

# SHOULD CONTROVERSIAL BOOKS BE CENSORED?

**THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA FOR HOMEWORK, IN-CLASS TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.**

## INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Students can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

### NEW EDITION OF HUCK FINN WILL ELIMINATE OFFENSIVE WORDS

NPR | January 4, 2011 | Article  
258 words

An article on the new version of Huckleberry Finn, which will eliminate uses of the "N" word.

- Two scholars have proposed publishing a version of Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn to eliminate uses of the "N" word, replace it with "slave", and shorten an offensive reference to Native Americans.
- The version hopes to keep the book from disappearing from classrooms across the country because of the repeated use of offensive language.
- They argue that the action will not remove the issues of race Twain covers in the books.
- On Twitter, people were protesting the decision, saying it is not a good idea. One user said that reading the book taught them not to use the word because it was "improper."

### IT MAY BE 'PERFECTLY NORMAL,' BUT IT'S ALSO FREQUENTLY BANNED

NPR | September 21, 2014 | Audio  
3:58 minutes

A clip from All Things Considered that talks about why a children's book on sex education is one of the most banned books of the past two decades.

- The top three reasons for a book to be banned in the U.S. are violence, curse words, and sexual content.
- One of the most banned books of the past 20 years is a children's book on sex education, "It's Perfectly Normal." Specifically, the book has received backlash for its full-color pictures of naked people and illustrations of sex and birth control methods.
- Author Robie Harris says the information in the book is what every child has a right to know. The book is now in its fourth edition and has been updated to include fact-checked information on internet safety, sexting, and updated gender explanations for and about transgender youth.
- Many parents have asked libraries to put the book in a restricted section so kids do not come across it accidentally. Parent Carey Fritz says he would not want his children to see information in the book without his supervision.
- Harris does not agree with keeping the book in a restricted section. Harris believes that if it is in a special section of the library, maybe the kids who need it the most are not going to get it.

### NEW LONDON-SPICER PARENTS WANT BOOK BANNED

Minnesota Public Radio | May 11, 2017 | Article  
263 words

*Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help students to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.*

A news report on how a Minnesota school district is offering alternative lesson plans for the children of parents that want specific books banned.

- The New London-Spicer School District in west-central Minnesota offers an alternative lesson plan for children whose parents disagree with a book discussed in class.
- Parents are now claiming that the alternative lesson plan, which separates the children into different classrooms, acts more as a punishment to the kids whose parents object to the book being taught.
- Parents have objected to the use of the book “The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian” in the school’s eighth-grade curriculum, citing its profanity and reference to sexual acts.
- Parent Jessica Conlin believes that parents have the right to teach their own values to their children and have assurance that a classroom teacher would teach those same values.
- The school districts spokesperson says that banning a book in school is separate from a parent making a decision for their own household, which is why the alternative lesson plans were introduced to offer accommodations.

## KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your classroom and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Controversial
- Censor
- Profanity
- Values

## CONTEMPLATE

Students will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help students answer these five questions about each piece of media.

## DEBATE

Students will engage their peers in an evidence-based debate using the media they just analyzed. Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form an evidence-based response to the debate question.

In addition to rich in-class discussions, teachers can also connect with other classrooms through the Thinkalong website.

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# LET'S INVESTIGATE

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Use this worksheet to help you investigate the media sources in the Thinkalong module.



## SUMMARIZE THE TOPIC

## KEY VOCABULARY

## MEDIA RESOURCE 1

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

## MAIN IDEAS

## MEDIA RESOURCE 2

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

MAIN IDEAS

## MEDIA RESOURCE 3

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

MAIN IDEAS

# CONTEMPLATE YOUR SOURCES

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

After watching the media in the module, answer the questions below.

1. AUTHORSHIP: Who created this message?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

2. FORMAT: What creative techniques are being used to grab my attention?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

3. AUDIENCE: How might different people understand this message differently than me?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

4. CONTENT: What values and points of view are represented? What's left out of this message?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

5. PURPOSE: Why is this message being sent?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3



# CREATE YOUR ARGUMENT

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Create strong arguments for both sides from the resources in the Thinkalong module.



DEBATE QUESTION	
PRO ARGUMENT	CON ARGUMENT
REASONING	REASONING
EVIDENCE	EVIDENCE