

**Standards Focus: Historical Context***The Most Frequently Banned or Challenged Books of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

Since time immemorial, books have been banned or challenged. According to the American Library Association, challenges are defined as “formal, written complaints filed with a library or school requesting that materials be removed because of content or appropriateness.” Today, books continue to be challenged, as parents and community members the world over find reasons they would like books to be removed from library shelves. The reasons throughout time are varied and numerous. Books have been banned or challenged for profanity, sexual explicitness, morbidity or violence, and mature themes, but also because books have “encouraged” lying, cheating, stealing, going against authority, and use of magic and witchcraft (including all the Harry Potter books).

In 2005, a total of 405 challenges were made against books. Reasons included sexual content, religious viewpoint, abortion, offensive language, being unsuited for age group, anti-family ideas, homosexual content, racism, and more.

**The 20 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990–1999**

1. *Scary Stories* (series) by Alvin Schwartz
2. *Daddy's Roommate* by Michael Willhoite
3. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou
4. *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier
5. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
6. *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
7. *Forever* by Judy Blume
8. *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson
9. *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Leslea Newman
10. *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger
11. *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
12. *My Brother Sam is Dead* by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier
13. *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie Harris
14. *Alice* (series) by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
15. *Goosebumps* (series) by R.L. Stine
16. *A Day No Pigs Would Die* by Robert Newton Peck
17. *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker
18. *Sex* by Madonna
19. *Earth's Children* (series) by Jean M. Auel
20. *The Great Gilly Hopkins* by Katherine Paterson

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4. *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier

5. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
6. *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
7. *Harry Potter* (series) by J.K. Rowling
8. *Forever* by Judy Blume
9. *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson
10. *Alice* (series) by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
11. *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Leslea Newman
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17. *A Day No Pigs Would Die* by Robert Newton Peck
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19. *Sex* by Madonna
20. *Earth's Children* (series) by Jean M. Auel

**The 10 Most Frequently Challenged Books of the 21st Century (2000-2005)**

1. *Harry Potter* (series) by J.K. Rowling
2. *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier
3. *Alice* (series) by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
4. *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
5. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou
6. *Fallen Angels* by Walter Dean Myers
7. *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie Harris
8. *Scary Stories* (series) by Alvin Schwartz
9. *Captain Underpants* (series) by Dav Pilkey
10. *Forever* by Judy Blume

Source: American Library Association  
www.ala.org