

# Editorial: Americans Are Blocking Important Books From Their Children

By: Paige Stone

We have choices in many different things. From the food we eat to who we make as friends. And for some of us the books we read. But for others they are censored from what they read for reasons of race and talk of racism, sexual content, homosexuality and other LGBTQIA+ content, and “anti - family” content.<sup>1</sup> There has been censorship of what people read for a very long time, but in recent years with America’s tense political climate there has been an influx of banned content, especially books in school settings.

There were 1597 books<sup>2</sup> challenged in 2021 alone, with titles such as *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe<sup>3</sup>, *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison<sup>4</sup>, and *All Boys Aren’t Blue* by George M. Johnson<sup>5</sup>. These books were the top three most banned books in 2021. All for themes of LGBTQIA+ content and being “sexually explicit”. While on the contrary, books like *Lawn Boy* are well balanced novels providing a less discussed point of view about what it means to find the American Dream, important topics of finding sexuality, and surrounding yourself with good people. There is more message to the books other than the deemed inappropriate topics. Or titles like *Gender Queer* is a memoir of the author Maia Kobabe and eir<sup>6</sup> journey with self discovery in eir gender identity. Such a book provides a point of view and representation for those who might be on a similar self discovery as Maia was on em self.

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<sup>1</sup> "How Do Books Get Banned? - First Amendment Museum."

<https://firstamendmentmuseum.org/how-do-books-get-banned/>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2023.

<sup>2</sup> "Top 10 Most Challenged Books Lists | Advocacy, Legislation & Issues."

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/topt610>. Accessed 6 Apr. 2023.

<sup>3</sup> "Gender Queer - Wikipedia." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender\\_Queer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_Queer). Accessed 20 Apr. 2023.

<sup>4</sup> "Lawn Boy (Evison novel) - Wikipedia." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawn\\_Boy\\_\(Evison\\_novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawn_Boy_(Evison_novel)). Accessed 20 Apr. 2023.

<sup>5</sup> "All Boys Aren't Blue - Wikipedia." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All\\_Boys\\_Aren%27t\\_Blue](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Boys_Aren%27t_Blue). Accessed 20 Apr. 2023.

<sup>6</sup> This is not a typo, but rather the authors preferred pronouns (e, em, eir)

The most common state to ban and challenge books is Texas with 801, over 200 more over Florida that has the second most banned books at 566.<sup>7</sup> This data was taken over a 11 month period from July 2021 to June of the following year. Since 2001 the ALA has made lists of the banned books of the decades, where a list was compiled on Wikipedia.<sup>8</sup> If you look at the list there are many beloved books that often provide representation for people who might not be comfortable with their identity. Classics appear on this list such as *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck<sup>9</sup>, *The Great Gilly Hopkins* by Katherine Paterson<sup>10</sup>, and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald<sup>11</sup>.

Books provide a point of view that one might never experience. Taking away books is like taking away experiences from children.

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<sup>7</sup> "Books banned in U.S. schools by state 2022 - Statista." 2 Nov. 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1310288/school-book-bans-us-by-state/>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2023.

<sup>8</sup> "List of most commonly challenged books in the United States." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_most\\_commonly\\_challenged\\_books\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_most_commonly_challenged_books_in_the_United_States). Accessed 20 Apr. 2023.

<sup>9</sup> "The Grapes of Wrath - Wikipedia." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Grapes\\_of\\_Wrath](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Grapes_of_Wrath). Accessed 20 Apr. 2023.

<sup>10</sup> "The Great Gilly Hopkins - Wikipedia." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Great\\_Gilly\\_Hopkins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Gilly_Hopkins). Accessed 20 Apr. 2023.

<sup>11</sup> "The Great Gatsby - Wikipedia." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Great\\_Gatsby](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Gatsby). Accessed 20 Apr. 2023.