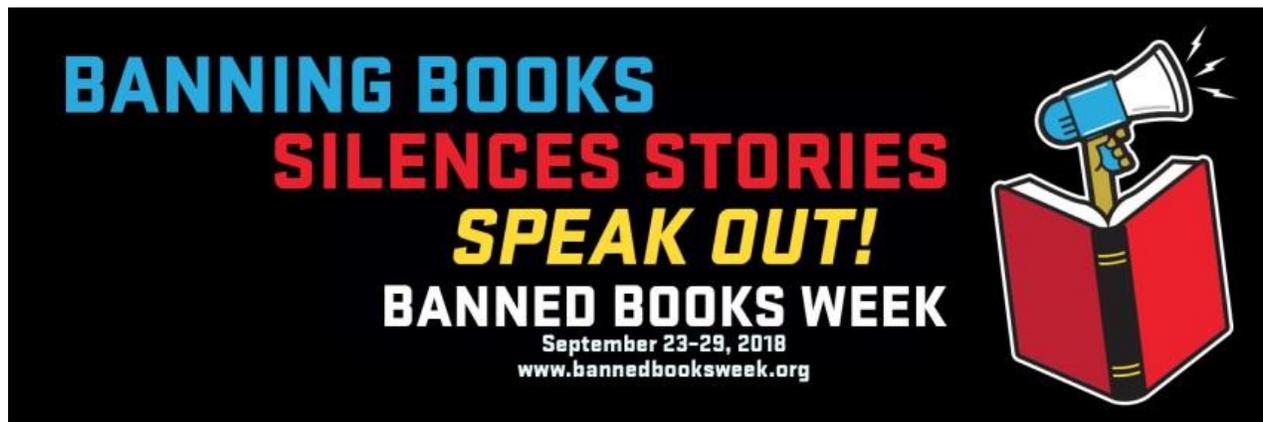


## Banning Books Silences Stories and It Kills a Love of Reading

By Shawnta S. Barnes – September 26, 2018



This week, September 23-29, is banned book week. This year's theme is, "Banning Books Silences Stories." Although this year is my 13th year as an educator, it is my first year as an elementary library/media specialist. During this month, I taught a censorship unit to my students in grades 2-6. We had fascinating conversations. One student asked, "Why do people want to keep information away from others?" I responded, "because they have power."

According to the Banned Books website:

*Banned Books Week is an annual event celebrating the freedom to read. Banned Books Week was launched in 1982 in response to a sudden surge in the number of challenges to books in schools, bookstores and libraries. Typically held during the last week of September, it highlights the value of free and open access to information. Banned Books Week brings together the entire book community – librarians, booksellers, publishers, journalists, teachers, and readers of all types – in shared support of the freedom to seek and to express ideas, even those some consider unorthodox or unpopular.*

People in power get to make the decisions. I wanted students to know, even as students, they have the right to speak up and have a say in what they know. They have the right to question situations and fight back against censorship. I even shared situations from my own career.

The majority of my career, I was a middle school English teacher. During my career, I have been challenged by colleagues, parents, and administration about texts I chose to use in my classroom. A few text I had to justify using were *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, *Tears of a Tiger* by Sharon Draper, and *Chains* by Laurie Halse Anderson. I have also had people even question the books that I used in literature circles. At the end of the day, I got kids to read. Any student (probably with an eye roll included) will tell you I say this, "You can't get better at reading if you don't read." My main goal is to get kids to read.

Last year when I wrote the article, "[Can the Ban and Just Let Kids Read](#)," my childhood Pastor spoke out and told me he disagreed with my stance. This isn't the first time my viewpoint on this topic has been challenged, so I'm used to it. During the majority of my career, I have worked mostly with students of color. Too many students of color are not reading on grade level. My students were not reading in a vacuum. They had to discuss the ideas in the text they were reading with their peers and me.

At the end of the day, I don't have time to argue with people about giving children the freedom to chose what they read especially when most of the complainers are doing nothing to ensure students know how to read and have the literacy skills to be successful after graduation.

If you are curious about the top ten banned books, click [here](#).