

# BOOKS CHALLENGED OR BANNED IN 2002–2003

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# Books Challenged or Banned in 2002-2003

Banned Books Week 2003 is the twenty-second annual celebration of the freedom to read. This freedom, not only to choose what we read, but also to select from a full array of possibilities, is firmly rooted in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of press. Even as we revel in the increasing quantity and availability of information and reading material, we must maintain vigilance to assure that access to this material is preserved. Threats against the freedom to read still exist and come from all quarters and all political persuasions. Quite simply, censors are those who try to limit the freedom of others to choose what they read, see, or hear, even if the motivation for the restriction is well intentioned.

Sex, profanity, and racism remain the primary categories of objections, and most incidents occur in schools and school libraries.

Frequently, challenges are motivated by the desire to protect children. While the cause is noble and commendable, this method of protection contains hazards far greater than exposure to the "evil" against which the protection is leveled. Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, in *Texas v. Johnson*, said, "If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the Government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable." Individuals may restrict what they themselves or their children read, but they must not call on governmental or public agencies to prevent others from reading or seeing that material.

The challenges documented in this list are not just by people expressing a point of view regarding these materials; rather, they have asked that these materials be removed from the school curriculum or library, thus restricting access to them by others. Even when the eventual outcome allows the book to stay on the library shelves and even when the person is a lone protester, the censorship attempt is real. Someone has tried to restrict another person's ability to choose. Challenges are as important to document as actual bannings, in which a book is removed from the shelves of a library or bookstore or from the curriculum at a school. Attempts to censor lead to voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy, a situation as critical as an actual banning, since in these cases the material may not be published or may not be purchased by a bookstore, library, or school district.

We have reason to be especially celebratory this year. Due to the commitment of parents, students, librarians, teachers, and other concerned citizens, more and more challenges are unsuccessful, and the reading material remains available.

It should be noted that this bibliography is incomplete because many prohibitions against free speech and expression remain undocumented. Surveys indicate approximately 85 percent of the challenges to library materials receive no media attention and remain unreported. Moreover, this list is limited to books and does not include challenges to magazines, newspapers, films, broadcasts, plays, performances, electronic publications, or exhibits.

This bibliography represents books challenged, restricted, removed, or banned in 2002 -2003 as reported in the *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* from May 2002 through May 2003.

**Alvarez, Julia.** *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents.* Plume. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

**Angelou, Maya.** *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.* Bantam. Challenged as required reading for Hamilton, Mont. freshman English classes (2002). At issue are scenes in which the author explores her sexuality through intercourse as a teenager and the depiction of a rape and molestation of an 8-year-old girl; homosexuality is another theme explored in the book that has drawn criticism. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity

and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Nov. 2002, p. 258; Jan. 2003, p. 10.

**Block, Francesca Lia.** *Girl Goddess.* HarperCollins. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

\_\_\_\_\_. *I Was a Teenage Fairy.* HarperCollins. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and

descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

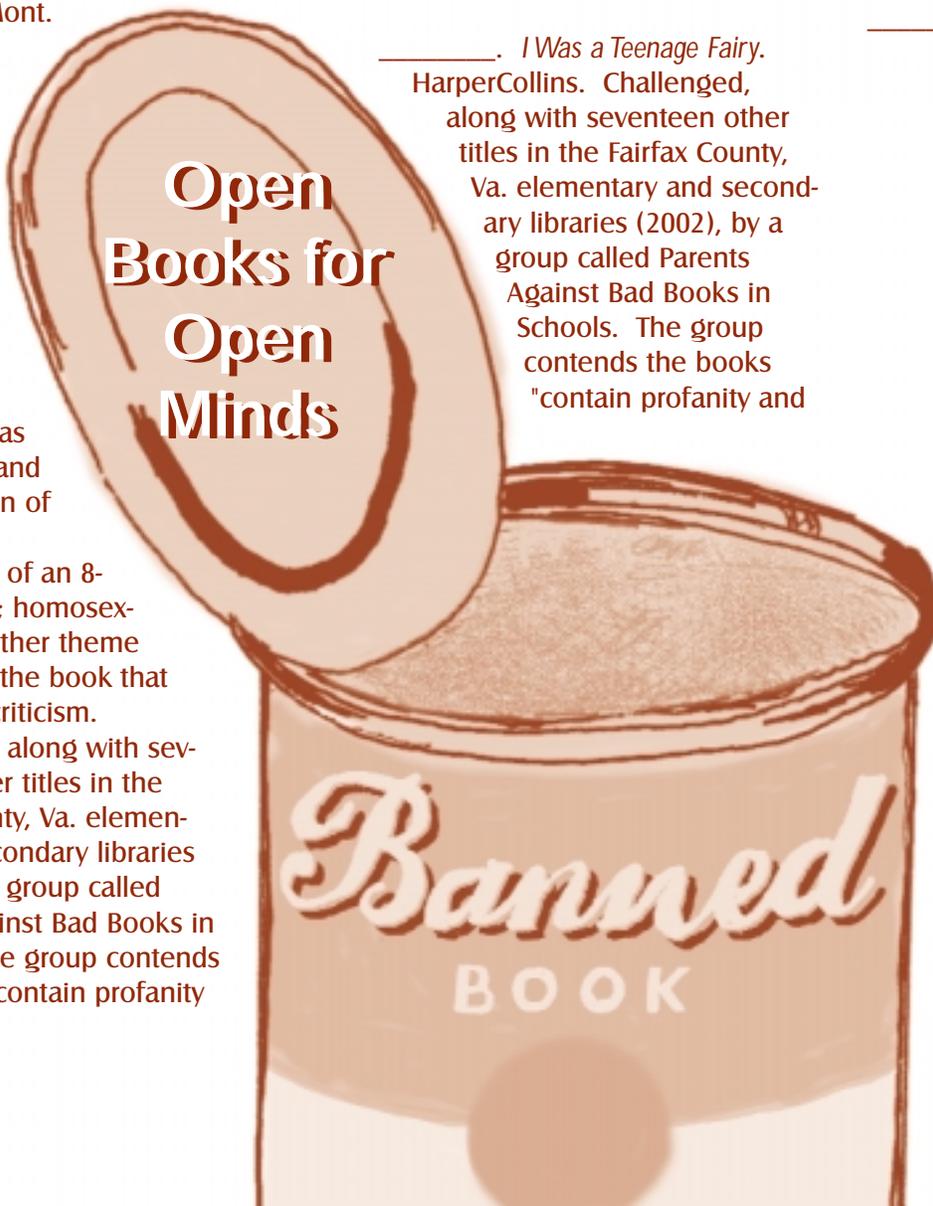
\_\_\_\_\_. *The Rose and the Beast: Fairy Tales Retold.* HarperCollins. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Witch Baby.* HarperCollins. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." On March 10, 2003, the school board determined the book is suitable for elementary- and middle-school collections and placed a young-adult sticker on its spine. Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10; May 2003, p. 117.

**Blume, Judy.** *Forever.* Bradbury Pr. Banned from middle school libraries in the Elgin, Ill. School District U46 (1997) because of sex scenes. The decision was upheld in June 1999 after an hour of emotional school board discussion. After a

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four-year absence, the book was returned (2002) to the shelves of the district's middle school libraries. Source: May 1997, pp. 60-61; Sept. 1997, p. 125; Sept. 1999, p. 119; Mar. 2002, p. 105; May 2002, pp. 135-36.

**Chbosky, Stephen.** *The Perks of Being a Wallflower.* Pocket Bks. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

**Clavell, James.** *Shogun.* Delacorte. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

**Cohen, Daniel.** *The World's Most Famous Ghosts.* Putnam. Proposed for removal, along with more than fifty other books, from the high school library in Russell Springs, Ky. (2002) by a teachers' prayer group. Source: May 2002, p. 116.

**Cormier, Robert.** *The Chocolate War.* Dell; Pantheon. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Heroes.* Delacorte. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Tenderness.* Delacorte. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

**Cunningham, Antonia, ed.** *Guinness Book of World Records.* Bantam. Retained in the Waukesha, Wis. elementary schools (2002) despite a challenge that the book was sexually explicit. Source: May 2002, p. 136.

**Curtis, Christopher Paul.** *The Watsons Go To Birmingham—1963.* Bantam. Challenged in the Stafford County, Va. middle schools (2002) because a parent was offended by some language. The book is a 1996 Newbery Honor winner and the same year was named a Coretta Scott King Honor Book. Source: July 2002, pp. 154-55.

**Davis, Lindsey.** *Silver Pigs.* Crown. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

**Franco, Betsy, ed.** *You Hear Me?: Poems and Writings by Teenage Boys.* Candlewick Pr. Challenged in the Houston County, Ga. public schools (2002) by a parent concerned about the book's language and topics. Source: Sept. 2002, pp. 195-96.



# TO A BANNED BOOK

**Harris, Robie H.** *It's Perfectly Normal: A Book about Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health.* Candlewick Pr. Challenged, but retained in the Montgomery County, Tex. library system (2002) after a conservative Christian group, the Republican Leadership Council, characterized the book as "vulgar" and trying "to minimize or even negate that homosexuality is a problem." Source: Nov. 2002, pp. 256-57; Jan. 2003, p. 33.

**Hurwin, Davida.** *Time for Dancing.* Puffin. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

**Kincaid, James Russell.** *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting.* Duke Univ. Pr. Challenged, but retained in the Montgomery County, Tex. library system (2002) after a conservative Christian group, the Republican Leadership Council, characterized the book as "helping to lay the groundwork for a culture of child molesters and homosexuals." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 33.

**Letts, Billie.** *Where the Heart Is.* G. K. Hall; Warner. Retained in the Natrona County, Wyo. School District (2002) after being challenged for graphic violence, obscene language, and drug use. Source: Sept. 2002, p. 223.

**Locker, Sari.** *Sari Says: The Real Dirt on Everything from Sex to School.* Harper. Removed from the shelves at the James Kennedy Public Library in Dyersville, Iowa (2002) because it deals with sexual issues. Source: Sept. 2002, p. 196; Nov. 2002, pp. 255-56.

**Lopez, Tiffany Ana.** *Growing Up Chicana/o.* Morrow. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

**Mah, Adeline Yen.** *A Thousand Pieces of Gold: My Discovery of China's Character in the History and Meaning of its Proverbs.* Harper. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse,

sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

**Myers, Walter Dean.** *Fallen Angels.* Scholastic. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Banned from the George County, Miss. schools (2002) because of profanity. Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10; Mar. 2003, p. 55.

**Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds.** *Achingly Alice.* Atheneum. Banned from the Webb City, Mo. school library (2002) because the book promotes homosexuality and discusses issues "best left to parents." Source: Nov. 2002, p. 256.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Alice in Lace.* Atheneum. Banned from the Webb City, Mo. school library (2002) because the book promotes homosexuality and discusses issues "best left to parents." Source: Nov. 2002, p. 256.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Grooming of Alice.* Atheneum. Banned from the Webb City, Mo. school library (2002) because the book promotes homosexuality and discusses issues "best left to parents." Source: Nov. 2002, p. 256.



- Newton, Michael.** *The Encyclopedia of Serial Killers.* Facts on File. Challenged and retained in the Hillsborough County, Fla. School District (2002) over a parent's objections to the book's "gruesome details." Source: July 2002, p. 179.
- O'Brien, Tim.** *The Things They Carried.* Broadway Bks.; Houghton. Banned from the George County, Miss. schools (2002) because of profanity. Source: Mar. 2003, p. 55.
- Paterson, Katherine.** *Bridge to Terabithia.* Crowell. Challenged in the middle school curriculum in Cromwell, Conn. (2002) due to concern that it promotes witchcraft and violence. The book is the recipient of the 1978 Newbery Medal for children's literature. Source: Sept. 2002, p. 197; Nov. 2002, pp. 257-58.
- Pressfield, Steven.** *Gates of Fire.* Doubleday. Retained in the Fairfax County, Va. Public Schools (2002) after being challenged for "too much profanity." Source: July 2002, p. 179.
- Rennison, Louise.** *Knocked Out by My Nunga-Nungas.* HarperCollins. Challenged at the Oregon, Wis. Middle School (2002) by a parent who was particularly offended by a passage in which a boy touches a girl's breast. Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.
- Rowling, J. K.** *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.* Scholastic. Proposed for removal, along with more than fifty other titles, by a teachers' prayer group at the high school in Russell Springs, Ky. (2002) because the book deals with ghosts, cults, and witchcraft. Parents of a Cedarville, Ark. (2002) fourth-grader filed a federal lawsuit challenging restricted access to the Harry Potter book—students are required to present written permission from a parent to borrow the books; the novel was originally challenged because it characterizes authority as "stupid" and portrays "good witches and good magic." Challenged in Moscow, Russia (2002) by a Slavic cultural organization that alleged the stories about magic and wizards could draw students into Satanism. Source: Mar. 2002, p. 61; May 2002, p. 116; Sept. 2002, p. 197; Mar. 2003, p. 77; May 2003, p. 94.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.* Scholastic. Proposed for removal, along with more than fifty other titles, by a teachers' prayer group at the high school in Russell Springs, Ky. (2002) because the book deals with ghosts, cults, and witchcraft. Parents of a Cedarville, Ark. (2002) fourth-grader filed a federal lawsuit challenging restricted access to the Harry Potter book—students are required to present written permission from a parent to borrow the book; the novel was originally challenged because it characterizes authority as "stupid" and portrays "good witches and good magic." Challenged in Moscow, Russia (2002) by a Slavic cultural organization that alleged the stories about magic and wizards could draw students into Satanism. Source: Mar. 2002, p. 61; May 2002, p. 116; Sept. 2002, p. 197; Mar. 2003, p. 77; May 2003, p. 94.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.* Scholastic. Proposed for removal, along with more than fifty other titles, by a teachers' prayer group at the high school in Russell Springs, Ky. (2002) because the book deals with ghosts, cults, and witchcraft. Parents of a Cedarville, Ark. (2002) fourth-grader filed a federal lawsuit challenging restricted access to the Harry Potter book—students are required to present written permission from a parent to borrow the book; the novel was originally challenged because it characterizes authority as "stupid" and portrays "good witches and good magic." Challenged in Moscow, Russia (2002) by a Slavic cultural organization that alleged the stories about magic and wizards could draw students into Satanism. Source: Mar. 2002, p. 61; May 2002, p. 116; Sept. 2002, p. 197; Mar. 2003, p. 77; May 2003, p. 94.
- Santiago, Esmeralda.** *When I Was Puerto Rican.* Addison-Wesley; Vintage. Challenged, along with

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seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.

**Schechter, Harold and David Everitt.** *The A-Z Encyclopedia of Serial Killers.* Pocket Bks. Challenged and retained in the Hillsborough County, Fla. School District (2002) because of a parent's objection to the book's "gruesome details." Source: July 2002, p. 179.

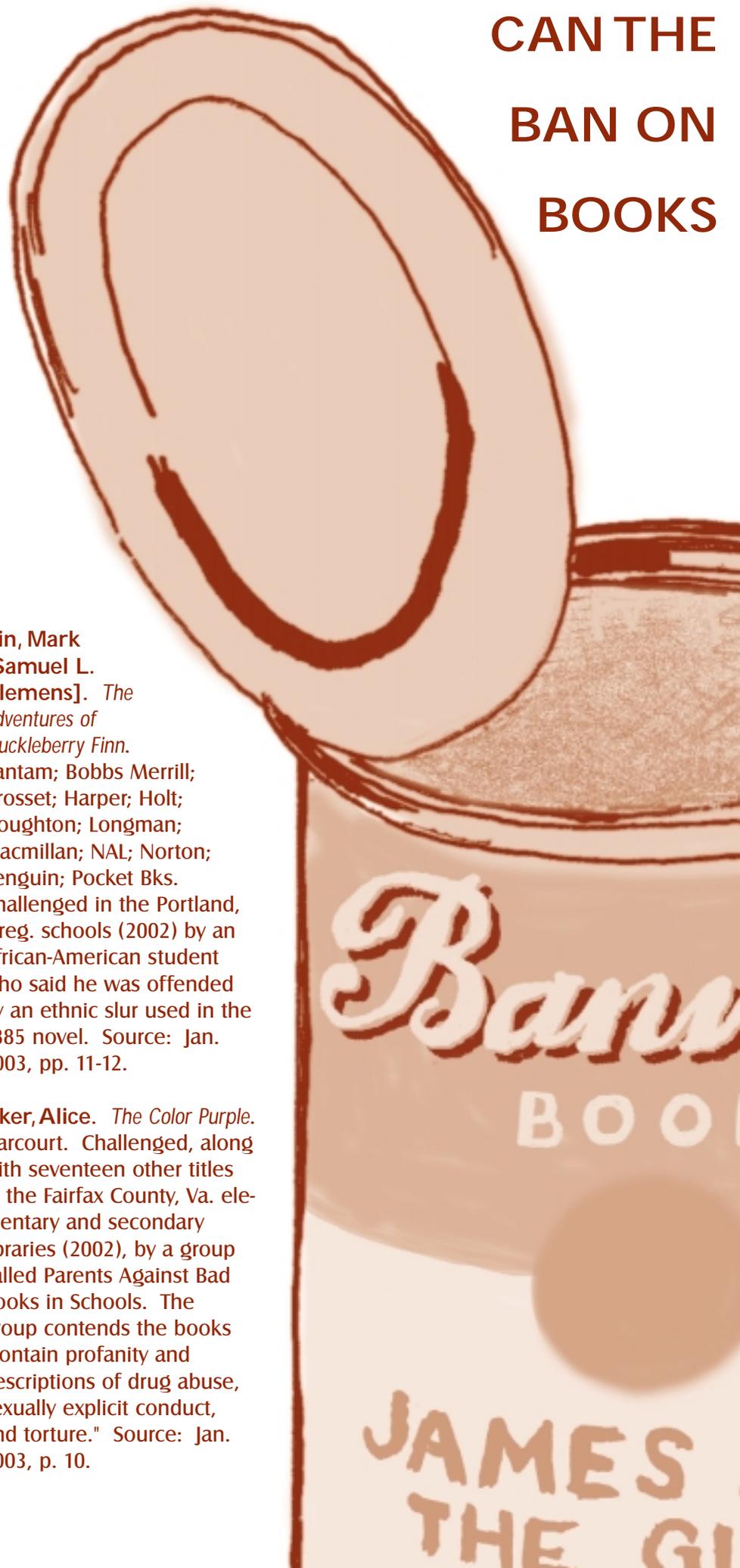
**Speare, Elizabeth George.** *Witch of Blackbird Pond.* Houghton. Challenged in the middle school curriculum in Cromwell, Conn. (2002) based on concern that it promotes witchcraft and violence. The book is the recipient of the 1959 Newbery Medal for children's literature. Source: Sept. 2002, p. 197; Nov. 2002, pp. 257-58.

**Steinbeck, John.** *Of Mice and Men.* Bantam; Penguin; Viking. Challenged as required reading at the high school in Grandville, Mich. (2002) because the book "is full of racism, profanity, and foul language." Banned from the George County, Miss. schools (2002) because of profanity. Source: Nov. 2002, p. 280; Mar. 2003, p. 55.

**Thom, James Alexander.** *Follow the River.* Mass Market. Removed from the tenth grade curriculum at the high school in Noblesville, Ind. (2002) after a parent objected to passages about an imagined rape; the book remains in the library collection. Source: May 2002, p. 117.

**Twain, Mark [Samuel L. Clemens].** *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* Bantam; Bobbs Merrill; Grosset; Harper; Holt; Houghton; Longman; Macmillan; NAL; Norton; Penguin; Pocket Bks. Challenged in the Portland, Ore. schools (2002) by an African-American student who said he was offended by an ethnic slur used in the 1885 novel. Source: Jan. 2003, pp. 11-12.

**Walker, Alice.** *The Color Purple.* Harcourt. Challenged, along with seventeen other titles in the Fairfax County, Va. elementary and secondary libraries (2002), by a group called Parents Against Bad Books in Schools. The group contends the books "contain profanity and descriptions of drug abuse, sexually explicit conduct, and torture." Source: Jan. 2003, p. 10.



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