

Challenged Books List

This selective list provides information on more than 100 books that have been challenged in the past 21 years. Each challenge sought to limit public access to the books in schools, libraries, or bookstores. Some challenges were upheld; others were rejected. We have tried to update our research on unresolved challenges.

Because some challenges are dismissed, the books remain on library shelves or curriculum lists. We think it worthwhile to include such instances because the effect of a controversy over print material can spread, even though the would-be book-banners lose. A book with a controversial reputation tends to be quietly dropped from reading lists and curricula. This interference can be most insidious—quiet acquiescence to the kind of scare tactics that would-be censors know how to employ.

Because organizations and community groups that ask for book and magazine bans generally want to avoid public controversies, it is often difficult to discover why challenges are launched or what becomes of them. If you know of book challenges or, better still, satisfactory resolutions anywhere in Canada, please use the accompanying case study form to give us details.

Challenged Books

Alma, Ann. *Something to Tell*.

2000—At the beginning of a Children’s Book Week tour of schools and libraries in Prince Edward Island, the author was told that she should not read from this book, one of her three titles for young readers.

Cause of objection—The tour coordinator said P.E.I. students were not mature enough for the book, which tells the story of a girl who has been subjected to sexual touching by the headmistress of her school.

Update—It turned out that a child had made an accusation of sexual touching in one of the schools Alma was to visit. After agreeing to the ban for the first day of her week-long tour, Alma decided to ignore the prohibition, and teachers in schools she visited subsequently thanked her for including the book in her presentations.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid’s Tale*.

2001—Although there is no known instance of a challenge to this novel in Canada, it ranks 37th on the American Library Association’s list of the 100 most frequently challenged books in the 1990s. Most recently it caused a controversy when placed on the reading list for senior high school students in Dripping Springs (TX), a town 40 kilometres southwest of Austin.

Cause of objection—A group of parents said the book was anti-Christian and pornographic.

Update—An ad hoc committee appointed to consider the objections decided to leave the book on the list, although the parents said they would appeal the school board’s decision.

Awashish, Basile, Lucien Awashish, Claude Lachapelle, and Christine Laniel. *Carcajou le glouton fripon*.

1982—Several schools turned down these educational strips on native lore (funded by the Canada Council, the Secretary of State, and Quebec's Ministry of Cultural Affairs) because of nudity—even though it's part and parcel of the legends.

Babel, Isaac. "The Sin of Jesus" from the anthology *The Story-Makers*, edited by Rudy Wiebe.

1984—This book was challenged at the Halton County (ON) Board of Education. Cause of objection—Blasphemy.

Update—The anthology has not been listed since 1984.

Babbitt, Natalie. *Ouch*, illustrated by Fred Marcelino.

1999—This title was withdrawn from an Edmonton school when the library technician warned the principal that the book was unsuitable. A teacher had chosen the book from the Edmonton Public School Board's Best of the Best list. Cause of objection—The book deals with hell.

Update—When the teacher appealed the decision, the principal told her that the decision stood and that children could borrow the book from the public library.

Ball, John. *In the Heat of the Night*.

See Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Banks, Lynne Reid. *The Indian in the Cupboard*.

1992—Kamloops (BC) School Board removed this title temporarily from its libraries.

Cause of objection—Potentially offensive treatment of native peoples.

Update—The books were replaced, but the title is included on a roster of challenged materials for teacher information.

Barker, Malcolm J., and T.C. Sobey. *Courting Disaster*.

1990—This book about goings-on in Buckingham Palace was banned worldwide by a British court. T.C. Sobey is a Canadian.

Update—It became a best-seller in the United States and Canada.

Bayliss, Maureen. *Strike!*

1995—A Canadian children's picture book about a child and mother on the picket line raised hackles in England.

Cause of objection—The book attempts to politically indoctrinate children.

The Bible.

2001—A one-woman board of inquiry of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission declared that four Biblical passages used in a Saskatoon newspaper advertisement in 1997, published by *The StarPhoenix* and paid for by Hugh Owens, were hate speech.

Cause of objection—The excerpts, combined with a drawing of two stick-men holding hands surrounded by a circle with a slash through it, tended to expose homosexuals to hatred and ridicule.

Update—*The StarPhoenix* and Hugh Owens were each ordered to pay \$4,500 to the complainants; Owens was forbidden from publishing similar messages in the future. In 2003, a provincial court refused to hear Owens's appeal.

Block, Francesco Lia. *Baby Be-Bop*.

1998—One of two titles removed from a high school library in Calgary by the director of education who was pressured by a parent group intent on weeding out books with gay or lesbian content. The board appointed a review committee to assess the book's appropriateness.

Cause of objection—The book includes homosexual characters and situations.

Update—The board's review committee recommended that this title be retained in the board's database.

Booth, Jack, and David Booth (eds.). *Impressions*.

A language arts series for Grades 1 to 6 published from 1984 on by Holt, Rinehart and Winston Canada and a continuing target of fundamentalist religious organizations.

Cause of objection—Promotion of the occult and Satanism.

Update—The books have been challenged in communities across Alberta, Manitoba, and southern Ontario. In 1995, some trustees of the Metropolitan Toronto Separate School Board asked to have this series removed from their schools. Because more than three quarters of the board's schools used the series, the board's decision would have cost the system \$1 million for replacement texts. The board ultimately decided to keep the series.

Buffie, Margaret. *Who Is Frances Rain?*

1990—Winner of the 1988 Young Adult Fiction Award from the Canadian Library Association and an American Library Association Notable Book. The author's visit to a public school in Orleans (ON) was cancelled during Canadian Children's Book Week.

Cause of objection—The words "hell" and "bastard" made the book unsuitable for 10-to-13-year-olds.

Burgess, Anthony. *A Clockwork Orange*.

1990—One of several books challenged by a parent group in Essex County (ON).

Update—None of the books were withdrawn from the high school reading list as a result of the protest.

Butz, Arthur. *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*.

1984—This book was seized from the library of the University of Calgary by RCMP officers acting under the authority of the Customs Tariff Act.

Cause of objection—Classified as "hate literature."

Update—The book was put back on the university's library shelves because of a technicality—Customs officers' prohibition of the book came after the book had entered the country.

1995—A copy of the book was seized by the RCMP from a public library in Didsbury (AB). Before the librarian could respond to the seizure, the book was shredded—because the RCMP said it was prohibited.

Califia, Pat, and Janine Fuller (eds.). *Forbidden Passages*.

1995—This collection of excerpts from books that Canada Customs had barred from Canada was published in the United States by Cleis Press, a small gay and lesbian publishing house. The book was turned down by several printers and distributors in Canada before finding a printer and a Canadian distributor, Marginal Distribution of Peterborough (ON).

Cause of objection—Canadian distributors were concerned about reprisals from Canada Customs.

Cantin, Reynald. *J'ai besoin de personne; Le choix d'Eve; Le secret d'Eve*.

1991—Because they deal with teenage sex and abortion, these books were banned in the high school of Loretteville (QC), even though the author has been teaching there for 15 years.

Chan, Gillian. *Glory Days and Other Stories*.

2000—During the sexual assault trial of a former teacher in Langley (BC), court heard evidence that the teacher had assigned a story, "Invisible Girl," from this critically acclaimed collection to a Grade 4 and 5 class. The story deals with date rape. The school principal suggested to the board superintendent that the book be withdrawn from Langley schools.

Cause of objection—The story was deemed inappropriate for the grade level.

Update—Almost two years passed before a school board official assured the preparers of the Freedom to Read kit that the book had been withdrawn from the elementary panel but not from all schools in Langley. The book's publisher, Kids Can Press, also attempted to find out whether the book had been taken out of all schools in the district. The book is still available in secondary school libraries.

Cormier, Robert. *We All Fall Down*.

1998—A parent in Simcoe County (ON) complained to the school board about the presence of this title and Lois Lowry's novel *The Giver* in two elementary school libraries. The Cormier novel begins with the description of the vandalizing of a family home and the brutal attack on a 14-year-old girl who lives in the house.

Cause of objection—The violence portrayed in the novel makes it unfit for public schools, the parent said.

Update—When the board decided to move the book into the secondary schools, the parent remained unsatisfied and wrote a letter to the Ontario minister of education, who said (in the fall of 1999) that the school board should handle the

problem. A school board spokesperson said, in turn, that the school's principal was accountable for any decision.

Coville, Bruce. *Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher*.

1993—A parent group in Leeds-Grenville County (ON) wanted this fantasy novel about dragons and magic removed from the Linklater-Macdonald Public School Library.

Cause of objection—One complainant said the book hints at occultism and “New Age religion.”

Update—A review committee set up by the board recommended that the book remain in the library.

DeClements, Barthe. *No Place for Me*.

1995—A parent of children in Surrey (BC) Traditional School fought to have this book removed.

Cause of objection—The book was said to promote the Wicca religion.

Update—The Surrey School Board voted to keep the book in its libraries.

Deschamps, Yvon. *Tout Deschamps*.

1998—After Deschamps, Quebec's top francophone storyteller, and black comic Normand Brathwaite read excerpts from this book onto a cassette, a unilingual anglophone complained about a 29-year-old piece entitled “Nigger Black.” The complainant didn't understand that the piece was anti-racist. Nonetheless, the complaint was published in Montreal's *Gazette*, which ran a front-page attack on the alleged slur by Deschamps.

Update—To offset further controversy, stores across Quebec stopped selling the cassette two days later.

Dickey, James. *Deliverance*.

1990—This title was one of several books challenged by a parent group in Essex County (ON).

Update—The books were not withdrawn.

Doyle, Brian. *Hey, Dad!*

1984—Doyle's publisher received a letter from the principal of a rural Ontario school stating that copies of the book were being returned because they promoted negative views and did not contain the values of “positive citizenship.”

Duncan, “Sandy” Frances. *Listen to Me, Grace Kelly*.

1990—During her tour of Newfoundland and Labrador during Children's Book Week, the author was told by a language arts consultant that she was not to read from or even talk about her latest novel.

Cause of objection—Author was never told.

Update—The author claims a whispering campaign prevented wide distribution of her book in schools.

Duras, Marguerite. *Man Sitting in a Corridor*.

1993—A Canada Customs agent prohibited entry after leafing through the novel. The shipment was destined for use in a graduate course at Trent University. Cause of objection—The book was ruled obscene because of its portrayal of “sex with violence.”

Update—The ruling was appealed and the shipment was released.

Dworkin, Andrea. *Pornography: Men Possessing Women and Woman Hating*.

1993—A shipment of books that included this title was detained by Canada Customs. Dworkin is a noted feminist writer opposed to pornography. The Supreme Court of Canada based its landmark Butler decision on obscenity, at least in part, on the works of this U.S. feminist. Ironically, Dworkin’s books were among those detained by Customs as a result of conflicting interpretations of the court’s ruling.

Update—Both books were eventually released as a result of media coverage but without the filing of an appeal. Thus the books are still officially obscene.

Elwin, Rosamund. *Asha’s Mums*.

1997—This Canadian picture book, aimed at children in kindergarten and Grade 1, was banned from use in public schools in Surrey (BC) along with two other picture books, *Belinda’s Bouquet* by Lesléa Newman and *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads* by Johnny Valentine. The books had been submitted to the school board for approval earlier in the school year by a primary-level teacher. Before banning these three books, the board also announced that it would not approve any materials drawn from resource lists submitted by the Gay and Lesbian Educators (GALE) of British Columbia. As a result, parents, teachers, and students launched a lawsuit against the school board, seeking to have the decisions reversed.

Cause of objection—The books were said by the board to promote a homosexual lifestyle—though the words “gay,” “lesbian,” and “homosexual” are not used in the three books.

Update—In December 2002, the Supreme Court of Canada declared that the school board was wrong to ban books depicting homosexual parents in a positive light from elementary classrooms. The B.C. School Act, the court said, requires public schools to be secular, pluralistic and respectful of diversity.

Findley, Timothy. *The Wars*.

1991—In Lambton County (ON), a high school student asked that the novel be removed from the English curriculum.

Cause of objection—A passage describes the rape of a Canadian soldier by his fellow officers during World War I. The book was said to pressure students to accept homosexuality.

Update—The school board upheld use of the book at the OAC (formerly Grade 13) level.

Friday, Nancy. *Women on Top: How Real Life Has Changed Women’s Sexual Fantasies*.

1997—Winnipeg police entered libraries in the city and threatened to lay charges if this book were not withdrawn immediately from library shelves. The police were acting on advice from the Crown attorney's office, which was responding to an anonymous call to a radio phone-in show. The police also said they would prosecute anyone caught distributing the book, including bookstores. At the same time, RCMP officers in B.C. raided three libraries looking for copies of the book but without success.

Cause of objection—The book, which was based on interviews with women who described their sexual fantasies in detail, was said to be pornographic. Although the book had been published in 1991, no charges had ever been brought against it.

Update—Within a week, the Manitoba Crown attorney's office retreated from the controversy, saying that a successful prosecution would be unlikely. In B.C., civil rights organizations and the B.C. Library Association objected to the RCMP's intimidation of librarians.

Gauthier, Bertrand. *Ani Croche* and *La course à l'amour*.

1995—Before the Commission des états généraux sur l'éducation (Estates General of Education Commission), the president of the Association des parents catholiques du Québec (Association of Catholic Parents of Quebec) denounced these two books for youngsters, written by a multiple prize-winner, as being "unacceptable" and "borderline pornographic." She asked the Ministry of Education to provide "better control over the selection of books found in libraries." The news media described the recommendation as a return to blacklisting and noted that the APCQ exerted a strong influence over the Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal (Catholic School Board of Montreal). The president of the school board said that APCQ influence would not affect the schools since *Ani Croche* was no longer on the list recommended by its Bureau of Teaching Materials and that *La course à l'amour* had not been on that list since 1990.

Gill, John (ed.). *New American and Canadian Poetry*.

1994—The school board in Sechelt (BC), responding to a parental complaint, removed this book from student use in Chatelech Secondary School.

Cause of objection—Anthology was said to present an anti-establishment view and to present sex and four-letter words in a positive light.

Update—The school board decided, following a review, that the book should remain in the library. The sole copy has since been stolen and not replaced.

Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies*.

1988—The Race Relations Committee of the Toronto Board of Education recommended that the book be withdrawn from curriculum use in all Toronto high schools.

Cause of objection—Novel was seen to contain racial slurs.

Update—The board rejected the committee's recommendation but circulated to all its schools the reasons for the parents' objections that had led to the

committee's study of the book and asked its Committee on Bias in the Curriculum to suggest ways the book could be taught with sensitivity.

Gourdeau, Gabrielle. *Clins d'oeil à Romain Gary*

2002—A professor at Laval University, who thought he was being maligned in the short story “Gros-Câlisse” (which depicts the misbehaviour of a fictional department head in an unnamed university), sued Gourdeau for libel, damages, and psychological aggravation. The professor also obtained a court order that prevents the news media from identifying him. Gourdeau declared bankruptcy in July 2003, and the suit was dropped in mid-trial. The professor later died.

Update—The CBC and the newspaper *Le Soleil* are appealing the court order that protects the professor's anonymity.

Grime, Tony. *Not the Only One: Lesbian and Gay Fiction for Teens.*

1997—The director of Calgary's Board of Education removed this book and one other title from a high school library, and asked a review committee to decide whether Grime's book should remain in the system. At the time, the board was considering a policy aimed at creating more support for gay and lesbian youth in Calgary schools but was under considerable pressure from a parent group that did not want the policy to be adopted.

Cause of objection—Although no one had objected to the book, the director felt that the book was inappropriate because of content and language.

Update—The book was deemed inappropriate by the review committee and withdrawn from use in the schools.

hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation.*

1993—hooks is a professor at Oberlin College (OH). She is a noted feminist and an anti-racist activist. Her book was adopted for women's studies courses at the University of Alberta, Simon Fraser University, York University, St. Mary's University, and the University of Windsor. As a result, the first printing had sold out in Canada. A reprint of 1,500 copies from the U.S. was held up by Canada Customs.

Cause of objection—Examined as possible hate literature.

Update—The books were released 24 hours later.

Hornung, Rick. *Under the Gun: Inside the Mohawk Civil War.*

1991—A Quebec court's injunction suspended for one week the sale and distribution of this account of the 1990 clash at Oka.

Cause of objection—Two native women complained that they had been misquoted and defamed by the writer.

Update—The ban was lifted by a Quebec Superior Court judge who said he could see no evidence of either charge.

Hoy, Claire, and Victor Ostrovsky. *By Way of Deception: A Devastating Insider's Portrait of the Mossad.*

1990—Release temporarily restricted in Canada.

Cause of objection—Said to contain “lethal information about Israeli intelligence services.”

Update—It became a best-seller in the United States after a ban was lifted there, but the Israeli government filed a lawsuit in 1990 against the Canadian publisher (Stoddart) and the authors. The lawsuit did not proceed, and in 1991 Stoddart released a paperback edition that included a chapter describing the legal problems the book had incurred.

Jackson, Shirley. “The Witch” from the anthology *Inside Stories I*, edited by two Edmonton teachers.

1994—Approved for curriculum use in high schools by the Alberta government, the anthology was removed from classrooms in Ponoka County because of the Jackson story.

Cause of objection—A trustee with a son in a school in Rimbey said “The Witch” was “very, very disturbing” and inappropriate for children of any age. Students in the trustee’s son’s class surrendered the books, the teacher was threatened with dismissal if she did not comply with the books’ withdrawal, and a substitute teacher who wrote to a local paper to support the text was fired. Later the books were returned to the students with “The Witch” and a story by Alice Munro cut out.

Update—When Ponoka County amalgamated with another in 1995, the stories were reinstated.

Jolin, Dominique. *Qu’est-ce que vous faites là?*

1995—Although young readers rated the book at the top of the *Livromagie* list, this illustrated book for children was kept under lock and key in a Vancouver library along with books on sex. The reason: in the final scene, two children wake up to discover that their parents, who seem to be undressed under their bedsheet, are pretending to have a pillow fight. An elementary school in Manitoba, which had ordered the book, returned it to the publisher “because it might lead some parents to protest.”

King, Stephen. *Different Seasons*.

1995—The Lanark County (ON) School Board refused to include this collection of four novellas chosen by teachers for senior students at Carleton Place High School.

Cause of objection—Board members, one of whom had not read the book, said it was unsuitable because of language and sexual content.

Update—A Lanark County bookseller co-operated with King’s publisher to distribute 600 free copies of the book in three communities. The board decided that in future it would not make arbitrary decisions about book choices but would establish a consultative process with teachers and members of the community.

Kinsella, W.P. *Dance Me Outside* and other titles.

1994—Books by the well-known Canadian author were removed from the library in Jean Vanier Roman Catholic school in Barrie (ON) after complaints from an Onkwehonwe anti-racism alliance.

Cause of objection—“It was felt that there are some things that might be objectionable if taken out of context . . . A 14-year-old might not get the idea that Kinsella is using irony.”

Update—The public library and public schools in the district decided not to remove Kinsella’s books.

Kristof, Agota. *Le grand cahier*.

2003—This award-winning novel, which is based on the author’s experiences in World War II, tells of the effects of a fictional war on two boys in an unnamed country. A parent of a 16-year-old girl in St-Jérôme (QC) complained about the book and took his case to the media when the school would not provide an alternative novel.

Cause of objection—The parent complained that the book is “very violent and grossly pornographic, as it features scenes of bestiality and pedophilia.”

Update—School administrators announced that the book would be dropped in September 2003, but they also said their decision had nothing to do with the controversy. They noted that today’s teens are subjected to much harsher realities without adult supervision. The novel is used in high schools throughout Quebec.

Kropp, Paul. *Moonkid and Liberty*.

1998—A parent in Winnipeg complained to her child’s school about this novel which was offered for study in Grade 8 language arts classes.

Cause of objection—The book was said to include “negative and morally questionable situations” such as drug encounters, sexual comments, underage drinking, smoking in school washrooms, the selling of pornographic magazines, and offensive language.

Update—The principal persuaded the teacher to teach another novel.

Laird, Elizabeth. *A Little Piece of Ground*.

2003—A Canadian bookseller wrote to the British publisher of this novel about a 12-year-old Palestinian boy living in an Israeli-occupied area and asked that the firm consider not releasing the book.

Cause of objection—The bookseller said the novel, intended for teenage readers, was “a racist, inflammatory, and a totally one-sided piece of propaganda.”

Update—The book was released by the Canadian distributor. Publicity about the Canadian objection and others in the United Kingdom pushed the novel to a sales ranking of 161 on www.amazon.co.uk.

Lally, Robert. *Heroes, Dreams and Incest*.

1992—This unpublished manuscript, which explored the mind of a pedophile and was written by a retired psychologist, was shredded by Canada Customs officers after they intercepted it on its way back from a U.S. literary agent. RCMP

officers, acting on advice from Canada Customs, raided Lally's home in Alberta to confiscate a second copy of the manuscript.

Update—The attorney general's office later determined that the manuscript did not violate the Criminal Code.

Laurence, Margaret. *The Diviners*.

From 1976 to 1994, the book was challenged repeatedly and removed from senior high school reading lists across Canada. In at least two provinces it does not appear on the curriculum.

Cause of objection—Language and sexual content.

LeBlanc, Pierre, and Robin Konstabaris. *Scrambled Brains*.

1998—A controversial cookbook with whimsical illustrations, the book was removed from gift shops in B.C. Ferries vessels after a chief steward raised concern. There were no public complaints, but a spokesman for B.C. Ferries said that a contract with a bookseller required that titles be "of a non-controversial nature."

Cause of objection—The book includes recipes such as "Exploding Jesus Cake," a section called "Cooking with Weed," and one illustration in which a semi-naked man displays an intimate interpretation of roulade, a rolled meat dish usually stuffed with a pickle.

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

2002—A black parents' group in Yarmouth (NS) objected to this novel plus Barbara Smucker's *Underground to Canada* and John Ball's *In the Heat of the Night*. The director of education of the Tri-County school board ordered the withdrawal of the three books pending a ruling by the board, but his order was rescinded at a board meeting and the books were restored. In 1993, a school principal in Hamilton (ON) removed the novel from the core reading list for Grade 10 after a complaint from a parent. In 1991, a black community group called PRUDE (Pride of Race, Unity and Dignity through Education) asked Saint John (NB) School District 20 to withdraw this book and *Huckleberry Finn* from reading lists.

Cause of objection—The novel, which contains the word "nigger," might cause black students to be mocked because of racial stereotyping.

Leger, Diane. *Maxine's Tree*.

1992—An official of the International Woodworkers of America in Sechelt (BC) asked that the book be withdrawn from elementary school libraries in his community.

Cause of objection—The young protagonist in this picture book is opposed to clear-cut logging in a first growth forest. The union leader charged that the book indoctrinated children into an anti-logging or extremist viewpoint.

Update—The school board rejected his request.

Lowry, Lois. *The Giver*.

1998—A parent in Simcoe County (ON) complained about the presence of this book and Robert Cormier's novel *We All Fall Down* in two elementary school libraries.

Cause of objection—The parent said that teaching this book would be more appropriate at the Grade 11 level. The book is aimed at children aged 10 to 13.

Update—The board considered the objection but decided to leave *The Giver* in school libraries for Grade 6, 7, and 8 students.

Madonna. *Sex*.

1991–92—In Thunder Bay (ON), Cambridge (ON), Halifax (NS), and many other Canadian communities, a chorus of objections greeted news that libraries had purchased copies for patrons. One library recorded more than 100 requests for the book.

Update—After a noisy public meeting of Thunder Bay's library board, officials decided to keep the book in the system for borrowers over the age of 18.

Major, Kevin. *Hold Fast*.

1988–89—One of three books challenged by one person in a high school library in Estevan (SK).

Update—The board followed regular procedures for dealing with challenged materials, and the book remains in the library.

Background—The book, credited with being the first young-adult novel to be written in Canada, has been at the heart of many controversies in schools and communities across Canada. A public reading of *Hold Fast* was held at the Canadian Children's Book Centre in Toronto to mark Freedom to Read Week 1995.

Marineau, Michèle. *L'été des baleines*.

1991—When the author was invited to a school in Princeville (QC) to speak on this sequel to the novel *Cassiopée ou l'été polonais*, for which she received the Governor General's Award, a group of parents objected to the visit because the book deals with, among other things, teenage sex. After a survey of the sexual habits of students revealed that the novel would not unleash a wave of traumas, the visit was allowed to take place.

Martel, Suzanne. *The King's Daughter*.

1993—The Regina (SK) Public School Division pulled the book off library shelves after school curriculum consultants decided that the book was inappropriate for students to read unsupervised.

Cause of objection—Martel, a historical writer who won the Ruth Schwartz Award for this book as well as the Vicky Metcalf Award for lifetime achievement, describes natives from the perspective of a scared young immigrant who has yet to overcome her prejudice.

Update—When Groundwood reprinted the book, the publisher added a warning to explain this subjective approach, but the “offensive” passages were nevertheless deleted or modified without notifying the author.

Matas, Carol. *The Primrose Path*.

1995—The author had been invited to speak at the Shaarey Zedek synagogue in Winnipeg where she and her family had attended for three generations, but several weeks before the agreed-upon date, the invitation was withdrawn.

Cause of objection—The synagogue had been advised that it could be sued for libel if the author spoke about her most recent novel for young people, which described the sexual abuse of a girl by a rabbi who is her teacher. The fictional story resembled a recent case in which a Winnipeg rabbi had been charged but found not guilty of a similar offence.

Meyer, Richard. *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art*.

2002—The author was due to appear at Glad Day Bookshop in Toronto when he discovered that his publisher, Oxford University Press, had decided not to sell the U.S. edition in Canada.

Cause of objection—The book includes a photograph of a nude boy by Robert Mapplethorpe, and the publisher feared the photograph might trigger criminal charges under Canada’s child pornography law. “The picture at issue, a portrait entitled ‘Jesse McBride,’ is not pornographic in any way,” said Meyer, “and part of what I discuss in the book is how the patently false charge of child pornography has been used by conservative politicians and the Christian Right as a justification to suppress Mapplethorpe’s work. Using these same arguments, Oxford has, in effect, censored a scholarly book on censorship.”

Moebius (Jean Giraud). *Metallic Memories*.

1992—This collection of illustrations by the famous science fiction artist—France issued a stamp in his honour—was refused entry by Canada Customs while en route to Styx International in Winnipeg (MB).

Cause of objection—The Customs form mentioned a drawing of an animal devouring its victim and a child pierced with needles. Not only is it impossible to find such illustrations in the book, but according to the government agency’s own criteria, none of these reasons is sufficient to warrant an import ban.

Montpetit, Charles (ed.). *La première fois* and *The First Time*. Two volumes each.

1992–2002—In Quebec, five secondary schools asked the anthologist to give a lecture as part of a Department of Education tour. Each school received a box full of free copies of these critically acclaimed collections, which contain true accounts of first-time sexual experiences by writers for adolescents. Even though sex education was mandatory in secondary schools, all five schools refused to pass the books to the students who would attend the lecture, and the anthologist was asked to talk about something else—in one case, less than 15 minutes before the lecture took place.

Mohr, Richard. *Gay Ideas*.

1992—This controversial American book contains photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe. Oxford University Press, the Canadian distributor, decided not to distribute or promote the book, even though the company carries the rest of the list of the American publisher, Beacon Press. One salesperson resigned in protest.

Munro, Alice. *Lives of Girls and Women*.

1982—Toronto parents petitioned, without success, to remove the book from the high school curriculum. This book has been the target of challenges in school districts across the country.

Cause of objection—Parents objected to the “language and philosophy of the book.”

Newlove, John (ed.). *Canadian Poetry: The Modern Era*.

1987—This text—and *Dreamspeaker* by Cam Hubert, *The Diviners*, *A Jest of God*, and *The Stone Angel* by Margaret Laurence, and *Selected Poems* by Al Purdy—triggered objections by a parent group in Victoria County (ON).

Update—The board voted to retain *Canadian Poetry: The Modern Era* on its reading list. During the 1987–88 school year, the parent group objected to J.D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* and *Faces of Mythology*, edited by John Livesay. The school board rejected the challenges. The parent group ran candidates for the school board during the 1989 municipal elections; all were defeated.

Newman, Lesléa. *Belinda’s Bouquet*.

See Elwin, Rosamund. *Asha’s Mums*.

Oates, Joyce Carol. *Foxfire*.

1996—A parent demanded the removal of this novel from the optional reading list for senior English students at a Milton (ON) high school. His 16-page flyer, distributed throughout the community, included excerpts from the book and the text of an eight-page letter to the superintendent of educational services for the Halton Board of Education.

Cause of objection—The book, which deals with the subject of teenaged gangs, was said to contain obscene and profane language as well as graphic scenes of sex and violence.

Update—In April 1997, the school board agreed that *Foxfire* should be retained as a curriculum option for Milton and other high schools but designated the book for small group instruction or independent study. Nothing further was heard from Parents Against Corrupt Teachers (PACT), the organization that sparked the controversy.

O’Brien, Dereck. *Suffer the Little Children*.

1991—This autobiographical account of child abuse in the Mount Cashel orphanage and foster homes in the St. John’s (NF) area was banned in the St. John’s region.

Cause of objection—The provincial government argued that the book should not be sold during the trials of the eight Christian Brothers charged with abusing boys at Mount Cashel.

Update—At first, the province extended the ban pending proceedings against a foster mother's court appearance in December 1992. The ban was extended even though the government had released the report of the commission that investigated the Mount Cashel affair. However, the book is now available in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Pearson, Mike. *Waging War from Canada*.

2001—This non-fiction book argues that Canada is an ideal launching pad for international terrorism against the United States. Canada Customs intercepted several boxes of the book that were sent from the U.S. publisher to the author in Ottawa. The author is a Canadian writing under a pseudonym.

Cause of objection—Customs officials said there is no record of the books' seizure. An over-zealous official might have turned the books back because they were shipped just two days after the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001. The author later received two copies of the book by overnight courier.

Pierce, William. *The Turner Diaries*.

1996—This underground novel, said to have inspired the Oklahoma City bomber, describes how white supremacists launch an anti-government race war. Originally published in 1978, the book has recently been republished by Barricade Books in the U.S. The Jewish publisher has said that he strongly opposes the content of the book, but he believes that it should be available to the public.

Update—Canada Customs has never allowed the book into Canada, having stopped it at the border half a dozen times. Since the new edition came out with a mainstream publisher, Customs reviewed the book and classified it as hate literature. The import prohibition was issued in July 1996, by which time Barricade's Canadian distributor had received a shipment—which it promptly sent back. The bookstore that had ordered the book said it would not appeal Customs' decision.

Pomerleau, Gervais. *L'affaire du cachalot noir, Tison-Ardent, La complainte des huarts,* and *Les colères de l'océan*.

1995—A student was invited to set up a display in the lobby of the Polyvalente des Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Magdalen Islands High School) on the theme of the damage caused by the sunken oil barge *Irving Whale*. But the principal asked him to remove *L'affaire du cachalot noir*, a young people's book that deals with this matter, or the display would be cancelled. The principal also prohibited the reading of other books by the author "because he doesn't know what he's talking about" and "because they are full of exaggerations and spelling mistakes." (The "spelling mistakes" occur when an uneducated character or a bird whose beak is glued together is talking.) The student withdrew the book but, despite his teacher's objections, did his end-of-term work in literature on *Les colères de l'océan*—and got one of the highest marks in his class.

Pron, Nick. *Lethal Marriage*.

1995—This account of the Bernardo-Homolka murders, written by a *Toronto Star* reporter, was removed from the St. Catharines (ON) Public Library by the library board.

Cause of objection—The book was said to contain some inaccuracies, and the board received visits from the police morality squad and the mother of one of Bernardo's victims. It was said that retaining the book in the library would prove too traumatic for the community.

Update—In the fall of 1999, the book was still unavailable in the public libraries of St. Catharines.

Rahall, Monier M. *Banksters and Prairie Boys*.

1997—Shortly after the book was published, the author, publisher, printer, and three bookstores were threatened with legal action. The book alleged provincial government interference and improper business practices at the Alberta Treasury Branches.

Cause of objection—One individual named in the book claimed to have been defamed. But the three bookstores continued to sell the book, and Steve Budnarchuk, proprietor of Audrey's Books in Edmonton, described *Banksters* as the fastest-selling local book he had ever carried.

Update—By the fall of 1999, the threatened lawsuit had not materialized, and Audrey's reported that the book was nearly out of print and that demand for it had disappeared.

Rancourt, Sylvie, and Jacques Boivin. *Melody*.

1990–91—Even though the author received a grant from the Quebec Ministry of Cultural Affairs, this illustrated autobiography of an exotic dancer was denounced by *Family Circle* magazine as “pornography” in cartoon guise. Later, after recognizing the cover of *Melody* on the wall of the Planet Earth comic store in Toronto, a mother complained to the police, who charged four employees with “possession and sale of obscene material.” The *Toronto Sun* indicated where the employees lived. Due to serious illness, the store owner could not appeal and the store closed shortly thereafter. The Toronto Morality Squad raided another comic store, Dragon Lady, and seized more than 400 magazines—one of which was *Melody*—kept in bags out of public view. The staff was charged with possession and sale of obscene materials, even though signs said that no “adult” title would be sold to minors. The store stopped selling these magazines. Shortly thereafter, the police raided the warehouse of the Andromeda distribution company and seized about 15 magazines. Upon a lawyer's recommendation, Andromeda announced that it was relinquishing 66 comic-strip magazines—one of which was *Melody*—which might be considered obscene. Most stores no longer carry *Melody*.

Richler, Mordecai. *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*.

This book has been attacked in various jurisdictions. In 1982, the Etobicoke (ON) Board of Education was asked to ban it from the high school curriculum. The motion was defeated. In 1990, a complaint from a student and her father led the Essex County (ON) Board of Education to establish a written policy to deal with such objections. The book was not withdrawn.

Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.*

2000—The Durham (ON) Board of Education received numerous complaints about the immensely popular Harry Potter books being read in classrooms throughout the board's schools. A school board official said that the complaints came from fundamentalist Christian parents.

Cause of objection—As is the case in at least 19 states of the U.S. and other parts of Canada, parents were concerned that Harry Potter is engaged in wizardry, witchcraft, and magic-making, and that these activities are inappropriate for young readers.

Update—After listening to the complaints, the administration decided to withdraw the books from classroom use but left them in school libraries where they would be available for book reports. One board member said she had wanted the books to be withdrawn completely from the schools; another member said the board had never been asked to decide the issue, so the books' withdrawal amounted to censorship. Several months later, after a raucous public meeting, the board rescinded its decision to remove the books. However, in other jurisdictions teachers have been asked not to use the books in the classroom. This is said to have occurred in a school in Corner Brook (NF) and in Rockwood Public School in Pembroke (ON). In 2002, the Niagara (ON) District School Board turned down a parent's request for the removal of the books from area schools. The parent said the books contained violence and promoted a religion (Wicca) which is against the law in Ontario schools. She said that she had not read the books.

Rule, Jane. *The Young in One Another's Arms.*

1990—Although this Canadian novel had been published in 1977 and thousands of copies were available in Canada, a shipment addressed to Glad Day Bookshop in Toronto was detained by Customs officers at the U.S. border.

Update—The shipment was released.

Salinger, J.D. *Catcher in the Rye.*

This novel has been consistently challenged in Canadian schools for at least 15 years.

Cause of objection—"Foul language."

Schulman, Michael, and Eva Mekler (eds.). *Contemporary Scenes for Student Actors.*

1989—Excerpts from this anthology for senior high school drama students were included in a flyer distributed to 20,000 homes in Victoria County (ON). Parents for a Quality Curriculum, which produced the flyer, sought to influence school

board elections by citing the book as an example of texts that should be removed from schools.

Cause of objection—Language in the book.

Update—When the elections were held, none of the candidates put forward by the parent group won seats, and the book remained on the curriculum.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Tendencies; Fat Art, Thin Art*, and 14 other titles.

1995—These books by an American scholar, ordered by Glad Day Bookshop in Toronto and timed to arrive for an author reading, were detained by Canada Customs for a month.

Cause of objection—No reason was given.

Update—The books arrived two weeks after the reading.

Sernine, Daniel. *Les envoûtements*.

1989—In Quebec, the distribution of this novel for teenagers and at least one school reading were cancelled. The author has won numerous prizes.

Cause of objection—Sernine is believed to promote the occult—even though the “bewitchments” mentioned in the title are actually fraudulent and exposed as such in the story.

Sherman, Josepha, and T.K.F. Weisskopf. *Greasy, Grimy, Gopher Guts: The Subversive Folklore of Children*.

2000—A teacher from a private school in Kingston (ON) complained about the single copy of this book held by the Kingston Frontenac Public Library in its children’s collection. She said that the book was better suited to the library’s adult collection. The 248-page collection of street rhymes and folk tales was drawn from the authors’ research with children in the U.S. and Canada.

Cause of objection—The teacher said the book was inappropriate for children because it contains rhymes on “how to get girls pregnant, put-downs of homosexuals, racism and profanity.”

Update—An editorial in *The Kingston Whig-Standard* said that the book belonged in the adult section of the library, but the library board unanimously supported its staff and decided to leave the book in the children’s section.

Smucker, Barbara. *Underground to Canada*.

1998—A mother in Transcona (MB) complained to the mayor of Winnipeg about this historical novel for Grades 5 to 8. The story describes the underground railway that brought slaves escaping from the American South to Canada during the 1850s and 1860s. The mayor turned the complaint over to Winnipeg’s race relations committee, which recommended that the book be withdrawn from provincial lists of materials approved for classroom use. The complaint was supported by the Black Educators Association in Manitoba.

Cause of objection—The word “nigger” appears 20 times in the novel. The mother said her child was the only black student in her class and felt the novel was unsuitable in such circumstances.

Update—The school division’s review committee unanimously recommended that the book be retained for use in the schools. However, the parent continued to demand through the Human Rights Commission that the book be withdrawn from provincial reading lists. In 2002, the book was among three titles targeted by a black parents’ group in Nova Scotia’s Tri-County school district and was temporarily withdrawn from schools.

See Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Stacey, Cherylyn. *How Do You Spell Abducted?*

1996—An Alberta MLA, Julius Yankowski, called for the banning of the book after reading a negative review by Toronto journalist Michael Coren. Both men called for the withdrawal of provincial and federal government grants for the publisher, Red Deer Press.

Cause of objection—Coren said the novel was no more than hate literature against men. The story, aimed at readers 10 to 12 years of age, is an account of the abduction of three children by their estranged father.

Update—By the fall of 1999, the novel had sold 12,000 copies, and no further attempt had been made to ban the book or cut government grants to Red Deer Press.

Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*.

2000—Terry Lewis, a member of the Reform party’s national executive council, complained about the use of this novel by Winnipeg’s River East School Division and called for the book’s removal from school reading lists. The novel has been targeted in other school jurisdictions across Canada as well.

Cause of objection—Lewis, who distributed 10,000 copies of a pamphlet arguing against the book, said that Steinbeck’s frequent use of “God,” “God-damned,” and “Jesus” in profane and blasphemous ways offended Christians and couldn’t possibly have any educational benefit.

Update—The River East School Division took no action. This objection and its disposition echoed an incident in Alberta in 1994, when a member of the legislature demanded that the novel be withdrawn from all high school reading lists in the province.

Stine, R.L. *Goosebumps* and *Fear Street* book series.

1995—A parent group in Halifax asked that both these series be withdrawn from schools in the Halifax School Board’s jurisdiction.

Cause of objection—The books were said to convey violence and a lack of respect for parental authority.

Update—The board agreed that parents could govern what their own children read in school but not what other children read. It was agreed that the books should be available at age-appropriate levels; thus the *Fear Street* series was placed in junior high school libraries but withdrawn from elementary schools. When the parent group subsequently asked that all horror books be withdrawn from schools, the board turned down the request.

Trotsky, Leon. *On Chapters from My Diary*.

1996—This title was selected for a reading given at the Harbourfront Reading Series (Toronto) to mark Freedom to Read Week, but the book could not be found in any Canadian public library. When former Conservative cabinet minister Ron Atkey could not find a copy in Canada, he arranged for a portion of the book to be faxed from the New York Public Library.

Cause of objection—During the early years of the Cold War, the book appeared on Canada Customs' prohibited list of books, probably because the author was a renowned Russian communist.

Twain, Mark. *Huckleberry Finn*.

1991—With Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, this classic novel was targeted by a parent group for removal from recommended reading lists in the Saint John (NB) School District 20.

Cause of objection—Racism in characterization and language.

Valentine, Johnny. *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads*.

See Elwin, Rosamund. *Asha's Mums*.

Valgardson, W.D. *Gentle Sinners*.

1989—A parent group in Fort Garry (MB) distributed a flyer with excerpts from this novel by the much-admired Manitoba writer and asked for its withdrawal from school reading lists.

Cause of objection—Explicit sexual references, violence, negative relationships, and attitude towards organized religion.

Update—An independent committee appointed by the school board upheld use of the book in schools. Parents for Quality Education renewed its attack in 1991, and the board agreed to re-examine the matter. The teacher who used the book decided not to use it again.

Weisbord, Merily, and Marilyn Simonds Mohr. *The Valour and the Horror*.

1992—The book, based on a three-part TV series, was targeted by Canadian veterans' organizations and was discussed in the hearings of the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs. Veterans demanded that the TV production be withdrawn from distribution and that the book be pulled from libraries.

Cause of objection—The TV series and the book raised questions about Canada's military participation in the Second World War.

Update—In 1993, a group of veterans known as the Bomber Harris Trust launched a \$500-million class action suit against those connected with the TV production and the two authors of the book. The action was thrown out of court.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *On the Banks of Plum Creek*.

1997—Two parents in the Fort Garry School Division in Winnipeg complained about this book. The title is part of the renowned series that inspired the TV series *Little House on the Prairie*.

Cause of objection—The classic children's book, based on tales of the settlers in the American West, was said to contain several references offensive to

aboriginals. But school superintendent Henry Izatt said: “Stories like this are an important part of our history on this continent. Simply eradicating them from shelves does not seem to be the answer.”

Update—A committee of teachers, parents, and other members of the community prepared to examine the complaint and report back to the administration, but in the meantime the complaint was withdrawn.