

Example by StudyDriver

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Limits to Freedom of Speech Example

Literature has always been tricky. At times, people find certain books to be offensive or inappropriate. People will even go to great lengths to challenge or ban books just because of differing opinions. Limiting free speech has been a constant and continuous argument throughout history. One side argues that certain pieces of writing should be banned or censored due to words, content and themes that are either viewed as inappropriate, controversial or contain language that is no longer acceptable. Violence, profanity, racial terms, and sexual content are some examples. The other side strongly believes that the First Amendment should be upheld regardless of the what the content is and how it is presented. Freedom of speech should not be limited. The First Amendment is defined as the freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, and protest. It is said that freedom of the press is more important than freedom of speech because it can reach a bigger audience therefore making it more dangerous. (The First Amendment, 2:10 - 2:40). When something is written down and out for everyone to see, it can have more power and be more far reaching than the spoken word. However, freedom of speech is not absolute. Some limitations of free speech are, you are not allowed to harm others to get what want, you cant deceive someone or threaten them, you cant misrepresent the truth, and you can't abuse someone. (The Limits of Free Speech, 0:50 - 1:16) These limits are designed to protect people and set moral boundaries for the overall well-being of humanity. Topics such as, science, religion, morality, and social issues as well as art and even

personal gossip (Ms.Griffin) can be talked about freely. It is important to note that typically, parents challenge materials more often than any other group. (Ms.Griffin) People tend to challenge books that make them feel uncomfortable. Parents can be reactive to sensitive topics, such as sexuality, cursing and violence. At times, a word or part of a book can make a whole group uncomfortable and thats when things get complicated. Some may claim that harsh and cruel subjects should not be covered in books. These subjects can range from racial slurs to sexual content. Books for teenagers have become dark, graphic, and gruesome to an unprecedented degree. (Young Adult Literature) While this statement can ring true, it shouldnt be an excuse to get rid of the books all together. If a teen feels that he or she can handle the content presented in a book, they should be able to read it. As stated in the previous paragraph, parents are the ones who usually feel that particular books should be banned. They may be trying to protect their kids but at the same time they are arguing to remove classics such as Huckleberry Finn and The Outsiders. Such books provide horrible role models for young people and encourage bad behavior. (Young Adult Literature) Arguably, there can be awful people described in books but like it or not, teens make decisions on their own terms. A book is not going to influence their decision to curse or to have sex. In addition, books directed toward teens that include topics such as sex, drugs and alcohol are describing typical situations in teen life. Getting rid of books that include these subjects, in a way, would deny that teens go through serious challenges. A teenagers life is in no way flawless or cookie cutter perfection. Therefore books shouldnt try to cover up the imperfections. Further insight about this argument is that books should not be limited to describing situations where everything is always joyful. Many of the best works of literature have very serious aspects to them. However, certain people feel that classics should be altered in a way to make them less offensive and cruel. This misguided act would be damaging to the original text. Critics of editing classic books insist that changing an authors original words changes the intent. (Editing The Classics) Undoubtedly, altering one word or phrase could change the whole context of the dialogue. Another good point is that a book should not be removed from a shelf just because of someones opinion. Opponents contend that great works of art should not be changed simply because somebody finds them uncomfortable look at. (Editing The Classics) Consequently, one persons opinion shouldnt affect the majority's view. If a book truly makes someone uncomfortable, then they can choose not to read it. For example, if a parent feels that a book is too harsh for their child to read, they can decide to not buy the book rather than try to get it banned from everyone. Critics of limiting free speech feel that humans have

the intelligence to figure out the real intent of a written work. Critics argue that readers should be smart enough to discern the true meaning of a text by themselves without an editor filtering it for them. We, as people, should be able to see deeper meanings and read between the lines. For instance, it's typical for evil and crude characters to curse. The cursing can help give voice to a significant part of their personality. Curse words are also commonly used to portray strong emotions. For this project I read the book *Angus Thongs and Full Frontal Snogging*. I enjoyed the book and would have never thought it would have been a book that was challenged. I think of the book as a cheesy teen story. Surprisingly, the book was considered scandalous by a parent and consequences followed. Retained with limited access at the Maplewood Middle School Library in Menasha, Wis. (2008). The coming-of-age novel, which has sexual content, was found offensive by a parent. In addition to retaining the book, board members voted unanimously to adopt procedures intended to secure and record parental consent before limited access books are released to students. (Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom) Yet the sexual content within the book is quite mild. Georgia, the main character, makes out with boys like many teens do. She argues with her parents and curses sometimes. Georgia and her friends discuss lesbianism and she even considers it to solve her boy problems. All of these things can occur during a teens life. There is no shame in any of it. Georgias actions are similar to many of my peers. There are two sides to every argument. The topic of freedom of speech inspires disagreements and debates. Those who support censorship cite books that include themes such as violence, sexual content, cursing, racial slurs, age inappropriateness and controversial ideas. Carelessly, certain people believe that because one person/group becomes uncomfortable with a book, it should be booted off shelves. In contrast, others believe that freedom of speech is everyone's right, regardless of content. Parents are usually responsible for the banning of a book. While they believe they are protecting their kids, they are essentially censoring them from the real world. A book can evoke empathy and connections, even allowing a teen to feel like they are sharing the same experience as a character in a book. As a result, they feel like they have someone to relate to. During a time when many young people can feel misunderstood, books can help them feel like they are not alone. Editors shouldn't have to alter books just to please an opinion. It would change the intent of classics completely. If someone is sincerely bothered by a book they should step away and choose not to read it then go on their way. Their opinion should not impact everyone else. All in all, free speech should not be limited. There is no point in censoring books that so importantly reveal society truthfully.