrum. For example, "Huckleberry Finn" is challenged yearly for racial epithets. Judy insists that it is better to discuss the language and why it is appropriate in the context of the book instead of simply banning it. She laments the loss of books that will not be written in this age of censorship as many writers resort to self-censorship. Not only does censorship happen, it can occur anywhere, even where you least expect it. The first step is awareness. Support groups against censorship can help because censors and school boards hate publicity, yet they will make decisions that affect everyone's First Amendment rights if no one takes a stand. To those who write or want to write, Judy advises, "There is no predicting the censor...So write honestly. Write from deep inside" (p. 15).



Censorship: A Personal View by Judy Blume Analysis

Censorship: A Personal View serves as Judy Blume's introduction to this collection. In it, she discusses some of her early experiences with censorship as well as some of her concerns. When Judy Blume was forbidden to borrow a restricted book at the library, she was angry at the librarian but never thought that it might not be the librarian's choice. Censorship is defined as forbidding expression believed to threaten political, social or moral order, but Judy wonders what these words mean to writers, their chosen stories, readers and the books they choose to read. When Judy began writing, she was not thinking about controversy, and she wanted to write the truth; she would have never believed that she would become one of the most banned writers in America. "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret" was challenged because it discussed menstruation, and Judy was accused of being a communist because of this topic in her book. Judy wrote 13 more books that decade, but her publishers tried to shield her from the negative feedback in hopes she would not be intimidated if she did not know that some people were upset by her work. Though Judy heard about the disapproval, she was not concerned because there was no organized effort to ban her books. Judy compares the 1970s and the 1980s, claiming the 1970s allowed writers to write about real kids in the real world, but the censors emerged in the 1980s. Seeing books and thinking as dangerous, parents were quick to jump on the bandwagon for fear of "exposing their children to ideas different from their own" (p. 5). Schools got rid of anything seen as controversial, their decisions based on what would not offend the censors, not on what was best for the children. When Judy allowed her editor to convince her to remove a scene concerning masturbation from "Tiger Eyes", she felt very lonely, and this led her to become active in speaking out against censorship.

Judy notes that such a climate has a chilling effect on writers, making it easy to become discouraged. Judy goes on to discuss several teachers who were forced to resign from their positions due to their attempts to defend books that they were censored unjustly. This obsession with burning books continues into the twenty-first century: books about Halloween or witches are seen as promoting Satanism while "Romeo and Juliet" is condemned of romanticizing suicide. Judy worries how young people are affected by this loss; they will only be assigned bland books for required reading if no one speaks out for them, causing them not to find the information they need in novels that illuminate life. One of Judy's friends refused to allow her children to read "The Stupids Step Out" because she did not want her children to use that word, but Judy wishes she had used it as an opportunity to teach her children why it is hurtful to call another person stupid instead of avoiding the issue. The book is dedicated to Leanne Katz for trying to prevent voices from being silenced. Though many censored writers are missing from this collection, Judy is grateful to those who decided to contribute as they are all writers who have been challenged by groups wanting to forbid their books, and each shares their own experiences with censorship. Judy urges readers to become aware of the censor's presence and to take a stand. She encourages writers to ignore the censors and write from inside themselves. Leanne once told Judy that Judy's job is to write as well as she can and Leanne's job is to defend what is written, but Judy warns that Leanne cannot do it on her own; "it's up to all of us" (p. 15).



A Letter from Joan Bertin, Executive Director, National Coalition Against Censorship

A Letter from Joan Bertin, Executive Director, National Coalition Against Censorship Summary

The National Coalition Against Censorship receives calls about censorship and provides information, advice and resources to educate the public about the importance of free speech through the newsletter they publish four times annually. Many people do not understand the First Amendment; they want to protect the material they like but not necessarily what others like. Joan points out that not much would remain if everyone could veto what they do not like. Those who oppose censorship believe that reading is a way for young people to safely explore and understand things. Kids need to learn how to deal with controversial issues, but censors focus on what they believe is acceptable for kids to read at school.

A Letter from Joan Bertin, Executive Director, National Coalition Against Censorship Analysis

Joan Bertin briefly addresses the reader to explain the goals and the activities of the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC). She discusses the importance of the First Amendment and emphasizes that little would be available to read if everyone could censor whatever they like. Joan also emphasizes her belief that reading is a way for kids to safely explore and deal with controversial issues. Joan is grateful to the writers who contributed to this collection.



Meeting the Mugger by Norma Fox Mazer

Meeting the Mugger by Norma Fox Mazer Summary

In *The Argument*, Sarabeth is irritated that Mom does not trust her as Mom lectures her about being too young to have sex. When Leo, Mom's boyfriend, enters with his beautiful friend, Pepper, and mocks her, Sarabeth is unable to take anymore, so she grabs her jacket and leaves. In *the Mugger*, Sarabeth notices she is being followed as she walks through the city, and a girl in a hoodie orders her to face the wall and relinquish her jacket, scratching Sarabeth's back with some sharp instrument. Sarabeth waits quite some time before turning around. In *The Waiting-For-Me Party*, Sarabeth is unable to say anything about the mugging when she gets home because Leo, Pepper and two neighbors chide her for worrying Mom. When Mom asks if Sarabeth left home without her jacket, Sarabeth is unable to speak so she goes to her room instead.

In *Talking to Leo*, Sarabeth calls to Leo from her window and asks if he likes his jacket, insisting it matters and that she is fine. He tells her to talk to Mom and asks where she went, but Sarabeth tells him goodbye and shuts the window. In *Mom and Me*, when Mom brings a sandwich to her daughter and asks what happened, Sarabeth tells Mom about the mugging and shows her the wounds on her back. Upset, Mom tends the wound as she rants about her anger at the mugger, refusing to feel sorry for the scared girl though Sarabeth pities her. As Mom holds Sarabeth, Sarabeth feels okay for the first time in hours, crying because this is the worst thing that has ever happened to her. In *The Morning As Usual*, Sarabeth agrees to borrow Mom's jacket since hers was stolen under the condition that Mom has the doctor check the freckle on her leg. In *Hugged*, Sarabeth tells her friends about the mugging, but she has no way to know everything would change within a few weeks and all she would remember would be hugging Mom on her bed. In *Mugged*, they biopsied Mom's freckle, did more tests, and found cancer everywhere. Now, Sarabeth lives with Leo and Pepper. She still listens to Mom's advice and like Mom, she will struggle through life as long as she can.

Norma Fox Mazer *On Censorship* describes her first introduction to censorship, and noting that while it was comical at first, it has become wearily familiar. She tries not to let censorship affect her, but she has to fight mentally to free herself from censorious presences. It is bad for writers and for readers; censorship is crippling. Readers should have the right to pick their own books, and writers need the freedom of their imaginations because that is all they have; letting the censors into their imagination leads to dullness, imitation and mediocrity.



Meeting the Mugger by Norma Fox Mazer Analysis

In *The Argument*, Mom always gives Sarabeth advice so she will not make the same mistakes, but Sarabeth is impatient with Mom and her advice lately because it seems like she is unwilling to listen to her daughter. That may be part of the reason that Sarabeth ran out of the house that night. They were arguing about how Sarabeth is too young to have sex, but Sarabeth is agitated that Mom will not trust her. Mom's boyfriend, Leo, walks in with his beautiful friend, Pepper, and as he laughs at Sarabeth's anger, Sarabeth grabs her jacket and runs out, unable to take anymore. Pepper's presence foreshadows Leo leaving Mom, and Sarabeth grabbing her jacket suggests the importance of that action. In *The Mugger*, Sarabeth walks out into the city, and she knows she is in trouble when she hears footsteps behind her. She walks faster, but the footsteps get closer until a girl in a hoodie grabs her and demands she relinquish her jacket. The girl scratches Sarabeth's back with a knife or razorblade as she orders Sarabeth to stand facing the wall, threatening to come back and get her if she does not stay there. Sarabeth hears her leave but is afraid to turn around in case the girl is tricking her. The street is empty when she finally turns around. The horror of the mugging foreshadows the emotional turmoil Sarabeth suffers in the remainder of the story. In *The Waiting-For-Me Party*, Sarabeth tells her mother about the mugging mentally on the way home, but she does not say anything when she gets home and Mom asks where she was. Mom is waiting with Leo, Pepper and two neighbors all who start to chide Sarabeth for being gone so long and scaring Mom. Frustrated and unable to answer their questions, Sarabeth goes to her room.

In *Talking to Leo*, Sarabeth wants to cry as she hears everyone leave. She questions him about his jacket, suggesting the importance of his answer. She also suspects that he is going to leave Mom for Pepper, foreshadowing that event. In *Mom and Me*, Sarabeth confides in her mother about the mugging, demonstrating their close relationship, and this is also emphasized when Sarabeth feels better than she has in hours when Mom holds her. Her emphasis on the fact that this is the worst thing that has ever happened to her foreshadows that something worse will occur. In *The Morning As Usual*, Sarabeth asks Mom if Leo is dumping her, and when she tells Mom she hates him after it is confirmed, Mom warns her "it happens. You can't go nuts about things you can't control" (page 31). Sarabeth's concern about the freckle on Mom's leg foreshadows the importance of this circumstance. Hugged again emphasizes that the mugging was the worst thing that ever happened to Sarabeth, foreshadowing something worse to come, and the direction of this worse event is foreshadowed by the importance of remembering hugging Mom on the bed. In *Mugged*, Sarabeth lives with Leo and Pepper after Mom dies from cancer. She tries not to think about her life with Mom because being unhappy makes other people unhappy. She is usually able to steady herself by listening to the advice Mom still gives her. Mom did not want Sarabeth to know that everyone is eventually mugged by life; she wanted her daughter to be safe. Once, Mom told her that life is like a river and one does not get to choose where they get pitched in. Mom did not want Sarabeth to sink. She swam until she could not swim any longer, and Sarabeth guesses she will do the same.



In Norma Fox Mazer's *On Censorship*, when a seventh grade girl took "Saturday, the Twelfth of October" home, her parents were shocked and upset by it though they did not read it. Other people were also disturbed because it was set in a Stone Age matriarchal society where the onset of menstruation is celebrated. Parents also complained about the language, but the attorney general deemed the book of literary value. Still, the Board of Education met and removed the book from classrooms. This was Norma Fox Mazer's first introduction to censorship. She laughed at the notion, but it has since become wearily familiar. She hopes censorship has not affected her otherwise, but she still has to clear her mind of censorious presences before writing. She goes on to emphasize that censorship is crippling for the writer's imagination, and allowing the censors to influence a writer leads to mediocre writing. This discussion of censorship by the authors of the stories in this collection is the first instance, but each author comments on censorship after their story, and it is interesting to compare these opinions concerning the dangers and pains of censorship.



Spear by Julius Lester

Spear by Julius Lester Summary

When Spear's friends mock a white girl, Norma Jean Ray, for taking their African-American Literature course, Spear defends her, causing them to mock him. Spear is the senior class president in a school where the majority of the population is black, and his peers look to him as a leader because his father, Black Spear, was a leader whose anti-white speeches caused race riots in the 1970s. After school, Spear finds Norma in the library and is shocked to learn that she is not a new student. He tries to apologize for his friends, claiming they did not mean it, but Norma insists they did without anger or hurt, using only the tone of truth that Spear would prefer to avoid. The next day, Spear sits next to Norma because the fact that she is alone reminds him of how the white kids treated his dad. That night, he watches a video of his dad recounting his high school days, but when he talks to his mom, she says white kids are always the majority so it does not matter if they sit alone. She also tells him there is no reason for him to be curious about ugly white girls where there are so many beautiful, intelligent black girls for him to choose from. Spear and Norma begin spending time together after school, "learning how words can measure the beat of another's heart" (p. 45). Because of this, Spear's friend confronts him about spending so much time with a white girl. Spear skips his literature class to go home and watch a video of the white man shooting Dad, and noticing that the men does not fire when Spear falls across him, even though Black Spear is obviously still alive, Spear shows Mom, suggesting the man did not hate all black people or he would have killed Spear too. He only hated Black Spear. His mother slaps him, but Spear tells her to go ahead and do it again because he thinks he is in love with a white girl. When Spear asks Norma out, she objects that his people need him and that she is not good enough for him. She calls him that night to tell him that her parents are transferring her to an all-white school because they learned of her relationship with Spear and that she was taking his literature class. Spear begins going by Adrian and stops trying to be a leader for his people, finding happiness with his anonymity. Norma calls him every week but is quiet for fear of her parents. The gulf of silence can only be overcome when she tells Adrian that she loves him.

In Julius Lester *On Censorship*, censors fear loss of control because "language can seduce us into forgetting where we are and who we are" (p. 52). Sometimes it is difficult to write without censoring himself because he knows there are forces ready to seize upon anything they find objectionable. Julius Lester reminds himself that his obligation is to the realm of the imagination even though it is painful to be accused of writing something that hurts children. He believes that censorship deprives the human experience of mystery and complexity, and he insists that writing without truth would cause the death of the writer and the imagination.



Spear by Julius Lester Analysis

Greeting his peers, Spear notices a lone white girl in the front of the room after he sits down in the back. His friends ask why the girl, Norma Jean Ray, is in their African-American Literature course, and she argues that since they learn about books written by white, she should get to learn about the books their people wrote. Spear silences his classmates' taunts, so they mock him until the teacher enters. Spear is never addressed by his real name; he is called Little Spear after his dead father, Black Spear, the black leader whose anti-white speeches caused race riots in the 1970s. Spear does not care about that. He is focused on his senior year where he is the class president of a 75% black school. Spear often prevents racial misunderstandings, causing him to wonder what his father would think. Since he stays late at school as usual, Spear sees Norma while she studies in the library, and he calls to her without thinking. He feels awkward though she is not attractive, and when he asks if she is new, Norma explains she has been in the school since seventh grade but is used to being unnoticed. She excuses herself to catch the bus to Milltown, where the poor whites live, and Spear stops himself from offering her a ride. The next day, Spear sits next to Norma in class, causing her to stiffen as if he is making fun of her. He does not know why he sits with her, but seeing her sit alone reminds him of something. His friends are furious, but that just makes Spear angry; he cannot let Norma sit alone because that is what the white kids used to do to his dad. Spear realizes that is what Norma reminds him of. That afternoon, Spear watches a video of his father talking about his school years, and when he asks his mom if it is wrong to make a white kid sit alone since it was wrong for the white kids to make Black Spear sit alone, she tells him that whites are never alone because they are the majority. Spear asks what Daddy would think if he dated a white girl, or rather, since Daddy is dead, what Mom would think. Mom sees no reason for Spear to be curious about ugly white girls when there are so many beautiful, intelligent black girls at his school. Her racist attitude foreshadows the problems that Spear will encounter when he develops feelings for Norma.

The next day, Spear sits next to Norma again, and though she thanks him, she insists it is unnecessary. After rushing through his student council meeting that afternoon, Spear finds Norma in the library, and when she asks what to call him, he tells her that his name is Adrian. She refuses his offer of a ride home because her parents would kill her for being in a car with a black boy. After three weeks of Spear and Norma spending time together after school, Spear's friend, Monroe, confronts him because their friends and Spear's mom are all worried about how much time Spear is spending with this white girl; they need Spear to be their leader because they have not had one since Black Spear died. At home, Spear watches a video of his father's assassination, and realizing the killer did not shoot him as well, he accepts that the man only hated his father, not all blacks; however, Mom is furious when Spear points this out. This again emphasizes her racism as well as Spear's changing attitude as he begins to accept that everything should not be about race. People should be viewed as individuals. The next day, Spear asks Norma out, but she argues that she is not pretty plus her parents are racist and poor. She does not understand why he even likes her. Spear says he feels different with Norma and finds himself caring what she thinks of him, instead of what his father would



think. Additionally, she is the only person to ever ask his real name. Norma objects that his people need him, but Spear insists he does not need them. That night, Norma calls Spear to tell him she is not as brave as he is. Someone told her parents about her taking the African-American literature class and about hanging out with Spear, so her parents are transferring her to an all-white school. Norma tells Spear that he has given her the happiest moments of her life and she loves him. It takes a while before people call him Adrian, and though his friends are sad when he resigns as class president, Adrian is happy with his new anonymous identity. His mother seldom speaks to him, but Norma calls about once a week. Though she cannot talk for fear of being overheard, Adrian talks about school, or they are simply silent, the silence being like a gulf that cannot be crossed and opens only when Norma tells Adrian that she loves him before hanging up. This indicates that their love is stronger than the racist hatred that both of their parental units encourage. It proves that love can overcome hate.

Julius Lester notes that censors seek control because they fear language seduces readers into forgetting where and who they are. He finds it difficult to write without censoring himself at times, but he knows that he is obligated to the imagination. "Censorship is an attitude of mistrust and suspicion that seeks to deprive the human experience of mystery and complexity" (page 52). Writing without telling the truth would be the death of any writer and the imagination, and Julius Lester wonders what would happen to the souls of children if the imagination were to die.



Going Sentimental by Rachel Vail

Going Sentimental by Rachel Vail Summary

Thoughts wandering from the fact that she is losing her virginity, Jody announces that she has to call Aunt Tillie because it is her birthday as Mackey moves breathlessly on top of her. They finish and tidy up so her parents will not know they were here. Mackey asks if she is alright, but Jody feels uncomfortable dressing in front of him as she tells herself it is not a big deal to lose her virginity. Though they know everything about one another, their relationship is not like it is in the movies. Back at school, Mackey asks if Jody feels different about him or them, but she teases him about going sentimental and rushes off to the gym for her game before he can kiss her. In the locker room, Jody assures herself that she lost it responsibly since she has been with Mackey for four years. As the game starts, Jody settles into her defensive role, sure the girl will not get past her, but she stops center court when she sees him, the girl crashing into her, falling and dropping the ball. Still, Jody does not retrieve the ball because she is smiling at Mackey with her hands on her hips as he smiles back, holding a sign that says "Happy Birthday Aunt Tillie" (p. 61).

Rachel Vail On Censorship explains that Rachel vowed to herself as a teen that she would never forget or disrespect "the intensity of the adolescent experience, the power and terror of being a person actively creating herself" (p. 62). Though her characters do things that she hopes her children will not, she feels it is important to respect the reality of the character. Therefore, Rachel tries to find the most honest reality for her characters without worrying about whether she might be offending someone.

Going Sentimental by Rachel Vail Analysis

"Going Sentimental" addresses the issue of a teenage girl losing her virginity. Jody allows her mind to wander as she consecrates her four-year relationship with Mackey, resulting in her announcement that it is Aunt Tillie's birthday. Jody has been with Mackey since seventh grade, but she insisted that they wait to have sex until they received their drivers licenses. Since they got their licenses a month ago and their chemistry teacher was absent today, Jody and Mackey drove to her house to consummate their relationship finally. Mackey is concerned with how Jody feels after the fact, but Jody tells herself that it is not a big deal. In this story, the masculine and feminine roles seem to be reversed with Jody feigning indifference while Mackey is concerned with her emotions. Jody refuses to discuss the event, insisting she needs to get to the gym because she has a basketball game to play. Looking at her teammates in the locker room, she cannot imagine telling any of them what this afternoon felt like because she has never been the romantic, girly type; Jody is a private person, and this is nobody's business. She wonders if she feels so indifferent because Mackey and she have been together too long for passion. Jody comforts herself by recalling that she committed this act responsibly. As she tries to focus on the game, Jody sees Mackey



holding a sign referencing Aunt Tillie's birthday, showing that he knows her as well as she believes; he knows her indifference is not real, and this is his way of celebrating an important event in their relationship and in their lives.

In Rachel Vail *On Censorship*, when the school principal asked if there were any bad words in Rachel Vail's book, Rachel assured her that she tried to choose only good words. As a teen, Rachel vowed that she would never forget or disrespect "the intensity of the adolescent experience, the power and terror of being a person actively creating herself" (p. 62). Sometimes, her characters do or say things that she hopes her child will not, but it was different when she was a teenager with her friends. Rachel feels it is important to respect a character's reality, and she also believes that people should be able to choose what they read. She suggests that adults who send censorious letters should use the offensive literary situation as a platform for discussion with their children. Meanwhile, she tries to find the most compelling action, honest thoughts and real consequences for the characters in her stories. Offending someone does not matter; she pushes that consideration aside and just tries to find good words.



The Red Dragonfly by Katherine Paterson

The Red Dragonfly by Katherine Paterson Summary

The last nights of August are swollen with the promise of typhoons on the boy's island. This is also the season for Obon, making it easy to believe in spirits of the unknown dead who must be placated. At that time, he was young and obsessed with his teacher. His teacher reminded him of the red dragonfly of late summer, and he even wrote a haiku about her: "On the lantern/rests a dragonfly/friends of autumn" (p. 66). The boy studies alone in the empty house while the rest of the village celebrates, but a red dragonfly on his lamp reminds him of his teacher. He carefully writes and folds the poem, dressing in his school uniform and running around the edge of the village to avoid being seen. He slips the poem under her door and waits. Finally, he hears a woman's laugh, but it is accompanied by a man's voice. Entering the house, the man finds the poem and jokes that it is a love poem for her. The boy is ready to leave then, but as he turns, a light falls on a stone and reveals a giant mantis eating a dragonfly. The boy destroys the creature and runs home.

Katherine Paterson On Censorship explains that Katherine Paterson tries not to let censorship affect her writing because self-censorship is damaging. She praises those who defend books against censorship and tries to ensure the controversial parts of her books are necessary to avoid making their lives harder.

The Red Dragonfly by Katherine Paterson Analysis

"The Red Dragonfly" discusses a young boy's obsession with his teacher. Though he was ashamed of his foolishness, his heart still smiled. He writes a haiku for her about the red dragonfly which she reminds him of. The boy's father had decided that one of his sons would attend university, and he was certain the boy must be mentally superior to his two brothers since he was physically weaker. While the boy is studying, a red dragonfly alights on his lantern, so he writes the poem and rushes toward his teacher's house. He plans to slip into his teacher's house and leave the poem on the platform of the entranceway, but first he waits for her mother to return home. Once the old woman is in bed, he slips the poem through the crack in the door and waits, thinking of his teacher's daily life in this place. When he finally hears his teacher's voice, he is distraught to realize she is not alone; she is with a man who finds and mocks the love poem. The boy sees a giant mantis eating a dragonfly as he turns to leave, a symbol for the man taking away his love for his teacher. The boy cries out as he beats the evil creature with his right clog, destroying it as he would like to destroy the man inside his teacher's house, and when the man inside the house asks who is outside, the boy runs to the narrow bridge spanning the Yoshino, kicks his left foot in the air, and waits for the faint splash from far below.



In Katherine Paterson *On Censorship*, Katherine Paterson tries not to allow censorship to affect her work because self-censorship is damaging and she knows that she is likely to write a book that does not affect anyone if her chief goal is to not offend. With her books appearing on the challenged lists more frequently, she closely examines what may cause problems for teachers who recommend her books, feeling it is painful for someone to put their reputation or very livelihood on the line because of something she has written. Katherine tries to ensure that the troublesome parts of her work are necessary because she does not want to make life harder on the people who share her books with the young. When a book is challenged, its defenders suffer, but they are heroes. They are "the guardians of the constitutional freedoms which make this country great. I admire them more than I can say. If we lose their witness, we will have lost democracy itself" (p. 71).



July Saturday by Jacqueline Woodson

July Saturday by Jacqueline Woodson Summary

While watching the Williams' house go up in smoke, the narrator sits with Claytena Smalls who is concerned with the fact that Chuck Williams would have asked her out if his house had not caught fire today. Claytena notes a teenage girl down the street who does not seem to belong in their neighborhood. The narrator and Claytena discuss how life seems to stop and speed up uncontrollably at times. Mama tells the narrator to get their house ready for the Williamses to stay with them. As Mama comforts Mrs. Williams, the narrator sees Mr. Williams talking to the strange teenager from her window, but Mama regains her attention as they walk down the street together. Back outside, the narrator confides to Claytena that she suspects the teenager of starting the fire, but Claytena is too concerned with watching Chuck, and she leaves the narrator to comfort him. The narrator walks away, thinking of how life is like a carnival ride she cannot get off at times.

In Jacqueline Woodson *On Censorship*, people do not always notice when censorship is happening, and sometimes it is very obvious. Jacqueline knew people would not like her because of prejudice from a young age, but she did not know the many ways that hatred could exist or that it would enter into the "most sacred part of me - my writing" (p. 83). As a child and young adult, Jacqueline wrote for herself, and she has gone back to that beginning and again found solace in writing. The hatred will always be there, but so will writing. The writing gives her a better sense of the world and helps her to grow and understand.

July Saturday by Jacqueline Woodson Analysis

As the narrator and Claytena Smalls sit on a fence and watch the Williams' house go up in smoke, Claytena is upset because Chuck Williams would have almost certainly asked her out today if his house had not caught fire. Claytena points out a teenaged girl down the street who does not seem to be from around here, and as Claytena glares at the teen with folded arms, the narrator fears that Claytena is going to tell the girl to go about her business. Luckily, she sits back down. People do not seem too put out by the fire, though they have never had one on their street. Everyone was at Mr. Wheeler's barbeque when Justine, the youngest of the Williamses ran over because her baby doll was burning up. Noting that it seems like it happened a long time ago, the narrator and Claytena discuss how it feels like life stops sometimes and then speeds up like a crazy ride they cannot escape. The narrator's Mama tells her to go inside and ready their house because the Williamses will be staying with them. Their neighborhood used to be up and coming but has settled into upper working class with one side holding professors and lawyers while anyone who holds a steady job and can pay the mortgage lives on the other side. Mrs. Williams cries at the table as Mama comforts her. The narrator has been friends with Claytena and Chuck her entire life, but this summer, they all seem to



be going their own ways; Chuck hangs out with boys across town, Claytena has a crush on Chuck, and the narrator dreams of going far away. Mrs. Williams notes that her husband is very upset because the firemen suspect arson was involved in the fire but still need to investigate. Looking out the window, the narrator sees Mr. Williams talking to the strange teenager like he has known her for a while, and they walk down the street together as Mama calls the narrator back inside. Mama assures Mrs. Williams that her house will get fixed and that she can stay with them as long as necessary. When Mama sends Claytena and the narrator outside, the narrator tells Claytena about seeing Mr. Williams walk away with the teenager, but Claytena is concerned with watching Chuck and wondering if she should go to him. The narrator suspects the teenager of starting the fire, and as Claytena rushes to comfort Chuck, she walks away from them, off their street as she recalls going to the amusement park with them on Saturdays in July when they were kids. She can almost hear the amusement park hawker asking if anyone wants another ride in the back of her head, reinforcing the metaphor comparing life to a carnival ride she cannot escape.

Jacqueline Woodson notes that censorship is sometimes very obvious and sometimes more obscure: sometimes the library just cannot afford a book, but other times are more obvious like the letters that Jacqueline Woodson received from sixth graders objecting to a book she wrote or the illustrator who refused to illustrate a cover because he disapproved of the book. The silence is scary as the person under attack by censorship is usually the last to know. She knew people would be prejudiced against her from her youth, but she did not know it would affect her writing. She has found solace in returning to her way of writing for herself as in her youth because the writing, like the hatred, will always be there, but the writing helps her grow and understand the world around her.



You Come, Too, A-Ron by Harry Mazer

You Come, Too, A-Ron by Harry Mazer Summary

Returning to Placement, Aaron remembers how they sent him to the Oakmont school the last time he was here because they could not find him a family, but he ran away from Oakmont because there were too many fights. Inside, he warms up as the receptionist locates him in her system and sends him to Mr. Posner. Aaron tells Mr. Posner that he did not like all the fights at Oakmont, so Mr. Posner tells Aaron to return to his office in the morning. In the lobby, Aaron defends a young kid, Kenny, who is being teased by the older girls, and Kenny clings to Aaron. Aaron tucks Kenny in that night, telling him a story about how they will go to the Bronx Park, before rejoining the older kids to get pizza. The girls mock Aaron for being stuck up, but he insists he has no reason to be stuck up. The next morning, Kenny follows Aaron to Mr. Posner's office and waits in the hallway while Mr. Posner tells Aaron that Kenny is leaving today but he has a hard time finding a home for older kids, like Aaron. Mr. Posner tries to convince Aaron to return to Oakmont and get an education, but Aaron refuses, so he tells him to consider his intentions. A bit later, Janice calls for Aaron's help because Kenny refuses to leave with his new family. Aaron encourages Kenny to leave, promising to visit him. Considering his intentions, Aaron decides he will return to Oakmont so he can call Kenny like he promised and even visit the kid on the weekends.

In Harry Mazer On Censorship, Harry Mazer struggles to avoid the dullness that overtakes books when censors control writers. He fears caution more than the censors because he must be able to write the book he wants to write. Mazer recounts how several of his books have been banned, but he insists that it is positive when the challenges are brought into the open. He believes the quality of writing suffers when authors yield to censors. Books belong to all readers, and more books and authors are needed to represent various points of view. "Books are our windows on the world. They permit us to safely experience other lives and ways of thinking and feeling. Books give us a glimmer of the complexity and wonder of life. All this, the censor would deny us" (p. 98).

You Come, Too, A-Ron by Harry Mazer Analysis

Banging on the door to Placement, Aaron recalls how they tried to find him a family the last time he was here but sent him to Oakmont, a state school in the boonies, where he had to watch his back every second because there were too many kids and not enough staff. Aaron skipped out in the spring and returned to Placement. As soon as someone lets him in, he warms up by the radiator, but the heat must melt his brain because he begins hoping they will find a family for him this time; he does not admire himself for dreaming because he needs to stay in touch with reality. When the woman at the reception desk tries to identify him, Aaron gives his mother's name though he know they will not find his mother who is in a mental ward upstate on meds to quiet her after she



threw a knife at him. The receptionist finally locates Aaron in the computer system and sends him to see Mr. Posner. In the hallway, Aaron greets a couple girls that he knows from before, and upon reaching Mr. Posner's office, Mr. Posner treats Aaron as if he never left and asks about Oakmont. Since Aaron explains he did not like Oakmont because there were so many fights, Mr. Posner tells Aaron to come back to see him at 10 the next morning. Janice, an aide, offers him pizza, but the girls have already ate all of it. The girls sitting on the couch begin to tease a little kid, Kenny, taking his hat which eventually ends up in Aaron's hands, so Aaron gives it back to Kenny. The girls mock Aaron, but Kenny clings to Aaron after that, pronouncing his name "A-Ron." Janice thanks Aaron for helping Kenny, explaining that Kenny and his mom were burned out of their house and his mom is in the hospital. That night, Kenny insists on sleeping next to Aaron and hearing a story before he will go to sleep, so Aaron tells him a story about how they will go to Bronx Park someday. Once Kenny falls asleep, Aaron goes to get some pizza, and the girls tease him about babysitting and call him stuck up; he argues that he has nothing to be stuck up about. The girls lament that they will never find the right placement because they are too old and miserable for people looking for kids.

The next morning, Aaron wakes up to Kenny hanging over him. Kenny follows him around and mimics him, reminding Aaron of how he used to admire older kids. Kenny follows Aaron to Mr. Posner's office and waits in the corridor. Mr. Posner tells Aaron that Kenny is leaving today, but he has a hard time placing older kids like Aaron and the only option is Oakmont. He asks Aaron's intentions because he does not want to send him back to Oakmont if Aaron will not stay this time, but Aaron needs an education. Aaron refuses to return to Oakmont, so Mr. Posner says he does not know what to do with him but he will try. While Aaron is smoking, Janice calls to him because Kenny does not want to leave Aaron behind to go with his new family. Aaron tells Kenny that he is going to a real family and will like it, but when Kenny asks Aaron to accompany him, Aaron explains that the family only wants Kenny. Aaron agrees that he will visit Kenny before Kenny rides away in a cab with his new family. After everyone else goes inside, Aaron stands outside and thinks about his intentions. His only intention is to call Kenny like he promised, and when he realizes there are phones at Oakmont and he can visit Kenny on the weekends, Aaron goes inside to get Kenny's number from Janice and to tell Mr. Posner about his latest intentions.

In Harry Mazer *On Censorship*, Harry Mazer struggles daily not to let the fear of the censors poison his writing as the dull sameness creeps into books where censors rule. "The Last Mission" was challenged by a school board in Minnesota because of the language and removed from shelves, but Mazer believes "that if we want to read about the real world we also must accept the language of that world" (p. 97). Some of his other books were also removed because of language. Censorship is always negative, but there are positive outcomes from the challenges because the issues are brought out in the open and many respond that they do not want censors trying to force their views on everyone else's kids. Some books are removed or simply not ordered without protest, and this type of closet censorship is difficult to gauge so Mazer is unsure if they are winning or losing against the censors. Good books are created when authors can write freely, but the quality of work suffers when an author writes to the standard of the feared censor. Most importantly, he believes that books belong to all readers because

they allow reader to experience other lives and other points of view safely. He urges readers not to let censors deny them this right.



The Beast Is In The Labyrinth by Walter Dean Myers

The Beast Is In The Labyrinth by Walter Dean Myers Summary

John left Harlem to attend college in Millersville, PA where he begins to build a life for himself. When he goes home for Christmas, Mom greets John with a fragility that shows she has been wounded, but they do not mention his sister, Temmi, because "you don't go where you don't know" (p. 102). John goes to Temmi's room after learning she has been sick, but she acts suspiciously about why he is there. The next morning, John, Mom and Temmi talk about their plans to paint the house over the summer, but Mom and John relax when Temmi goes downtown to find out about a job. After returning to college, John receives a call from Mom that Temmi has been gone for a week, so he returns to Harlem to search for his sister and finds her in an open lot near a garbage can fire. On the way back to school, he wonders about Temmi touching his cheek tenderly. John calls home daily, and Mom insists things are good, but when he returns home for Spring Break, he learns that Temmi is in the hospital. When John visits Temmi in the hospital, she is ashamed of what remains of her body and asks him to tell Mom not to come anymore. She notes it is too hard on Mom. It is also too hard for John to see his sister like this because "we've walked together into the maze of our lives and have taken different routes. The beast has come to the reunion" (p. 111). John suggests they can all start over in Millersville, but Temmi simply stares at him and Mom laughs at the idea. John returns to Millersville after the funeral, and he recalls how frightened he was when he found that he did not recognize his reflection in the mirror.

In Walter Dean Myers On Censorship, Walter Dean Myers believes that the fact that many African-American writers confine their topic matters solely to issues concerning the black experience in America is censorship by omission. Many African-American writers have spoken of the restraints placed on them, and this corrupts the development of the writer and also keeps the evils of censorship hidden from the general public and other black writers "who might be attracted to literature if they did not have to filter their thoughts solely through their racial identity" (p. 113).

The Beast Is In The Labyrinth by Walter Dean Myers Analysis

John applied only to out-of-town colleges because he wanted to get away, and he received a scholarship to a small college in Millersville, PA where people expect too much from black seventeen-year-olds from Harlem. Still, John likes Millersville and becomes a part of the quota of blacks that Millersville finds acceptable. Going home to Harlem for Christmas, he pulls Harlem into his heart and remembers the labyrinth of



their creation. The echoes of the labyrinth first came to him in a field in Millersville as he talked to a white girl about dead European writers. John runs up the stairs, pretending he is not apprehensive for the disappointment he knows will come. Mom and John do not discuss his sister, Temmi, at first, foreshadowing the idea that Temmi is part of the disappointment that John dreads. Finally, John asks about his sister and learns she has been sick. Going to her room, John needs a way out of despair as the labyrinth grows and he senses the distance between what he knows and what he sees before him. Temmi wakes at his voice, suspicious about why he is here and anxious about what he has seen. In the morning, voices try to hide their feelings from him, but it feels good to talk of plans for the summer with his mother and sister. Still yet, John wants to leave and think of times he will make better. He and Mom relax when Temmi goes downtown to see about a job, but the beast lurches in the labyrinth. Back in Millersville, John receives a call from Mom telling him that Temmi has not been home in a week, so he returns to Harlem and asks people he once knew for his sister's whereabouts. He is directed to an open lot where he finds Temmi sitting near a garbage can fire. He lies when he asks how she is doing, but her lack of an answer is the truth. On the bus back to school, John tries to make sense of the scenes of Temmi touching his cheek tenderly in the stairway and his lies of reassurance in response to Mom's concern. Though John does not want the burden of calling home daily, he continues to call showing he is a good and dutiful son, and Mom tells him Temmi is better and things are good which foreshadows her lie when compared to her previous claims that things were good. He returns home for spring break and gifts Mom with a tea set which she loves. They talk most of the night about the good things in their lives, but Mom also tells John that Temmi is sick. In the morning, John visits Temmi in the hospital, finding her by process of elimination. He considers telling Temmi that Mom cannot come today. Ashamed of what remains of her body, Temmi tells John to ask Mom not to come anymore because it is too hard. John suggests they can all move to Millersville and start over, but he knows that it is difficult to understand that different places can be called home and that someone like Temmi may never find a home. Later, Mom laughs at the idea of moving to Millersville. Once spring break and Temmi's funeral are over, John returns to Millersville, recalling waking up in Harlem the day after the funeral and looking into a mirror to find he did not recognize himself, indicating that he has changed beyond his own recognition; he turned away, frightened, and later, he said goodbye.

Walter Dean Myers suggests that African-American writers are censored by the expectation that they will write about the black experience in America. He also suggests that many blacks might be more inclined to write if they were not expected to write within such a limited and cliché frame of thought.



Ashes by Susan Beth Pfeffer

Ashes by Susan Beth Pfeffer Summary

Ashleigh enjoys visiting her father every Tuesday that winter, but she knows that he is a dreamer who cannot keep his promises, unlike her mother who is the most practical person she knows. She remembers Mom accusing Dad of calling her Ashes to annoy Mom, and though she believed it for some time, she began to feel special with her nickname again when she realized Dad still used it when Mom was not around to be irritated. Toward the end of February, Dad finally returns to his apartment where Ashleigh is waiting. After bragging on her intelligence and beauty and claiming she is one in a million, Dad suggests going to a diner to celebrate because he has a chance to make some money if he can get the financing together. Dad seems to be looking for someone at the diner, and he finally admits that he needs the \$200 to pay off a deal he already made, but then he will be on his way to easy street. Still, these type of people get itchy when you owe them money. Ashleigh asks how she can help, and Dad mentions that Mom always keeps a couple hundred dollars hidden in her teapot. He would never steal from her, but he suggests that Ashleigh could borrow it and he would return it by Friday before Mom even knew it was gone. Dad takes Ashleigh home and waits outside for her to retrieve the money, reminding her that she is the best daughter ever. Ashleigh runs into the apartment and stares at Mom's emergency money in the teapot, but the money offers her no advice about what she should do. Looking out the window, she hears Dad's car in the distance telling her she is one in a million.

In Susan Beth Pfeffer *On Censorship*, Susan Beth Pfeffer was the assistant literary editor at her school paper during her senior year of high school when a writer was forbidden to run a certain editorial. Pfeffer combined this with another incident about a high school newspaper that her friend told her about years later when she became a writer of young adult novels. It is easy to censor written work, but it is impossible to censor a mind, an imagination or the future.

Ashes by Susan Beth Pfeffer Analysis

Every day that Ashleigh sees her father that winter feels warmer than the day before. She sees him every Tuesday since she stopped visiting on weekends two years ago when her life got busy, indicating that she is likely in high school. Tuesday evenings work out well because Mom goes to school on Tuesdays, and it is lucky that Dad only lives on the other side of town. When Ashleigh was little, Dad promised her a necklace made of stars, but that never happened, like most of his promises. Dad admits that he is a dreamer, but Mom claims he is an irresponsible bum, so Ashleigh cannot figure out why her mother, the most practical person she knows, married him. Dad is always there when someone needs him, hoping to make the world a better place, but both Mom and Dad make sure that Ashleigh knows his limitations. Ashleigh recalls Mom's anger that Dad calls her Ashes a few months before their final breakup. Mom believed that Dad did



it just to annoy her, and Ashleigh started to believe it until she realized he still calls her Ashes when Mom is not around, so she felt special again. Mom never calls her Ashes and never promises her anything. She is always prepared except for what Dad did to her toward the end of that February. Ashleigh waits for Dad, and when he finally arrives, he brags on how pretty and smart she is, wishing he deserved her. Ashleigh loves hearing him say she is one in a million though she knows it is not true. Dad always tells her not to let anyone tear her dreams down, warning her that Mom will also because she is not a dreamer; "I was the only dream she ever believed in and once I failed her, she never let herself dream again" (p. 120). Dad insists that he and Ashleigh will go out to dinner to celebrate because he has the chance at something big if he can get \$200 together for financing. Ashleigh has no clue how Dad will come up with that kind of money, but she smile because he looks so happy. At the diner, Dad acts paranoid, foreshadowing disaster, and he admits that he actually owes \$200 to some dangerous people. When Ashleigh offers to help, he suggests she could borrow the \$200 Mom keeps in her teapot and loan it to him, promising to return it Friday before Mom knows about it. Ashleigh suggests Dad could sell his car for the money, but he insists he could never find a cheap enough replacement. When Dad takes Ashleigh home, he waits outside while she rushes into the apartment and stares at the money, wondering what to do as she hears Dad telling her she is one in a million in the distance.

Susan Beth Pfeffer *On Censorship* addresses censorship that Pfeffer witnessed in high school. She stresses that though writing can be censored, censors cannot affect a writer's mind or imagination; they "can never censor the future" (p. 126).



Baseball Camp by David Klass

Baseball Camp by David Klass Summary

About twenty kids at the camp were in the teens, the oldest group at baseball camp, and they sit between the dugout and the third baseline, trying to avoid eye contact with the large, menacing man talking about Ty Cobb being the best ball player ever. He stops to comment on how ugly they all are and to mock several of them before introducing himself as Paul Creese, the man who will be in charge of them for two weeks. Paul guarantees they will work their butts off, and though they will hate him, they have to believe in themselves in order to play baseball. By Wednesday, they all hate Paul, and though they talk of mutiny, they are all too scared to even talk back to him. After they lose a scrimmage to a local team that weekend, Paul introduces them to his two sons and mocks Roger, their pitcher, for walking in two runs. When he calls Roger ugly, Roger tells Paul that how he looks is none of Paul's business and Paul has no right to insult him. Paul yanks Roger up on his toes and threatens to whip him if he talks back again, but Roger insists that Paul does not have the right to touch any of them. Paul orders his sons to stand eight inches apart on either side of home plate and pitches between them; he is able to do that because he believes in himself and knows exactly where he will throw the ball. Urging Roger to have confidence, Paul situates him on the pitcher's mound, but Roger refuses, falling when he tries to run, and Paul kicks him in the rear. Roger does not attend practice for two days, but the other boys are too busy with Paul's demands to wonder what he is doing. On Tuesday night, Paul summons the boys for a talk, announcing they have a squealer in camp. Apparently, Roger called his father, a big-shot lawyer in New York, so Paul has been fired. He tells them that they are not talented, but they are getting better, advising them that it is all in the head and the heart. Paul is disappointed that Roger is a squealer because he had the most talent of any of them and Paul could have really taught him how to be a pitcher. None of the boys speak as Paul walks away with his sons.

David Klass *On Censorship* discusses his two novels that received the most attempts at censorship. Klass defends both novels, claiming the controversial scenes were necessary for developing his characters. His characters seem to exist on their own as he writes, and he tries to follow them; he cannot truthfully render characters if he is constantly concerned with offending the censors. "I feel very strongly that students do not need to be protected from books. People should learn to choose books for themselves, based on their own tastes and talents" (p. 140).

Baseball Camp by David Klass Analysis

"Baseball Camp" depicts a group of teens attending baseball camp where their coach, Paul Creese, is especially tough. He warns them that they will hate him, but he believes it is necessary to improve their skills; Paul seems to be a "tough love" kind of guy. True to Paul's predictions, the players begin to hate him, but they are too frightened of him to



do anything about it. When Paul mocks their pitcher, Roger, after a scrimmage, Roger talks back to him, claiming he does not have the right to talk to any of them in such a degrading manner or to touch them. Paul demonstrates his confidence by pitching between his two sons, claiming confidence is necessary to become successful at baseball. Roger refuses to participate and tries to run away, causing Paul to kick him in the rear. Roger avoids practice for several days until Paul calls his team together to tell them that he has been fired because Roger told his father, a lawyer in New York, what happened. Paul continues to insult the boys as untalented, but he tells them they are getting better and that becoming a good baseball player is in the heart and the head. He is particularly upset that Roger was a snitch though, because Roger had the most talent of any of them and Paul believes he could have made Roger into a real pitcher. This contradiction of Paul's actions and beliefs shows the difference in generation and upbringing between Paul and Roger; Paul is from an older generation where children are encouraged to improve themselves by being put down, but Roger is from a younger generation that feels entitled to respect without earning it.

In David Klass On Censorship, two of David Klass's novels generate the most controversy, "Wrestling With Honor" and "California Blue." "Wrestling With Honor" is accused of containing a gratuitous sex scene because an aggressive girl initiates a makeout session with the main character, but Klass believes this book is the most moral book he has written as the scene was written to define the moral code of his main character. He asks how people can expect teens to read books if writers avoid real life situations. In "California Blue", the main character has a crush on a teacher and is attacked for the taboo topic of a teacher and student flirtation, but Klass argues that the crush is a defining element of the character. Klass tries to stay true to his characters, but he cannot do that if he is concerned with offending the censors. He strongly believes that people should be able to choose their own books and that they do not need to be protected from books.



Love and Centipedes by Paul Zindel

Love and Centipedes by Paul Zindel Summary

While eating at Madame Wu's with her mother, Tuesday caresses the ankle support which belongs to Kyle Ecneps, her science project partner and the boyfriend of Maureen Willoughby, a popular cheerleader, while daydreaming about rubbing Kyle's foot yesterday. Suddenly, Maureen approaches Tuesday and her mother and insists on coming to Tuesday's house so Tuesday can help her come up with a senior prom theme since Kyle constantly tells her how brilliant Tuesday is. At home, Tuesday cleans the house, but before she can feed her animals, Maureen arrives and questions her about the prom theme. Ordering Tuesday to think about the theme, Maureen flushes Tuesday's turtle down the toilet, and she sticks Helen, Tuesday's ferret, in the microwave. Insisting on going to the basement to see Tuesday and Kyle's science project, fish that they are exposing to electricity, Maureen suggests the prom theme can be feet so every girl can rub any boy's feet that they want. Maureen increases the amps on the transformer as Tuesday begs her not to do that, but when Maureen is distracted by the sight of Kyle's ankle support, Tuesday shoves the transformer into her throat, causing Maureen to twitch and vomit as she falls to the ground. With Maureen unconscious, Tuesday decides to alert the authorities that Maureen fell, thinking no one will believe Maureen's version of events, including Kyle. Stroking the ankle support, she thinks that centipedes are like love, "the way love had to come for her. Scary. Complicated. A powerful thing creeping from the shadows. For her, it had to come slowly. Love on tiptoe and with a hundred tiny feet. Glorious little feet" (p. 161).

In Paul Zindel On Censorship, someone has always wanted to censor Paul Zindel since he started writing, but he believes most art arouses a degree of censorship since it is just on the other side of decency and able to shock for a while. As a professional writer, editors helped Zindel "obscure a darkness from my first drafts and balance it with laser bursts of compassion and understanding" (p. 162). Zindel's work is shocking because of his ideas, not because of individual words. He ignored censorship for a long time because he thought that a small amount of controversy was fashionable. He has since been exposed to the "CensorKooks", and he cannot imagine the rituals of some adults who try to inflict pure madness on schools and libraries by censoring books. Zindel notes that those on the front lines who face such attacks do an excellent job of protecting him and other writers. When he is called on to confront a CensorKook, he reminds them that kids are often capable of guiding themselves away from unsuitable material. He also believes that parents have the right to decide what their kids read but not what other kids read. He notes that CensorKooks tend to be megalomaniacs showcasing for the media, but when people tire of them, sanity can move forward and dispatch them.



Love and Centipedes by Paul Zindel Analysis

At Madame Wu's with her mother, Tuesday Racinski notices a centipede and mentally tells it to drop on the table of cheerleader Maureen Willoughby, but she changes her mind as it nears the table because Madame Wu would get in trouble with the Board of Health. Tuesday caresses an ankle support that belongs to Kyle Ecneps, her science project partner and Maureen's boyfriend. She daydreams about the memory of touching Kyle's foot and admits to herself that she tenderly cares for Kyle. Mrs. Racinski suggests going out for dessert after dinner, but Tuesday refuses, lamenting the fact that she weighs nearly 200 pounds like her mother. As Mrs. Racinski starts clearing Tuesday's plate into a Tupperware container, Maureen approaches their table, brags on Tuesday's brilliance and how excited Kyle is about their science project, and insists she needs Tuesday's help to come up with a theme for their senior prom, despite Tuesday's objections. As Tuesday leaves the restaurant, she mentally begs the centipede to drop on Maureen's table so Maureen will forget about her, and she hears the commotion as Maureen screams about the bug. On the way home, Tuesday strokes and kisses the ankle support while thinking about Kyle. She greets the centipedes at her house and warns them to stay hidden if Maureen comes over. She cleans, and as she is about to feed her pets, Maureen arrives. Tuesday tells Maureen she has not had time yet to think about the prom theme because she needs to take care of her pets. Maureen tells Tuesday to think of a theme while she takes Tuesday's turtle to the bathroom with her, and Tuesday feels sick when she hears the toilet flush. Maureen returns alone and claims the turtle is having a good time and thinks he is at the beach. She takes Helen, Tuesday's ferret, to the kitchen with her to get a snack, causing Tuesday to fear Kyle told Maureen something that made her jealous, and when she hears a shriek and smells burning fur, Tuesday is distraught. Maureen returns and claims she found a nice, warm place for Helen. She demands to see the gouramies in the basement, the fish that Tuesday and Kyle are experimenting on for their project. As she drags Tuesday downstairs, she suggests the prom theme can be feet so that everyone can rub any boy's feet they want. Tuesday begins to cry as she thinks of her pets, and as Maureen amps up the transformer, Tuesday begs her not to do this, looking away from the bubbling aquarium to the centipedes on the wall. Seeing Kyle's ankle support, Maureen screams and grabs it, but Tuesday lifts the transformer to Maureen's throat, causing her to fall to the ground, twitching and vomiting, as the electric current surges through her body. At Tuesday's mental command, the centipedes swarm Maureen until Tuesday tells them enough, leaving Maureen unconscious. Tuesday decides to call the authorities and tell them that Maureen fell, thinking people will think Maureen is crazy if she tells the truth. Even Kyle will believe Tuesday, and though he said things he should not have, he is so consecrated that Tuesday would forgive him for anything. The story ends with Tuesday mentally comparing love to centipedes.

Paul Zindel On Censorship discusses how someone has always tried to censor Zindel since he began writing. It began with him censoring himself out of a desire to hide who he was, but his father censored him by abandoning the family when Zindel was two years old and his mother wanted to censor anything that contained family secrets. He continued self-censoring with his first book, "The Pigman," and was shocked when a



librarian threatened to quit if "The Pigman" was added to the shelves. Luckily, her supervisors insisted that the book would be available to young people. Zindel ignored censorship for a while, but he has become more exposed to censors who try to inflict their beliefs on others. He praises those who defend against censorship and insists parents should be able to choose what their own kids read. He also uses a very apt and entertaining metaphor to compare the "CensorKooks" to vampires.



Lie, No Lie by Chris Lynch

Lie, No Lie by Chris Lynch Summary

They say everyone is a bit of this and that, and opposites add up to a whole. That's how it is with Pauly and the narrator; "we do a sort of inverse thing for each other: He provides me with the whoosh that makes the drag-ass parts of living more worth it, and I provide him with the vacuum of experience that allows him to still feel any whoosh at all" (p. 166). On Valentine's Day, Pauly suggests going to the gym, but on the way, he insists he does not know the guy in the back of his truck who eventually introduces himself as Leon. They leave Leon in the parking lot once they reach the fitness club, and in the locker room, the narrator is embarrassed when Pauly comments on another man's genitals. Pauly hurts the narrator while playing with a medicine ball in the gym, so he convinces his best friend to join him in the Jacuzzi until the narrator becomes uncomfortable because a naked guy walks by. The narrator hurries downstairs to the most private shower stall in the locker room, but he cannot help staring as he passes another guy with a large member. Pauly showers in the stall next to him. As the narrator showers, a man approaches from behind and greets him before reaching around to touch him. The narrator is distraught to find that he is erect; "I don't want to be. I have no business being" (p. 178). The man introduces himself as Henry before turning the narrator to face him and dropping to his knees. Not feeling in charge, the narrator is relieved to hear himself say no, but he does not do anything for a few seconds when Henry places his mouth on him. When the narrator finally pushes Henry away, Henry points out that everyone knows what it means to hang a towel in Henry's shower stall, and Pauly agrees that the narrator knew. On the way home to Whitechurch, Pauly claims he thought he was doing his friend a favor, asking how he would know if he was gay. Wanting to hurt his friend, the narrator claims he knows he is not gay because he slept with Lilly, his best friend and Pauly's girlfriend. The tension dissipates when Pauly asks if he can watch next time. The narrator wonders what he will tell his dad about his first oral experience, and Pauly asks how it went, but when the narrator claps him on the shoulder, Pauly seems to mean it when he tells him to keep his hands off and calls him a deviate.

Chris Lynch On Censorship addresses being censored, discussing how people were offended by the title of one of his books but refused to open the book to realize that the title was intended as mockery. Lynch considered changing the title, but he could not; he needed to "believe that there was room for the writer to be a little bit risky in trying to get his message across with impact" (p. 183). He insists that there needs to be an override philosophy to guide writers through dealing with such challenges.

Lie, No Lie by Chris Lynch Analysis

"Lie, No Lie" begins with the narrator explaining how he and Pauly are opposites that add up to a whole. If the narrator ever gets married, Pauly will be his best friend, but if



he ever kills someone, that will also be Pauly. On Valentine's Day, Pauly asks if the narrator knows what he is thinking and is disappointed that his best friend does not know because that means he does not know Pauly and if he does not know him, no one ever will. Pauly suggests going to the gym, and when he picks the narrator up forty minutes later, he claims he does not know the guy in the back of the truck. The guy, Leon, introduces himself, but Pauly speeds up so Leon cannot shake the narrator's hand, claiming he is jealous because his best friend belongs to him; this makes the narrator uncomfortable but initiates the homoerotic tone of the story. When they pull up to The Club, they leave Leon in the parking lot, and Pauly explains that he heard about The Club from Leon who he met at another club that the narrator has never been to. After paying to enter, the narrator follows Pauly to the locker room where he is embarrassed that Pauly comments on the size of another guy's "hog" and then proceeds to claim he does not know why he should pretend not to notice, again emphasizing homoeroticism. Pauly promises that he will try not to make the narrator nervous anymore and heads up to the gym ahead of him. Upstairs, Pauly decides they should play catch with a medicine ball, but he pins the narrator under the ball when he throws it to him, finally removing it when his friend insists he cannot breathe. The narrator jumps on the treadmill but cannot continue because his side hurts. Pauly convinces his friend to join him in the Jacuzzi, but the narrator decides to leave when a naked guy passes through the room. The comfort with nudeness at the fitness club foreshadows the events that occur in the shower stall. On the way to the showers, the narrator notices a man with a large penis, reemphasizing the homoerotic tone of the story and foreshadowing the narrator's own experiences with homosexuality. While he is showering, he is approached by another man, fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing as the narrator becomes erect and the man takes him in his mouth. The man insists that the narrator is putting out all of the signs, and Pauly agrees. It is a typical Pauly setup to get the narrator in the shower with a gay man, but he does not understand why Pauly is not laughing. On the way home, Pauly claims he was doing the narrator a favor, insisting his friend would not know if he was gay. The narrator claims he slept with Pauly's girlfriend to hurt Pauly, but Pauly laughs it off; still, he pulls away when the narrator touches his shoulder, indicating that he is uncomfortable or jealous of his friend's homoerotic experience.

In Chris Lynch On Censorship, Chris Lynch thought there was some mistake when his first book was challenged, but he figured he was hanging out with a better class of undesirables when he learned that Judy Blume was also being challenged. He changed his mind when he realized that people were challenging the right for his book to exist and wanted to preclude any debate. The title of Lynch's "He-Man Women Haters Club" was challenged because women hating is unfashionable, but the idea of the series is to illuminate the absurdity of male posturing. Still, people refused to open the book in order to understand the purpose of the title. He refused to change the title because he feels writers should be able to be a bit risky in order to get their messages across.



Something Which is Non-Existent by Norma Klein

Something Which is Non-Existent by Norma Klein Summary

The music room is nearly empty with only one person inside other than Ben and the boy working the phonograph. Ben looks at the boy but turns away when the boy meets his stare. When the boy leaves the room abruptly, Ben follows after several minutes but does not see the boy in any of the adjacent rooms. In the cafeteria downstairs, Ben passes a disgusting display of a party being held with local girls before seeing the boy on the other side of the cafeteria and asking to join him. Both of them disparage the party, and as they walk back to the dorms together, they converse maliciously about the university. The boy, Michael, invites Ben to come over the next day, and after that, Ben always studies in Michael's room, relieved to escape the music room since Michael has his own phonograph and records. Ben is comfortable in Michael's room, and Michael returns from his literature class one afternoon to rave about the stupidity of the class and the teacher. They are reading Proust's "Swann's Way", but Michael is reading it in the original French instead of the English translation. Michael and Ben frequent the cafeteria for coffee, both ignoring the flirtatious girls because they are too absorbed in their conversation. When they return to the dorm to work, Michael quotes "for whatever moral reasons he may do it, the artist who gives up an hour's work for a conversation with a friend knows that he is sacrificing a reality for something which is non-existent" (p. 188).

In April, Michael begins dating a girl from his literature class who is also reading "Swann's Way" in French. They attend parties together, and one night, Michael returns to his dorm very drunk, vomits and lays in bed. Ben provides hangover treatments and convinces Michael to take a walk. Michael thinks they were in a bedroom together but cannot remember what happened. After getting Michael in bed, Ben returns to his own room. The next weekend is Spring Weekend, and Ben is disgusted with the preparations being made, including Michael spending two hours to get dressed for a dance he is attending with the girl from his literature class. Michael begins to despair when the girl does not call after thirty minutes, but he bounds out of the room when she finally calls. Ben studies for three and a half hours, but feeling it makes no difference, he goes down by the lake for a cigarette, and startled by a couple coupling on a blanket, he goes to the cafeteria where Michael waves him over to a table where he is sitting with his girl, Clara. Ben asks about the dance and begins to wonder why he came as he becomes annoyed with Michael and Clara's flirting. Ben pretends not to know the artist when Clara comments on the song playing because he does not want her to think he is the type to keep up to date on popular songs. He feels awkward as she asks what he reads, and when he tells her Gibbon's "The Decline and Fall", he is irritated that she finds it boring, though he actually agrees with her. Still, he thinks that everything about



her reflects unthinking frivolity, so he gets up to leave, refusing Clara's invite to stay longer. In his room, Ben thinks "it will never matter if I do anything again or not" (p. 194), so he types a two-page treatise on the meaning of friendship and reads it while he takes a bath. In the hallway afterward, a boy asks if Ben is alright because he heard him talking to himself, and Ben decides that what he wrote is garbage, chuckling to himself as he returns to his room.

Something Which is Non-Existent by Norma Klein Analysis

"Something Which Is Non-Existent" begins by introducing Ben and Michael and describing how they first met. The story continues to explain how their friendship develops out of a mutual distaste for typical college partying and a desire for intellectual stimulation. There are homoerotic undertones to this story as Ben and Michael spend a significant amount of time alone in Michael's room, studying and listening to music. This is reinforced by the mention that they ignore flirtatious girls in the cafeteria because they are so absorbed in their conversation. The story also contains an allusion to Proust's "Swann's Way", and the fact that Michael is reading it in its original French shows either his scholarly personality or his pretentiousness. It would appear to show his conceit and arrogance based on his quote about the artist giving up work for a conversation with a friend and knowing he is sacrificing reality for something non-existent. The homoerotic tone to the story returns when Michael begins dating a girl from his literature course. Ben takes care of Michael when he gets drunk, but he seems jealous and irritated when Michael gets ready for his date to go to the dance on Spring Weekend. Furthermore, Ben seems indifferent or depressed while studying as he suddenly feels it make no difference and goes for a walk. When he goes downstairs and joins Michael and Clara, he tries to appear particularly intellectual to Clara, and he is annoyed by everything about her. After he finally leaves them, he types a treatise on the meaning of friendship, indicating that he thinks Michael has abandoned him; however, after his bath, he decides the treatise is garbage and laughs at himself as he returns to his room, indicating that perhaps the relationship is actually a friendship instead of homoerotic, and that perhaps Ben is just jealous of sharing his friend's time.



A Tribute to Norma Klein by Judy Blume

A Tribute to Norma Klein by Judy Blume Summary

Norma was Judy's first friend who also wrote, and they had a lot in common, including that they both "rushed into reading adult novels at eleven or twelve, to find an alternative to the idealized, sanitized, sentimentalized books meant for readers our ages" (page 195). Judy and Norma met in the early 1970s and bonded on their way to a meeting of children's book writers. Judy was charmed when she read an advance copy of Norma's "Mom, the Wolfman, and Me". A few years later, they found themselves together on the "most censored list". Norma's work was banned because of the nontraditional families she wrote about and because she wrote about young characters' sexuality. Norma tried to write about real life and found nothing objectionable in writing the truth. One of Judy's favorite books by Norma Klein is "Naomi in the Middle" which has been challenged because of the sexual context, and a few years ago, a woman objected to the novel, claiming it promotes alcoholism since the grandmother fixes warm milk laced with rum to get the kids to sleep; this woman does not want anyone telling her children that it is okay to use alcohol. Judy sees this as proof that "when it comes to censorship, if it's not one thing, it's another" (p. 196). Norma knew writers who gave up because they became so discouraged, but she charged on, refusing to water down her children's books because she never wrote anything she would not want her own daughters to read. Norma was a prolific writer, and her sudden death in 1989 was shocking. Judy misses her friendship and her voice on the page, and there was no way she could edit a book by censored writers without including Norma Klein. Luckily, her husband found "That Which is Non-Existent" which was originally published in "Focus" literary journal in 1959 when Norma was a student at Barnard College, and this story shows her early promise for creating believable, complicated characters. If Norma were still alive, Judy knows she would be speaking out on the same issues and still encouraging other writers to keep going, full steam ahead.

A Tribute to Norma Klein by Judy Blume Analysis

"A Tribute to Norma Klein" is Judy Blume's way of adding an "On Censorship" section to the story she included by Norma Klein since Norma is dead and cannot write it herself. Judy explains how she and Norma became friends and that both of them were added to the "most censored list" a few years later. She explains why Norma's work was banned and why Norma did not yield to the pressure from censors. Because Norma wanted to write about real life and did not find anything to challenge in the truth, she continued to write without watering down her stories, despite pressure from the censors. Moreover, Norma insisted that she never wrote anything she would not allow her own daughters to read, reinforcing the idea that it is the parents' responsibility to decide what material their children are permitted to read. Judy still misses her friend, and she knows that Norma would still be fighting the same issues if she were alive today which is the reason Judy included Norma's story in this collection against censorship.



Characters

Judy Blume appears in *Censorship: A Personal View & A Tribute to Norma Klein*

Judy Blume is the editor of this collection of stories, and she also wrote the introduction and "A Tribute to Norma Klein" at the end of the collection. As the author of these two additions to the collection, she plays the largest role of anyone in this book other than the censors. As a child, Judy Blume was curious about the adult world. Since her mother forbade her to read "A Rage to Live" by John O'Hara in fifth grade, she was excited to see that her junior high reading list contained any book by John O'Hara. Unfortunately, when she went to the library, the librarian informed her that "A Rage to Live" was on the restricted list so Judy could not borrow the book without her parents' written permission. She was angry at the librarian but never thought that it might not be the librarian's choice. Aside from that one instance, Judy's parents never dictated what she could read, and when she complained about the book being restricted, her aunt lent her a copy that led Judy to read everything she could find by that author. Censorship is defined as forbidding expression believed to threaten political, social or moral order, but Judy wonders what these words mean to writers, their chosen stories, readers and the books they choose to read. Judy began writing in her mid-twenties with "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret" about her feelings in sixth grade. Not thinking about controversy, she wanted to write the truth and would have never believed that she would become one of the most banned writers in America. The principal of her children's school refused to add the book to the library because it discussed menstruation, while one woman phoned Judy to call her a communist. Judy wrote 13 more books that decade, but her publishers tried to shield her from the negative feedback in hopes she would not be intimidated if she did not know that some people were upset by her work. Though Judy heard about the disapproval, she was not concerned because there was no organized effort to ban her books. She notes that the 1970s were a good decade because writers were free to write about real kids in the real world; however, the censor emerged after the 1980 presidential election with the intent of deciding what all children could read. Seeing books and thinking as dangerous, parents were quick to jump on the bandwagon for fear of "exposing their children to ideas different from their own" (page 5). Schools got rid of anything seen as controversial, their decisions based on what would not offend the censors, not on what was best for the children. Judy's books were constantly challenged and restricted due to the use of curses and topics deemed inappropriate. Her editor wanted her to remove the passage concerned masturbation in "Tiger Eyes" so it would reach as many readers as possible. Judy argued that the moment was important in her character's development, but she eventually caved and removed it. Even now, she recalls how lonely she felt at that moment.

Such a climate has a chilling effect on writers, making it easy to become discouraged. Judy began to speak out about her experiences and was surprised to find she was not as alone as she thought. Her life changed when she learned about the National



Coalition Against Censorship and met Leanne Katz who was devoted to defending the First Amendment. Judy goes on to discuss several teachers who were forced to resign from their positions due to their attempts to defend books that they were censored unjustly. This obsession with burning books continues into the twenty-first century: books about Halloween or witches are seen as promoting Satanism while "Romeo and Juliet" is condemned of romanticizing suicide. Judy worries how young people are affected by this loss; they will only be assigned bland books for required reading if no one speaks out for them, causing them not to find the information they need in novels that illuminate life. Censors want to rate books, but individual families should decide what their own children read. This urge no longer comes solely from the religious right. It has spread across the political spectrum. For example, "Huckleberry Finn" is challenged yearly for racial epithets. Judy insists that it is better to discuss the language and why it is appropriate in the context of the book instead of simply banning it. One of Judy's friends refused to allow her children to read "The Stupids Step Out" because she did not want her children to use that word, but Judy wishes she had used it as an opportunity to teach her children why it is hurtful to call another person stupid instead of avoiding the issue. She laments the loss of books that will not be written in this age of censorship as many writers resort to self-censorship. The book is dedicated to Leanne Katz for trying to prevent voices from being silenced. Though many censored writers are missing from this collection, Judy is grateful to those who decided to contribute as they are all writers who have been challenged by groups wanting to forbid their books, and each shares their own experiences with censorship. Not only does censorship happen, it can occur anywhere, even where you least expect it. The first step is awareness. Support groups against censorship can help because censors and school boards hate publicity, yet they will make decisions that affect everyone's First Amendment rights if no one takes a stand. To those who write or want to write, Judy advises "there is no predicting the censor... So write honestly. Write from deep inside" (page 15). Leanne once told Judy that Judy's job is to write as well as she can and Leanne's job is to defend what is written, but Judy warns that Leanne cannot do it on her own; "it's up to all of us" (page 15).

In "A Tribute to Norma Klein", Judy Blume explains that Norma was Judy's first friend who also wrote, and they had a lot in common, including that they both "rushed into reading adult novels at eleven or twelve, to find an alternative to the idealized, sanitized, sentimentalized books meant for readers our ages" (page 195). Judy and Norma met in the early 1970s and bonded on their way to a meeting of children's book writers. Judy was charmed when she read an advance copy of Norma's "Mom, the Wolfman, and Me". A few years later, they found themselves together on the "most censored list". Norma's work was banned because of the nontraditional families she wrote about and because she wrote about young characters' sexuality. Norma tried to write about real life and found nothing objectionable in writing the truth. One of Judy's favorite books by Norma Klein is "Naomi in the Middle" which has been challenged because of the sexual context, and a few years ago, a woman objected to the novel, claiming it promotes alcoholism since the grandmother fixes warm milk laced with rum to get the kids to sleep; this woman does not want anyone telling her children that it is okay to use alcohol. Judy sees this as proof that "when it comes to censorship, if it's not one thing, it's another" (page 196). Norma knew writers who gave up because they became so



discouraged, but she charged on, refusing to water down her children's books because she never wrote anything she would not want her own daughters to read. Norma was a prolific writer, and her sudden death in 1989 was shocking. Judy misses her friendship and her voice on the page, and there was no way she could edit a book by censored writers without including Norma Klein. Luckily, her husband found "That Which is Non-Existent" which was originally published in "Focus" literary journal in 1959 when Norma was a student at Barnard College, and this story shows her early promise for creating believable, complicated characters. If Norma were still alive, Judy knows she would be speaking out on the same issues and still encouraging other writers to keep going, full steam ahead.

Censors appears in Places I Never Meant to Be

Because "Places I Never Meant to Be" is a collection of stories by censored authors, a significant portion of the book is devoted to discussing censors and censorship. Each author gives their own viewpoint on censors after their story. Censorship is defined as forbidding expression believed to threaten political, social or moral order, but Judy Blume wonders what these words mean to writers, their chosen stories, readers and the books they choose to read. She notes that the 1970s were a good decade because writers were free to write about real kids in the real world; however, the censor emerged after the 1980 presidential election with the intent of deciding what all children could read. Seeing books and thinking as dangerous, parents were quick to jump on the bandwagon for fear of "exposing their children to ideas different from their own" (page 5). Censors want to rate books, but individual families should decide what their own children read. To those who write or want to write, Judy advises "there is no predicting the censor... So write honestly. Write from deep inside" (page 15). Norma Fox Mazer notes that the concept of censorship has become wearily familiar. She hopes censorship has not affected her otherwise, but she still has to clear her mind of censorious presences before writing. It is bad for writers and for readers; censorship is crippling. Readers should have the right to pick their own books, and writers need the freedom of their imaginations because that is all they have; letting the censors into their imagination leads to dullness, imitation and mediocrity. In Julius Lester On Censorship, censors fear loss of control because "language can seduce us into forgetting where we are and who we are" (page 52). Sometimes it is difficult to write without censoring himself because he knows there are forces ready to seize upon anything they find objectionable. "Censorship is an attitude of mistrust and suspicion that seeks to deprive the human experience of mystery and complexity" (page 52).

Rachel Vail tries to ignore the pressure to yield to the censor, suggesting those who want to censor "offensive" books should use the offensive literary situation as a platform for discussion with their children instead of banning the book. In Katherine Paterson On Censorship, Katherine Paterson tries not to allow censorship to affect her work because self-censorship is damaging and she knows that she is likely to write a book that does not affect anyone if her chief goal is to not offend. In Jacqueline Woodson On Censorship, people do not always notice when censorship is happening. Sometimes the library just cannot afford a book, but other times are more obvious like the letters that



Jacqueline Woodson received from sixth graders objecting to a book she wrote or the illustrator who refused to illustrate a cover because he disapproved of the book. The silence is scary as the person under attack by censorship is usually the last to know. Jacqueline knew people would not like her because of prejudice from a young age, but she did not know the many ways that hatred could exist or that it would enter into the "most sacred part of me-my writing" (page 83). As a child and young adult, Jacqueline wrote for herself, and she has gone back to that beginning and again found solace in writing. The hatred will always be there, but so will writing. The writing gives her a better sense of the world and helps her to grow and understand. Harry Mazer fears caution more than the censors because he must be able to write the book he wants to write. "The Last Mission" was challenged by a school board in Minnesota because of the language and removed from shelves, but Mazer believes "that if we want to read about the real world we also must accept the language of that world" (page 97). Some of his other books were also removed because of language. Censorship is always negative, but there are positive outcomes from the challenges because the issues are brought out in the open and many respond that they do not want censors trying to force their views on everyone else's kids. Some books are removed or simply not ordered without protest, and this type of closet censorship is difficult to gauge so Mazer is unsure if they are winning or losing against the censors. Good books are created when authors can write freely, but the quality of work suffers when an author writes to the standard of the feared censor. Books belong to all readers, and more books and authors are needed to represent various points of view. "Books are our windows on the world. They permit us to safely experience other lives and ways of thinking and feeling. Books give us a glimmer of the complexity and wonder of life. All this, the censor would deny us" (page 98).

Walter Dean Myers believes that many African-American writers confine their topic matters solely to issues concerning the black experience in America because of restraints placed on them that is censorship by omission and prevents many from writing. Susan Beth Pfeffer was the assistant literary editor at her school paper during her senior year of high school when a writer was forbidden to run a certain editorial. Pfeffer combined this with another incident about a high school newspaper that her friend told her about years later when she became a writer of young adult novels. It is easy to censor written work, but it is impossible to censor a mind, an imagination or the future. David Klass notes that teens want to read books that depict real life situations; "I feel very strongly that students do not need to be protected from books. People should learn to choose books for themselves, based on their own tastes and talents" (page 140). His characters seem to exist on their own as he writes, and he tries to follow them; he cannot truthfully render characters if he is constantly concerned with offending the censors. In Paul Zindel *On Censorship*, someone has always wanted to censor Paul Zindel since he started writing, but he believes most art arouses a degree of censorship since it is just on the other side of decency and able to shock for a while. It began with him censoring himself out of a desire to hide who he was, but his father censored him by abandoning the family when Zindel was two years old, and his mother wanted to censor anything that contained family secrets. As a professional writer, editors helped Zindel "obscure a darkness from my first drafts and balance it with laser bursts of compassion and understanding" (page 162). He continued self-censoring with his first



book, "The Pigman", and was shocked when a librarian threatened to quit if "The Pigman" was added to the shelves. Luckily, her supervisors insisted that the book would be available to young people. Zindel's work is shocking because of his ideas, not because of individual words. He ignored censorship for a long time because he thought that a small amount of controversy was fashionable. He has since been exposed to the "CensorKooks", and he cannot imagine the rituals of some adults who try to inflict pure madness on schools and libraries by censoring books. Zindel notes that those on the front lines who face such attacks do an excellent job of protecting him and other writers. When he is called on to confront a CensorKook, he reminds them that kids are often capable of guiding themselves away from unsuitable material. He also believes that parents have the right to decide what their kids read but not what other kids read. He notes that CensorKooks tend to be megalomaniacs showcasing for the media, but when people tire of them, sanity can move forward and dispatch them. He also uses a very apt and entertaining metaphor to compare the "CensorKooks" to vampires.

Chris Lynch thought there was some mistake when his first book was challenged, but he figured he was hanging out with a better class of undesirables when he learned that Judy Blume was also being challenged. He changed his mind when he realized that people were challenging the right for his book to exist and wanted to preclude any debate. The title of Lynch's "He-Man Women Haters Club" was challenged because women hating is unfashionable, but the idea of the series is to illuminate the absurdity of male posturing. Still, people refused to open the book in order to understand the purpose of the title. Lynch considered changing the title, but he could not; he needed to "believe that there was room for the writer to be a little bit risky in trying to get his message across with impact" (page 183). He insists that there needs to be an override philosophy to guide writers through dealing with such challenges. Judy Blume notes that both she and her friend, Norma Klein, were censored in the 1970s for various reasons. Judy sees this as proof that "when it comes to censorship, if it's not one thing, it's another" (page 196). Norma knew writers who gave up because they became so discouraged, but she charged on, refusing to water down her children's books because she never wrote anything she would not want her own daughters to read. If Norma were still alive, Judy knows she would be speaking out on the same issues and still encouraging other writers to keep going, full steam ahead.

Sarabeth appears in Meeting the Mugger

Sarabeth is the main character of "Meeting the Mugger". She is a teenage girl who is impatient with her mother's advice. This impatience leads her to run out of the house one night and wander into a part of the city where she is mugged. Her jacket is stolen, and her back gets cut up. At home, she tells her mother about the mugging after everyone else leaves, and Mom holds and comforts her. The next day, Sarabeth agrees to wear Mom's jacket if Mom goes to the doctor to check out the odd freckle on her leg. Later, Sarabeth only remembers the time with her mother after the mugging because the doctor finds cancer. After Mom's death, Sarabeth goes to live with Leo, Mom's ex-boyfriend, and his new girlfriend, Pepper. She still listens to her mother's advice.



Janie appears in Meeting the Mugger

Janie is Sarabeth's mother. Her advice causes her daughter to become impatient, but after Sarabeth rushes from the house one evening and gets mugged, Janie comforts her daughter. The next day, Sarabeth agrees to wear Mom's jacket if Mom goes to the doctor to check out the odd freckle on her leg. The doctor finds cancer everywhere; Janie dies.

Leo appears in Meeting the Mugger

Leo is Janie's boyfriend who leaves her for Pepper. After Janie's death, Sarabeth lives with Leo and Pepper.

Spear AKA Adrian appears in Spear

Spear is the main character of "Spear". He is a black senior in high school whose father was a black leader whose anti-white speeches caused race riots in the 1970s. He is the class president at his school, and when his friends mock a white girl, Norma, for taking their African-American Literature class, Spear befriends her and eventually falls in love with her. Unfortunately, her parents learn about their relationship and transfer her to an all-white school. Spear resigns as class president and insists on people calling him Adrian. He is happy with his new anonymity. He talks to Norma about once a week.

Norma Jean Ray appears in Spear

Norma Jean Ray is the white girl who takes Spear's African-American Literature course. They begin spending more time together and fall in love, though Norma objects to Spear's love because her family is racist and his people need him. Norma's parents force her to transfer to an all-white school when they learn about her relationship with Spear, but she still calls Spear once a week and tells him she loves him.

Jody appears in Going Sentimental

Jody is the main character and narrator of "Going Sentimental". She loses her virginity to her boyfriend, Mackey, of four years, but afterward, she feels indifferent and worries why she suddenly cares about romance and passion. Mackey appears in the stands during her basketball game with a sign that reads "Happy Birthday Aunt Tillie", mimicking what she said during their first time together.

Mackey appears in Going Sentimental

Mackey is Jody's boyfriend who she loses her virginity to. He worries about his performance and that she feels differently toward him after their encounter. Mackey



appears in the stands during Jody's basketball game with a sign that reads "Happy Birthday Aunt Tillie", mimicking what she said during their first time together.

Claytena Smalls appears in July Saturday

Claytena Smalls is friends with the narrator of "July Saturday". She has a huge crush on Chuck Williams and comforts him after his family's house burns down.

Chuck Williams appears in July Saturday

Chuck Williams is friends with the narrator of "July Saturday". He probably would have asked Claytena Smalls out today if his house had not burned down. Claytena tries to comfort Chuck after the event.

Aaron Hill appears in You Come, Too, A-Ron

Aaron Hill is the narrator and main character of "You Come, Too, A-Ron". He is an older kid in the foster system, and he returns to Placement in hopes of finding a family because he does not like attending school at Oakmont. While at Placement, he befriends and protects a younger kid, Kenny, and ultimately decides to return to Oakmont so he can talk to Kenny on the phone and visit him on weekends.

Kenny appears in You Come, Too, A-Ron

Kenny is the younger kid at Placement who attaches himself to Aaron after Aaron defends him from some of the older girls. Though a family wants to take Kenny home, Kenny does not want to leave Aaron and agrees only after Aaron promises to call him and visit him.

John appears in The Beast Is In the Labyrinth

John is the main character and narrator of "The Beast Is In the Labyrinth". He attends college in Millersville, PA because he wants to escape his home in Harlem, but he visits home for Christmas and Spring Break, as well as to help his mother search for his sister, Temmi. At home, he feels lost in the labyrinth. During Spring Break, John visits Temmi in the hospital and thinks it is too hard to see her in such a condition. He stays to bury her after she dies, and then he returns to Millersville.

Ashleigh AKA Ashes appears in Ashes

Ashleigh is the narrator and main character of "Ashes". Ashleigh visits her father, a dreamer, who tells her he has come upon some financial troubles and owes dangerous



people \$200. Ashleigh's father asks her to borrow the money from her mom's emergency stash in a teapot. Ashleigh is torn about whether to take her mother's money, but she can hear her father telling her how special she is as she debates with herself.

Roger appears in Baseball Camp

Roger is the pitcher that does not do well at the team's first scrimmage, and before of this, Paul Creese mocks and taunts him. Roger does not come to practice for several days during which he contacts his father, a big-shot lawyer from New York, who calls the camp and has Paul Creese fired. Paul laments the fact that Roger is a squealer because Roger has the most talent of any of the other ball players and could have really become a pitcher.

Paul Creese appears in Baseball Camp

Paul Creese is the coach that trains the group of teenagers at baseball camp. He warns them that they will hate him, and he is true to his word. When Paul mocks Roger's pitching and degrades him in front of the other campers, Roger contacts his father, a lawyer, who gets Paul fired. Paul laments the fact that Roger is a squealer because Roger has the most talent of any of the other ball players and could have really become a pitcher.

Tuesday Racinsky appears in Love and Centipedes

Tuesday Racinsky is the main character in "Love and Centipedes". She has a crush on Kyle Ecneps, her science project partner and Maureen Willoughby's boyfriend. When Maureen asks Tuesday to help come up with a prom theme and begins torturing Tuesday's animals, Tuesday fears Kyle has told Maureen something to make her jealous. As Maureen attempts to kill the fish that Tuesday is using for her science project, Tuesday pushes the transformer into Maureen's throat and orders the centipedes in her basement to attack Maureen. She decides to alert the authorities, knowing that no one will believe Maureen's version of events.

Maureen Willoughby appears in Love and Centipedes

Maureen Willoughby is a popular cheerleader in "Love and Centipedes" who dates Kyle Ecneps. She becomes jealous after learning that Tuesday rubbed Kyle's foot, so she asks Tuesday for help coming up with an idea for a prom theme. At Tuesday's house, she kills Tuesday's turtle and ferret, but Tuesday prevents her from killing the fish she and Kyle are using for their science project by shoving the transformer into Maureen's throat.



Pauly appears in Lie, No Lie

Pauly is the best friend and worst enemy of the narrator in "Lie, No Lie". He convinces the narrator to go to the gym on Valentine's Day which leads to the narrator receiving oral sex from another man in the shower of the locker room. On the way home, Pauly claims he thought he was doing his friend a favor because his friend would not know if he was gay. Still, Pauly calls his friend a deviate and forbids him to touch him.

Ben appears in Something Which Is Non-Existent

Ben is the main character of "Something Which is Non-Existent". He befriends Michael, and the two spend a lot of time studying together until Michael begins dating Clara, a girl from his literature class who Ben dislikes. In his room after a brief conversation with Michael and Clara, Ben thinks "it will never matter if I do anything again or not" (page 194), so he types a two-page treatise on the meaning of friendship and reads it while he takes a bath. In the hallway afterward, a boy asks if Ben is alright because he heard him talking to himself, and Ben decides that what he wrote is garbage, chuckling to himself as he returns to his room.

Michael appears in Something Which Is Non-Existent

Michael is the boy that Ben befriends, and they spend a lot of time together until Michael begins dating a girl from his literature class, Clara, causing Ben to question their friendship.



Objects/Places

Elizabeth Public Library appears in Censorship: A Personal View

The Elizabeth Public Library is where Judy Blume was not allowed to check out John O'Hara's "A Rage to Live" without parental consent because it was restricted. This was her first experience with censorship.

Milltown appears in Spear

Milltown is the neighborhood where Norma Jean Ray lives with the other poor whites.

Placement appears in You Come, Too, A-Ron

Placement is a shelter for kids without families. It is the main setting of the story as Aaron returns here after running away from Oakmont.

Oakmont appears in You Come, Too, A-Ron

Oakmont is a school in the boonies where Aaron was sent the last time he was at Placement because they could not find a family for him. He ran away because there are too many kids and not enough staff, but he decides to return to get an education and so he can call and visit Kenny.

Harlem appears in The Beast Is In The Labyrinth

Harlem is John's hometown where he visits on breaks from school to see Mom and Temmi.

Millersville, PA appears in The Beast Is In The Labyrinth

Millersville, PA is where John attends college. He is accepted by the locals as part of the acceptable population of blacks. He wants Mom to move to Millersville with him after Temmi's death, but Mom laughs at the idea.



Madame Wu's appears in Love and Centipedes

Madame Wu's is the Chinese restaurant where Tuesday and her mom are eating when Maureen approaches Tuesday and insists on coming to her house because she claims she needs Tuesday's help to come up with a good idea for their senior prom theme.

Whitechurch appears in Lie, No Lie

Whitechurch is the town where Pauly and the narrator live. They return there after the narrator's homoerotic experience in the shower of a fitness club.

Japan appears in The Red Dragonfly

Japan is the main setting of "The Red Dragonfly" where a boy slips a haiku under his beloved teacher's door.

Mom's Teapot appears in Ashes

Mom keeps \$200 stashed in her teapot for emergencies, but when Dad wants Ashleigh to borrow it to help him pay off his debt to dangerous people, she stares at the teapot and the money inside because she does not know what to do.

National Coalition Against Censorship appears in A Letter From Joan Bertin, Executive Director, National Coal

Description



Themes

Dangers of Censorship

As a book organized to promote the dangers of censorship, it makes sense that this is one of the most predominant themes in "Places I Never Meant to Be". Judy Blume's introduction, *Censorship: A Personal View*, begins by detailing some of her experiences with censorship. As a child, she was not allowed to check a book out from the library because it was on the restricted list. Censorship is defined as forbidding expression believed to threaten political, social or moral order, but Judy wonders what these words mean to writers, their chosen stories, readers and the books they choose to read. Though many of her books were challenged, Judy was not concerned since there was no organized effort to ban her books. The censors emerged in force after 1980, and parents were quick to jump on the bandwagon for fear of "exposing their children to ideas different from their own" (page 5). Her books were increasingly challenged as inappropriate. When Judy Blume began to speak out against censorship, she learned that many others shared similar experiences. This obsession with burning books continues into the twenty-first century: books about Halloween or witches are seen as promoting Satanism while "Romeo and Juliet" is condemned of romanticizing suicide. Judy worries how young people are affected by this loss; they will only be assigned bland books for required reading if no one speaks out for them, causing them not to find the information they need in novels that illuminate life. Censors want to rate books, but individual families should decide what their own children read. To those who write or want to write, Judy advises "there is no predicting the censor... So write honestly. Write from deep inside" (page 15). A Letter from Joan Bertin, Executive Director, National Coalition Against Censorship details the goals and activities of the NCAC, including the fact that those who oppose censorship believe that reading is a way for young people to safely explore and understand things.

In addition to Judy Blume's views on censorship, each contributing author has included a brief essay concerning their experiences with and/or comments on censorship. Norma Fox Mazer hopes censorship has not affected her, but she still has to clear her mind of censorious presences before writing. It is bad for writers and for readers; censorship is crippling. Readers should have the right to pick their own books, and writers need the freedom of their imaginations because that is all they have; letting the censors into their imagination leads to dullness, imitation and mediocrity. In Julius Lester *On Censorship*, censors fear loss of control because "language can seduce us into forgetting where we are and who we are" (page 52). Sometimes it is difficult to write without censoring himself because he knows there are forces ready to seize upon anything they find objectionable. Julius Lester reminds himself that his obligation is to the realm of the imagination even though it is painful to be accused of writing something that hurts children. "Censorship is an attitude of mistrust and suspicion that seeks to deprive the human experience of mystery and complexity" (page 52). Writing without telling the truth would be the death of any writer and the imagination, and Julius Lester wonders what would happen to the souls of children if the imagination were to die. As a teen, Rachel



Vail vowed that she would never forget or disrespect "the intensity of the adolescent experience, the power and terror of being a person actively creating herself" (page 62). Sometimes, her characters do or say things that she hopes her child will not, but it was different when she was a teenager with her friends. Rachel feels it is important to respect a character's reality, and she also believes that people should be able to choose what they read. She suggests that adults who send censorious letters should use the offensive literary situation as a platform for discussion with their children. Katherine Paterson tries not to allow censorship to affect her work because self-censorship is damaging and she knows that she is likely to write a book that does not affect anyone if her chief goal is to not offend. Jacqueline Woodson knew people would not like her because of prejudice from a young age, but she did not know the many ways that hatred could exist or that it would enter into the "most sacred part of me-my writing" (page 83). As a child and young adult, Jacqueline wrote for herself, and she has gone back to that beginning and again found solace in writing. The hatred will always be there, but so will writing. The writing gives her a better sense of the world and helps her to grow and understand.

Harry Mazer worries that fear of the sensors will cause his books to become dull. Books belong to all readers, and more books and authors are needed to represent various points of view. "Books are our windows on the world. They permit us to safely experience other lives and ways of thinking and feeling. Books give us a glimmer of the complexity and wonder of life. All this, the censor would deny us" (page 98). Walter Dean Myers fears that many African-Americans choose not to write because they are expected to confine their topics solely to issues concerning the black experience in America and some do not want to "filter their thoughts solely through their racial identity" (page 113). Susan Beth Pfeffer notes that it is easy to censor written work, but it is impossible to censor a mind, an imagination or the future. David Klass asks how people can expect teens to read books if writers avoid real life situations. "I feel very strongly that students do not need to be protected from books. People should learn to choose books for themselves, based on their own tastes and talents" (page 140). Paul Zindel does not understand why some adults try to force their views on all children. When he is called on to confront a CensorKook, he reminds them that kids are often capable of guiding themselves away from unsuitable material. He also believes that parents have the right to decide what their kids read but not what other kids read. The title of Lynch's "He-Man Women Haters Club" was challenged because women hating is unfashionable, but the idea of the series is to illuminate the absurdity of male posturing. Still, people refused to open the book in order to understand the purpose of the title. Lynch considered changing the title, but he could not; he needed to "believe that there was room for the writer to be a little bit risky in trying to get his message across with impact" (page 183). He insists that there needs to be an override philosophy to guide writers through dealing with such challenges. In "A Tribute to Norma Klein", Judy Blume discusses how she and Norma Klein bonded because they found themselves together on the "most censored list". Norma's work was banned because of the nontraditional families she wrote about and because she wrote about young characters' sexuality. Norma tried to write about real life and found nothing objectionable in writing the truth. One of Judy's favorite books by Norma Klein is "Naomi in the Middle" which has been challenged because of the sexual context, and a few years ago, a woman objected to



the novel, claiming it promotes alcoholism since the grandmother fixes warm milk laced with rum to get the kids to sleep; this woman does not want anyone telling her children that it is okay to use alcohol. Judy sees this as proof that "when it comes to censorship, if it's not one thing, it's another" (page 196).

Difficult Adolescent Experiences

Since "Places I Never Meant to Be" deals with censorship, it makes sense that an important theme in this collection is difficult adolescent experiences. These experiences are a major reason that censors challenge such books, but the authors of these books argue that reading about such experiences can help teens deal with the reality of them. One such example is mentioned in "Censorship: A Personal View" when Judy Blume mentions that "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret" was challenged because it contained a discussion of menstruation. Later, her editor persuaded her to remove a scene concerning masturbation from "Tiger Eyes" so that it would reach as many readers as possible. These are both topics that every teen faces in some aspect, and Judy Blume and several of the contributors in this collection urge parents to use such topics as a platform for discussion with their children, rather than forbidding their children to read such books and pretending that these issues do not exist. "Meeting the Mugger" deals with Sarabeth being mugged, but the more important topic is her mother's death which makes the mugging, the worst thing that had ever happened to her, fade into oblivion in her mind. "Spear" deals with the topic of interracial relationships and battling racism, as well as thwarting a parent's unfair expectations. "Going Sentimental" addresses the turmoil of a teenage girl losing her virginity, while "The Red Dragonfly" deals with the issue of a young boy who is obsessed with his teacher. "July Saturday" brings up issues concerning jealousy, suspicion, growing apart and the desire to escape.

In "You Come, Too, A-Ron", the characters are children in the foster system, an issue that many do not understand and that is painful to those who experience it. "The Beast Is In The Labyrinth" deals with the death of the main character's sister, presumably from drug addiction. "Ashes" addresses the issue of a moral dilemma when Ashleigh is asked to steal money from her mother to loan to her father so that he can repay some dangerous people that he borrowed money from. In "Baseball Camp", the issue of abuse is presented as well as the concept of how people view abuse and sports training. "Love and Centipedes" shows the possible results of jealousy and the response. Homosexuality is addressed in "Lie, No Lie" and friendship is questioned in "Something Which Is Non-Existent". All of these topics are things that teenagers face at some point, but many parents object to their children reading about such topics. These books should be used as a safe way for children to learn about difficult issues.

Making Decisions

An important theme that recurs throughout this collection is the concept of making decisions which goes hand-in-hand with the difficult adolescent experiences that the



characters face. In "Meeting the Mugger", Sarabeth deals with how to react in a mugging, and she is proud of herself that she remains calm. "Spear" shows the decisions that Spear and Norma make regarding their relationship as well as the decisions that their families make due to their disapproval of the interracial relationship. Spear decides to become anonymous by being called Adrian, his birth name, and resigning as class president. In "Going Sentimental", Jody makes the decision to safely lose her virginity to her long-time boyfriend. In "You Come, Too, A-Ron", Aaron decides to return to Oakmont so that he can talk to Kenny on the phone and visit him on weekends.

John from "The Beast Is In The Labyrinth" decides to go home though he does not want to. He also continues to call home though he does not want the burden, and he visits home to search for his sister. He also decides to return to college in Millersville after his sister's death. When Ashleigh's father asks her to "borrow" money from her mother in "Ashes", she faces the moral dilemma of whether to steal her mother's emergency money. In "Love and Centipedes", both Tuesday and Maureen are faced with decisions regarding their relationship with each other, and unfortunately, they both allow their animosity to influence their decisions, resulting in Maureen killing Tuesday's pets and Tuesday attacking Maureen. In "Lie, No Lie", the narrator is forced to examine his sexual preferences and decide what to do about it when a man performs oral sex on him in the shower of a fitness club. The most important decision that is addressed in this collection of short stories is the decision that each of the authors make each time they choose to write; they decide to write for their readers instead of for the censors, and therefore, they are able to produce engaging stories to entertain their target audience.

Style

Point of View

The point of view for each of the stories in "Places I Never Meant To Be" varies. All of the stories are written from a limited point of view. "Spear", "Love and Centipedes", and "Something Which Is Non-Existent" are written from a third-person point of view while the remaining stories utilize first person. In each story, the point of view is useful in determining the focus of the story. In the case of first person narratives, the narrator is the main character whose story is being told. In "Spear", Spear is the main character, Tuesday Racinsky is the main character in "Love and Centipedes", and Ben is the main character in "Something Which Is Non-Existent". The viewpoint of each of these is centered around the main character.

Most of the stories in this collection uses a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue with a few exceptions as follows: "Censorship: A Personal View", "Letter from Joan Bertin", "The Red Dragonfly", and "A Tribute to Norma Klein". The distribution is important in each story as it either emphasizes the narrator's own thoughts and emotions or their relationships with other people. This is especially significant since all of these stories deal with difficult situations that adolescents face. The topic of censorship is also addressed by each of the authors of these short stories, and these commentaries are written in the first person and describe each author's experiences with and views on censorship.

Setting

The stories in this collection are all set in the real world, in various towns and cities in America with the exception of "The Red Dragonfly" which is set in Japan. The characters are primarily American teens which is important since censorship is designed to control what teens and children have access to read. Each "On Censorship" section is set in modern America.

In "Censorship: A Personal View", the Elizabeth Public Library is where Judy Blume was not allowed to check out John O'Hara's "A Rage to Live" without parental consent because it was restricted. This was her first experience with censorship. In "Spear", Milltown is the neighborhood where Norma Jean Ray lives with the other poor whites. In "You Come, Too, A-Ron", Placement is a shelter for kids without families. It is the main setting of the story as Aaron returns here after running away from Oakmont. Oakmont is a school in the boonies where Aaron was sent the last time he was at Placement because they could not find a family for him. He ran away because there are too many kids and not enough staff, but he decides to return to get an education and so he can call and visit Kenny. In "The Beast Is In The Labyrinth", Harlem is John's hometown where he visits on breaks from school to see Mom and Temmi. Millersville, PA is where John attends college. He is accepted by the locals as part of the acceptable population



of blacks. He wants Mom to move to Millersville with him after Temmi's death, but Mom laughs at the idea. In "Love and Centipedes", Madame Wu's is the Chinese restaurant where Tuesday and her mom are eating when Maureen approaches Tuesday and insists on coming to her house because she claims she needs Tuesday's help to come up with a good idea for their senior prom theme. In "Lie, No Lie", Whitechurch is the town where Pauly and the narrator live. They return there after the narrator's homoerotic experience in the shower of a fitness club. Japan is the main setting of "The Red Dragonfly" where a boy slips a haiku under his beloved teacher's door. In "Ashes", Mom keeps \$200 stashed in her teapot for emergencies, but when Dad wants Ashleigh to borrow it to help him pay off his debt to dangerous people, she stares at the teapot and the money inside because she does not know what to do.

Language and Meaning

The stories in "Places I Never Meant To Be" all utilize casual and informal language which is appropriate for the American teenagers who are the target audience of these narratives. The "On Censorship" sections tend to be more formal but are still comprehensive. The language chosen to tell these stories is beneficial as the use of common vernacular aids readers' comprehension of the stories and their underlying messages.

Most of the stories in this collection uses a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue with a few exceptions as follows: "Censorship: A Personal View", "Letter from Joan Bertin", "The Red Dragonfly", and "A Tribute to Norma Klein". The distribution is important in each story as it either emphasizes the narrator's own thoughts and emotions or their relationships with other people. The language used in this collection serves to characterize modern American teenagers and a wide array of experiences, particularly the challenges of dealing with difficult subjects. The language of the "On Censorships" characterizes each author's derogatory view of censorship as well as their rationale behind their feelings. Overall, the language used throughout this book aids comprehension and is easy for the target audience to understand.

Structure

"Places I Never Meant To Be" is comprised of twelve short stories in addition to Judy Blume's introduction, a letter from Joan Bertin of NCAC, Blume's "A Tribute to Norma Klein", and an appendix "About the Contributors". Each story is followed by the author's opinion of censorship. The book contains 202 pages, and each story averages about ten to fifteen pages in length. The stories are all fairly short, but some are very detailed while others are somewhat vague.

This collection of short stories is written about difficult adolescent experiences by writers whose work has frequently been censored due to their desire to depict reality when they write for children. Each story is also followed by the author's views and experiences on censorship. According to the back cover, this book was written as a "battle cry against

copyright", and the royalties benefit the National Coalition Against Censorship. The stories are generally quick-paced and easy to read. Overall, this collection is very entertaining, enjoyable and educational in regards to censorship.



Quotes

"All of which brings me to the question What is censorship? If you ask a dozen people you'll get twelve different answers. When I actually looked up the word in 'The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia' I found this definition: '[The] official restriction of any expression believed to threaten the political, social, or moral order.' My thesaurus lists the following words that can be used in place of ban (as in book banning): Forbid. Prohibit. Restrict. But what do these words mean to writers and the stories they choose to tell? And what do they mean to readers and the books they choose to read?" Censorship: A Personal View, page 3

"Then, almost overnight, following the presidential election of 1980, the censors crawled out of the woodwork, organized and determined. Not only would they decide what their children could read but what all children could read. It was the beginning of the decade that wouldn't go away, that still won't go away almost twenty years later. Suddenly books were seen as dangerous to young minds. Thinking was seen as dangerous, unless those thoughts were approved by groups like the Moral Majority, who believed with certainty they knew what was best for everyone." Censorship: A Personal View, page 5

"In this age of censorship I mourn the loss of books that will never be written, I mourn the voices that will be silenced- writers' voices, teachers' voices, students' voices- and all because of fear." Censorship: A Personal View, page 11

"Sometimes she gets mad the moment I open my mouth." Mom, Meeting the Mugger, page 23

"We sat there like that for a long time, and it was the way it used to be, the two of us close, so close, as close as if we were a single organism, as if we had come from the same source and could never be torn apart." Meeting the Mugger, page 30

"Censorship is crippling, negating, stifling. It should be unthinkable in a country like ours. Readers deserve to pick their own books. Writers need the freedom of their minds. That's all we writers have, anyway; our minds and imaginations. To allow the censors even the tiniest space in there with us can only lead to dullness, imitation, and mediocrity." Norma Fox Mazer On Censorship, page 35

"Well, y'all get to learn about all the white people what wrote books. How come I can't learn about all your people what wrote books?" Norma Jean Ray, Spear, page 38

"And what would make you curious about pasty-faced white girls? With all the beautiful and intelligent black girls there are at that school and in this world, there is no reason why you or any black man has to go chasing after white women. And that goes double for the son of Black Spear!" Mother Eve, Spear, page 44

"I had made a vow to myself when I was a teenager that I would never forget, and never disrespect, the intensity of the adolescent experience, the power and terror of being a



person actively creating herself. Some of the choices teenagers make are morally and practically wrong. Some of my characters do things I hope my child won't. There are occasionally words my characters choose that I wouldn't utter in my mother's presence. But when I was sixteen, or twelve, hanging out with my friends? That was different. For a story to feel real, I have to respect what a character would really do or say. I believe in any person's right to read whatever she or he chooses. It astonishes me that there are people who believe that by simply avoiding a discussion of sex, for instance, or cruelty, that they can protect the children in their community from any experience of these things." Rachel Vail On Censorship, page 62

"For youth there is only the act. It consumes all time. We learn to be cautious for consequences later." The Red Dragonfly, page 68

"Self-censorship can be very damaging to a story. When our chief goal is not to offend someone, we are not likely to write a book that will deeply affect anyone." Katherine Paterson On Censorship, page 71

"You ever get the feeling like your life just stops sometimes, Clay?... Then sometimes it feels like it's moving real fast- like some crazy ride I can't get off of." Narrator, July Saturday, page 76

"From a very young age I knew that there were going to be people out there who didn't like me because of some sort of prejudice. I did not know the many ways in which their hatred could exist. I did not know it would enter into the most sacred part of me- my writing. As a child and young adult, I wrote for myself, to get a better sense of the world around me, to be happy. I have gone back to that beginning, to the place from which my work began, and have once again found my solace in the writing. Like the censorship, like racism and homophobia and all the other hatreds in the world, the writing, too, will always be here- giving me a better sense of the world around me, helping me to grow and understand." Jacqueline Woodson On Censorship, page 83

"That heat! I could've stayed there all winter. The heat melted the snow off my jacket and it must have melted my brain because I started hoping that maybe, this time, they'd have somebody for me, a mother, who would call me to the table with the rest of her kids. I was flat-out, make-believe dreaming. I didn't admire myself for it. Gotta stay in touch with reality." You Come, Too, A-Ron, page 85

"I don't admit nothing. If you're rich, you can be stuck up. Or famous. I ain't got nothing to be stuck up about." Aaron, You Come, Too, A-Ron, page 91

"I struggle each day not to let the fear of the censor poison my writing. Where the censor rules, a dull sameness creeps into books. Am I becoming cautious, being too careful in what I choose to write about, watching my language? It's this caution inside that I fear, more than the censors. If I can't write the book that I want to write, what am I doing?" Harry Mazer On Censorship, page 97



"She offers food as a metaphor. I take it as poetry. We talk quietly. She doesn't mention my sister, Temmi. Neither do I. You don't go where you don't know." *The Beast Is in the Labyrinth*, page 102

"We speak a language of family that is not quite real, but that we understand. I know for the first time that it is the understanding that matters, not the reality." *The Beast Is in the Labyrinth*, page 110

"I go to bed at night, and ask myself, 'Is the world a better place because I exist?' If I've done one thing, no matter how small, that made the world a better place, I'm satisfied... All I can give you is dreams, Ashes. But one good dream is worth a thousand flashlight batteries." *Dad, Ashes*, pages 116-117

"It's easy enough to censor an article, a newspaper, even an idea. But no matter how hard you try, you cannot censor a mind or an imagination. You can never censor the future." *Susan Beth Pfeffer On Censorship*, page 126

"You'll say Paul Creese is the biggest, fattest, meanest, most arrogant southern son of a bitch ever crossed your path. But I wanna leave you with one thought. You gotta be strong for football. You gotta be tall for basketball. You gotta speak a foreign language to be any good at soccer. But for baseball you just gotta believe in yourself. There're guys playin' in the Majors who're runts, but they have it here, and here." *Paul Creese, Baseball Camp*, page 130

"When I write novels, the characters seem to exist on their own- they have their own integrity, their own strengths, their own flaws. I try to catch their voices, follow them through the story, and remain true to them. There is no way I can truthfully render characters if I must constantly worry about offending censors. I feel very strongly that students do not need to be protected from books. People should learn to choose books for themselves, based on their own tastes and values." *David Klass On Censorship*, page 140

"Centipedes, she thought, as she stepped over Maureen and started up the stairs. They're like love. The way love had to come for her. Scary. Complicated. A powerful thing creeping from the shadows. For her, it had to come slowly. Love on tiptoe and with a hundred tiny feet. Glorious little feet." *Love and Centipedes*, page 161

"Ever since I began to tell stories there was always some group or person who wanted to censor me. I think most art is intrinsically that which arouses a degree of censorship: Something that is just the other side of what passes for the current decency and holds the ability to shock for a while." *Paul Zindel On Censorship*, page 162

"He's serious, and he's disappointed, because here we are all the way up to junior year together, so if I don't know the boy then who does? And if after logging this much time at it I still don't know him then how if anybody anywhere going to know him ever? Something for a guy to worry about, I guess; but if I didn't know him then I wouldn't know he's thinking this. And he is." *Lie, No Lie*, page 167



"For whatever moral reasons he may do it, the artist who gives up an hour's work for a conversation with a friend knows that he is sacrificing a reality for something which is non-existent." Michael, *Something Which Is Non-Existent*, page 188

"I'm not a rebel, trying to stir things up just to be provocative. I'm doing it because I feel like writing about real life. I still can't believe there's anything objectionable about telling it like it is." Norma Klein, *A Tribute to Norma Klein*, page 195



Topics for Discussion

How do you feel about censorship after reading these authors' accounts?

Compare and contrast two stories in this collection.

Choose the story you feel is most offensive, and defend it against censorship.

Which story do you feel depicts the most realistic account of the adolescent experience, and why?

How does censorship affect the general reading public?

Argue for why one or more of the stories in this collection should be banned.

Which of the authors featured in this collection offers the most memorable experience with censorship? Why is it so memorable?