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**Summer
BANNED
BOOKS**
Reading
List



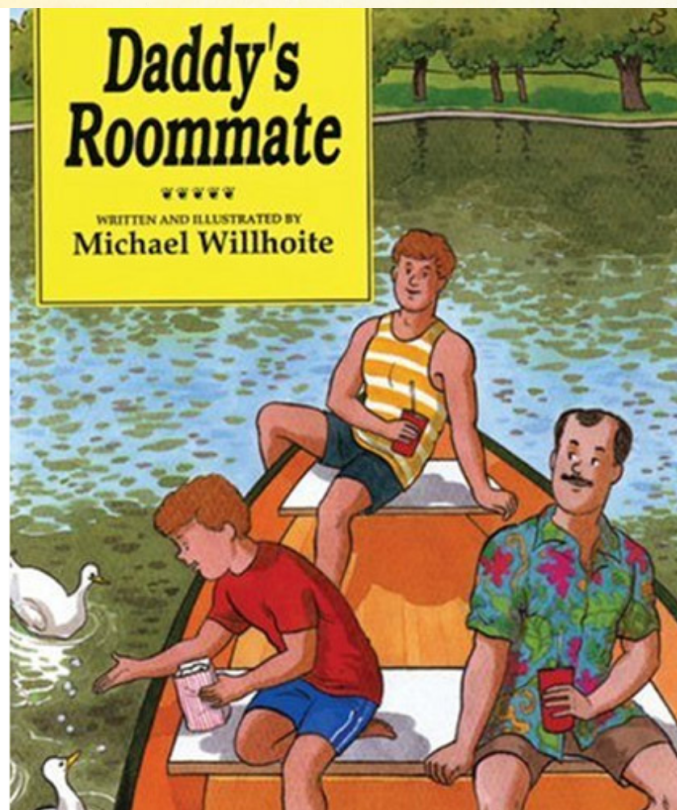
DR. SEUSS CONTROVERSY: WHETHER/HOW STUDENTS SHOULD READ “RACIST” CLASSICS

<https://forms.gle/wauUE6mgfJqzxAFR7>
Contact: Joyichicago@yahoo.com

**PHILIP NEL (KANSAS STATE), JONATHAN ZIMMERMAN (U PENN)
GERALD HAN (SUNNY HILLS HS), AARON HAN (LA MIRADA HS)**

OCT. 17 6PM PT 9PM ET

**HX EAST ASIA COMMUNITY (A COMMUNITY OF HETERODOX
ACADEMY) & NATIONAL WRITING INVITATIONAL**



<https://www.seussville.com/statement-from-dr-seuss-enterprises> March 2, 2021. Today, on Dr. Seuss's Birthday, Dr. Seuss Enterprises celebrates reading and also our mission of supporting all children and families with messages of hope, inspiration, inclusion, and friendship. To that end, Dr. Seuss Enterprises, working with a panel of experts, including educators, reviewed our catalog of titles and made the decision last year to cease publication and licensing of the following [six] titles: And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street, If I Ran the Zoo, McElligot's Pool, On Beyond Zebra!, Scrambled Eggs Super!, and The Cat's Quizzer. These books portray people in ways that are hurtful and wrong.

Q. 1) Do you agree that the Seuss books (e.g., Mulberry Street) portray people in ways that are hurtful and wrong? 2) How should students read books that some claim are harmful?

Dr. Seuss: Whether and how students should read controversial ('harmful') books.

Heterodox Academy / Hx East Asia Community forums on controversial topics: <https://zoom.us/j/93238244411>

Register: <https://forms.gle/wauUE6mgfJqzxAFR7>

Comment https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qisXOaWLGBlOhEm9K_70hC-RTnM7PeUePO40DTTAkpM/edit?tab=t.0

Philip Nel, Kansas State. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/05/16/breaking-up-with-racist-childrens-books/>;

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/02/27/no-virginia-school-district-did-not-ban-drseuss-books/>;

Jonathan Zimmerman, U Penn,

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2021/03/11/dr-seuss-and-censorship-dont-cancel-dr-seuss-column/4627595001>

Students: Gerald Han (Sunny Hills HS, California), Aaron Han (La Mirada HS, CA), Gabrielle Park (Oxford, CA)

Jonathan Zimmerman <jlzimmer@aol.com>; Philip Nel <philnel@gmail.com>; Joseph Yi

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Aaron Han. Dr. Seuss is recognized as one of the best children's authors and a prime shaper of this form of storytelling. For me, growing up in Los Angeles, these books opened up many fantastical worlds with their amusing illustrations and tales in rhyme, making reading enjoyable during after-school sessions. However, over the last few years, his legacy has been enveloped in controversy. In 2021, Dr. Seuss Enterprises halted publication of six books (e.g., "And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street," "If I Ran the Zoo") due to alleged racist imagery. This was part of the larger debates about how to balance literary preservation with stereotypes harmful to racial minorities in the US.

According to Kansas State English Professor Philip Nel, and the author of "Was the Cat in Hat Black?" Dr. Seuss's works have added to the perpetration of racial stereotypes in children's literature, since young children might be influenced by the negative portrayals of some groups. Nel does not necessarily argue that Dr. Seuss books should disappear, but there should be rethinking as to how the books are read to avoid harmful biases. "Instead of investing so much time in Dr. Seuss as an author, we should focus more on the content of the works and how they fit into a broader cultural and historical context."

Critics such as professor Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and children's author Grace Lin, on other hand, explicitly argue that the publication ban of the six Seuss books was

long overdue and that children's literature should meet modern values of diversity and inclusion.

University of Pennsylvania history professor Jonathan Zimmerman counters that pulling Dr. Seuss's books out of circulation is censorship. Students should be exposed to such works, even the aspects that are controversial, as they support critical thinking and discussions of race, history, and societal evolution. Instead of banning them, the books should serve as points for teaching about racism and historical contexts.

Those opposed to the ban, including the editors of Fox News and USA Today, worry that the removal of Dr. Seuss books could serve as an example of too much censorship, which in some time will refuse access to culturally important pieces.

I am an Asian American who grew up reading his books, including both "And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street" and "If I Ran the Zoo." I felt his stories to be inspiring; they nourished my creativity and imagination. The criticism for the racial depictions was brought to my notice long afterward; being a child, I had been into the vibrant illustrations and playful rhymes rather than the stereotyping. To me, the controversy is somewhat nonsensical, because most young readers read his work just for the fun and imaginative aspects rather than the racial imagery hidden between the lines.

One possible solution to this controversy might be to release the disputed books to the public domain, allowing educators and publishers alike to revise the offending imagery and offer an updated, inclusive interpretation of such classic stories. We can preserve the cultural and literary value of Dr. Seuss's works while still addressing the harmful stereotypes they may have contained. This would enable a more general discussion of social values that have changed and therefore place the series in better historical context. It will also better balance literary history and the recognition of bias from earlier eras.

Essay: Children's literature has long balanced education and entertainment, but some have expressed discontent about perceived messages or content. Books that challenged societal norms, questioned traditional family structures or depicted cultures questionably raised debates about whether they should be available to young readers. This is a controversy that reflects deeper concerns about just how much influence these books could have on the perceptions and values of children. The calls for banning these works conflict with more effective methods that involve thoughtful discussion and guidance, enabling children to understand complex themes with context and understanding.

Rather than banning these books, it is more advantageous to explain them to the children, pointing out various interpretations. In this way, a young reader will learn how to think critically and not be so sheltered against ideas he or she will come across. “Tikki Tikki Tembo,” which had been attacked for its presentation of Chinese culture, or LGBTQ-themed books like “Heather Has Two Mommies” and “Daddy's Roommate” are better used to talk about diversity and inclusion. These discussions, however, need to be tailored for the younger children who would not understand other sides of this discussion. For example, books on LGBTQ+ topics are better left to older children, who are more capable of forming an opinion.

Another approach to controversial literature is using warning labels or parental notice on these books. There may be some books that had been rated for age appropriateness, similar to movies or video games so that the parent could make some sort of decision. For example, books like those by Dr. Seuss that have been banned for their racially insensitive images might have a notice to encourage discussion about historical context rather than being completely restricted. Therefore, such measures attempt to grow interaction between children and adults by taking even the most controversial ideas as a way for teaching and encouraging the child's growth and perception of the world.

Age-appropriate discussions, parental guidance, and understanding the author's intentions is acceptable. Overall, it offers a thoughtful and comprehensive analysis of the issue. Understanding the author's motivation is important in arriving at an understanding of how books ought to be treated. For example, most likely Dr. Seuss did not intend to scandalize somebody or contribute to racism with his works, but the drawings echoed the views of the time. In contrast, the books “Heather Has Two Mommies” and “Daddy's Roommate” gave a specific message to comprehend LGBTQ+ families. Therefore, their objectives were more candid. Knowing what one is trying to achieve with these works will better inform how the materials should be presented to children so that appropriate context is provided without allowing for possible misinterpretation.

Instead of bans against such children's books, what needs to be done is a discussion about them in age-appropriate ways and, more importantly, to help young readers learn how to understand and interpret some of the heavier ideas that are being thrown their way. Controls, such as age recommendations or parental guidance labels, would set some limits to the exposure of such works while still providing access to a range of different perspectives. We help our children grow into more aware, all-rounded individuals who can face the many ideas and opinions forming our world by considering the authors for their motivations and encouraging open dialogue.

This was my very first formal forum and I was able to take out many things but there are a few that I would really love to share. I learned about the importance of perspective and how each and every one of us have different viewpoints on certain topics. Additionally, we all have different values and backgrounds that shape our understanding of certain things, and I learned that it's important to take these things into mind when wanting to live in a cohesive society. No one can fully agree with what you say but I learned that there's always a solution to these social issues by meeting in the middle and being considerate of what others may think. Even when it came to the solutions that Professor Nel shared, I was extremely open minded and realized that those solutions were not things I had taken into consideration. Although I still remain in my belief that these controversial books should be open to discussion and not kept from the public, I have learned a lot and grown through this short but meaningful experience.

Specifically, Aaliyah(Germany) shared a meaningful story on her experience dealing with racism as an elementary student. I learned through her meaningful story that although people may be privileged, there are people out there in this world who are experiencing problems with racism. Aaliyah's story opened me up to a new perspective and encouraged me to be open minded. The amount of courage it must have taken for someone to speak up about this topic also brought to my attention that we need more people to share and speak up for themselves including myself.

Thank you to all the participants who came out to this forum. I want to thank everyone who spoke up for their beliefs. I specifically want to thank Jonathan Zimmerman and Philip Nel both amazing professors for sharing their ideas and opening everyone up to new views. I'm sure everyone who attended was able to take out something meaningful and applicable to their own lives because I sure did.

JY: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sticks_and_Stones

Aaron Han is a sophomore at La Mirada High School (CA).

Brandon Chang is an 8th grader at Beechwood Elementary (California)

Dr Seuss is one of the most recognizable children book authors. He has made a lot of the most iconic books like, The Cat in the Hat, Green Eggs and Ham and One Fish, Two fish Blue Fish red Fish. But he was not a typical children's book author. he would say some offensive stuff, Phillip has come to be right since it is not ok to promote racism, especially in a kids book. These books were mostly that mostly offend other races. What Phillip was saying, Dr Seuss was a racist children's book series of how many offensive things he said during WWII. He has said a lot of political activities during the second world war.

But on the other hand, on PBS.org, Jonathan Zimmermann wants Dr Seuss to not be canceled. The reason why Jonathan said this is because he thinks that the people who read racist books don't make them racist. The people think that they should read first then decide if the book is racist or not. Jonathan also thought that throwing away books will not help you be less racist said Slaughter.

I believe Jonathan was the right person because he has a point. When a person reads a racist book, it doesn't exactly make them racist. People also need to read it to make sure it's not racist. There's a reason why we should check before banning books. Other books are also controversial such as Heather has two mommies and Daddy's Roommate. People shouldn't ban these books. I think it would be perfect to add a certain age limit to read some of these controversial books because of mature stuff. How this will work is that people will find an age restriction, such as thirteen, instead of total restrictions. Students under 13 can read with parental approval or notification. Parents have been complaining because of the "offensive content," on children's books. I feel like the parents are overreacting too much about what children read these days. In my opinion, I feel like people (at least 13 and over) should be allowed to read any book.

LEARN AT FORUM? What I learned from the forum was that people who teach controversial books should have better training, and many people don't really have a problem with reading racist books, especially if the author's motivation is not racist. Some people think the opposite. People like Phillip Nel exaggerate the harm of so-called racist books.

Gerald Han is a student at Sunny Hills HS, CA. Many pieces of controversial children's literature, like "Daddy's Roommate," "Heather Has Two Mommies," and various works from Dr. Seuss have been challenged or sometimes even outright banned from school bookshelves. While these books may be controversial, the option to outright ban access to them shouldn't be considered at all. All of these stories, as well as other challenged works, could be dealt with differently or not dealt with at all. For example, books containing queer elements are being challenged because of conservative cultural norms (and some religious beliefs). To me, books containing queer elements shouldn't have any controversy surrounding them in the first place, as being homosexual isn't necessarily an unnatural phenomenon. It's observed in many different species in nature and is possibly even linked to our genetics. Additionally, there are more openly gay people now than ever in history. Some may point out that this statistic is due to homosexuality being the trend for young people. This is false, as the cultural landscape decades ago looked far different from today. Being openly homosexual back then could cause trouble or harm to you and others, with bullying and harassment being a prominent issue. Thus, homosexual people had to keep quiet about their true sexual identity and lie about being heterosexual. As time passed, more and more people became accepting of different sexual identities. Now, homosexual people are free to express themselves without fear of facing any repercussions. Although there is no one specific reason behind why some people are queer, protesting and banning books that can help children understand homosexuality is not the right solution.

While I have not read "Daddy's Roommate" or "Heather Has Two Mommies" as a kid, I did read Dr. Seuss books, which similarly offended some people like the books

mentioned above. One book in particular, “And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street,” was my favorite Dr. Seuss book as a young child. This book was also among the six facing a cease to publication from Dr. Seuss Enterprises, with Mulberry Street being stopped due to a stereotypical image of an Asian man. As a kid, I had assumed this man looked like any other character drawn in the backgrounds of every page. There was nothing too distinct about him, being just another wacky figure.

Looking back, I wish that I was exposed to more controversial books like “Daddy’s Roommate” or any other literature depicting homosexuality. That way, I could have done more research into this contentious issue in the world and garnered a better understanding of it earlier on. If these books are still deemed too controversial for people, an easy, unbiased solution could be to apply a sticker that states that the book contains content that could offend others. Through this, parents and children can understand beforehand that anything they read is controversial, and adjust their thoughts accordingly. Brandon (see below) mentioned that there should be an age restriction on these books, for students under 13 to require parental approval to read controversial books. Although it may be reasonable to apply this to very young children, children around the ages of 13 and above are more than mature enough to read these books.

Before attending the forum, I thought that applying stickers or labels to LGBTQ-themed children’s books suggesting that it could contain some controversial elements could help satisfy people on both sides of the issue by not directly removing these books but rather putting them in a different context. However, after listening to some of the points made by the speakers, this might not be the best solution, and may actually result in bullying or harassment of students that chose to read these books. Additionally, the mere detail of a special sticker to indicate any controversial content would naturally lead to it being separated from other books without such a sticker. Thus, students may be more hesitant to check out books in the “special” section and see these books in a negative light.

Zimmerman’s point that parents should not have any involvement in what their children read and how preventing their kids from reading controversial literature can actually be harmful, as they cannot understand and connect with their identity deeper. Personally, this point resonates with me because reading Huckleberry Finn, a book banned in various school districts across the nation, at a young age helped me do research on racism and similar, more obscure concepts like institutional racism. If I were unable to read such books at a young age, I don’t think I would have the same level of knowledge on societal issues that I have today.

With this new insight, I don’t really know how you could keep these books in school libraries without dissatisfying people on both sides of the issue. A sticker could work, except for the negative consequences it can have when actually applied to books. An outright ban on these books could be controversial for directly impeding on our First Amendment laws. Even with various other potential compromises, there doesn’t seem to be a solid “middle ground” solution readily available.

ADDENDUM.

Sua Kim Should controversial children's books (e.g., Dr. Seuss, LGBTQ-themed) be restricted/banned?

Dr. Seuss's books have been accused of racism multiple times, and about six of them have already been banned by their publisher. There is some argument over if these books are insulting, but even more controversy about what should happen to them. Some think that the books are racist and absolutely should be banned, while others think that they are okay and should be continued, and others are somewhere in between.

I define racist as any words, imagery, or descriptions that will insult people of any kind of race though their culture, looks, etc... Dr. Seuss's books fit my and many others' definitions of racism.

I completely agree that multiple Seuss books fit my standard of racism, but I think that people should choose if they want to read them or not. After all, these books have been a huge part of our childhood.

I will first start off by pointing out the obvious: these books are old. Super old. Times change, and back then, racism was very common and went unpunished. A lot of people did not even think about if it was wrong. So, when writing his famous children's books, Dr. Seuss did not think that the content was wrong. He probably did not think it was offensive in the slightest. As the content of these books were not written in malice, not publishing several of them anymore is not going to be a stand against racism. It will just take away some great children's books.

One reason Dr. Seuss's books are so popular is because they are a great tool in helping children's vocabulary and reading skills. I believe that children should have parental consent and teacher/parent supervision if reading Dr. Seuss's books. Parents should be able to choose if they want their children reading these books; they should not be forced to read or give up these books. I think that a responsible adult should read alongside them, gently pointing out what is racist and why it is wrong, so children can know racism is wrong, why it is wrong, and at the same time, get access to great books!

I strongly believe that people should be able to choose if they want to read Dr. Seuss's books or not. The childhood stories are very meaningful to some, and it would be unfair to them to stop publishing Dr. Seuss's books. His books are great reading material, were not written with malice, and can teach more lessons than ever to young children. There are countless benefits compared to the small number of issues, so Dr. Seuss's books should be continued by the publisher.

There is much controversy not only about Dr. Seuss's books, but about Heather has Two mommies and other LGBTQ children's books. While I agree that Dr. Seuss's books are somewhat racist, and that people have every right to be offended by **them**, I believe that LGBTQ **children's** books should not be restricted in any way. Children coming from LGBTQ families deserve a book they can relate to, and I agree with Gerald Han that these books should not be banned at all. I disagree with Brandon that LGBTQ books should have an age limit for the same reason; it would be unfair for children coming from LGBTQ families to not have books that relate to them at all ages. However, I understand that some religious parents may not want their children reading LGBTQ books, so to not cause any more problems, I think the LGBTQ

children's books should be labeled so readers know of their content. I also think that if a parent has a problem with LGBTQ books at their school, they can sign a contract forbidding their children to check out queer books and be removed from the class when the teacher is reading one.

I also agree with Brandon Chang because reading racist books does not make people racist. Young children, who are the ones reading Dr. **Seuss's** books, also will not understand how wrong some of the content is, and will only understand the fun, colorful part of these cherished books. Brandon said that children under thirteen should be able to read Dr. Seuss's books with parental consent, and I agree because thirteen year olds should be mature enough to understand what is wrong and what is right, and because people have a right to complain about these books, but not the right to ban.

While I have never read *Heather has Two Mommies*, I have read Dr. Seuss as a child. I did not understand the wrongness in it and only saw the color pictures and fun rhymes. While I would have liked to read *Heather Has Two Mommies*, my experience reading these controversial books as a child has influenced my opinion that children will not be affected by the racism in Dr. Seuss's books.

In the Dr. Seuss forum, I learned two things about this topic that I had never thought about before, and really impacted what I felt should be done about these controversial books. For starters, it was pointed out that while teachers may have the best intentions at heart, they may not be skilled enough to handle what side effects that may come with teaching about racist books and/or books with other sensitive topics, like bullying. It was also pointed out that labeling or putting books in a certain area if the library may embarrass some and lead some children to think *oh, that books in the bad section of the library, something is wrong with it, or oh, that book has that sticker on it, it's different.*

What I learned at the forum made me rethink a few of my opinions. For one, I now think that teachers should undergo training to teach controversial books, so they can prevent bullying and help everyone understand the topic appropriately. Secondly, I did not read any queer books in elementary school, as they have very strict rules on who can read/check them out. As Korean was my first language, I would have had a hard time understanding LGBTQ books without any background content in kinder and first grade. In the forum, when others shared their experience with queer books in elementary school, I concluded that queer books should be in the library for all to read, but there should always be someone trusted to explain them to English learners, young children, and anyone else who is confused on this sensitive topic.

Gabrielle Park is an eighth grader at Oxford Academy, CA. Dr. Seuss is one of the most acknowledged authors in the world, with students dressing up in "crazy socks" and "wacky hats" on his birthday to celebrate and promote reading. However, a recent controversy has arisen to contradict one of the public's most widely held beliefs on the legacy of Dr. Seuss: in 2021, Dr. Seuss Enterprises ceased to publish six books due to supposed racist content.

Kansas State English Professor Philip Nel, author of "Was the Cat in Hat Black?" criticizes Dr. Seuss, stating that his books may have had a negative impact on its young readers, as children are easily influenced by the world around them.

On the contrary, I strongly disagree on the idea of banning, or even not publishing, Dr. Seuss's works. As a child, I remember reading "If I Ran the Zoo" and "On Beyond Zebra" with fascination about the colorful pictures and silly rhymes. Dr. Seuss did not have a political or social agenda and only wrote fun stories for young children. Yes, the books may have had a bit of outdated language, but Dr. Seuss's works were written with good intentions.

Additionally, the government should revise copyright laws and automatically allow permanently out-of-print books to enter the public domain. Right after the announcement about the banning of six of Seuss's stories, the books shot up to the bestseller's list on Amazon, with independent sellers listing them with sky-high prices. This illustrates how halting the publication of books will not halt America from reading them.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E2Yw64n7hD7AmsSIYpkPegD-mCFX_m1e5liHOMV2yOo/edit?tab=t.0
<https://www.amazon.com/Was-Cat-Hat-Black-Literature/dp/019063507X>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cd-gxTDnnqg>

Jonathan Zimmerman: The ones I strongly agree with are the comments about the weakness of the defense that that's what people thought back then. I'm a historian and that makes me crazy. You know people will say well you don't like slavery but that's what people thought back then. And to Phil's point the question is which people? Certainly a lot of white people that would be accurate. Not all white. William L Garrison didn't think slavery was great, and most of all enslaved people didn't think slavery was great. Frederick Douglas did not think slavery was great. The good censors are the ones who want to get rid of this really harmful racist stuff and the bad censors, the ones who want a blanket over racism, are the people that want a blanket over racism.