



## BANNED BOOKS WEEK 101

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### **Are books really still banned in the United States?**

Yes! Every year, the American Library Association reports hundreds of challenges to books in schools and libraries all over the United States, and ALA estimates that the unreported number of challenges is significantly higher. People continually try to take away readers' power to decide what books are right for themselves or their children by bringing challenges to remove books from libraries. Sometimes those challenges result in books being removed from circulation — the dreaded ban. Comic books, graphic novels, and manga are frequently challenged and banned.

### **Why are comics banned?**

Comics face bans and challenges for the same reasons as any other books. Reasons books are frequently challenged include “adult content,” “language,” “sex / nudity,” or “inappropriate for age group.” Comics are uniquely vulnerable to challenges because of the medium’s visual nature and because comics still carry the stigma of low-value speech. Some challenges are brought against comics because a single page or panel can be taken out of context, while others come under attack because of the mistaken notion that all comics are for children. Learn more about why comics are banned at [www.cbldf.org](http://www.cbldf.org).

### **What comics are banned?**

Comics are one of the most commonly attacked types of books, with challenges and bans happening every year. In 2013, the tenth most challenged book in the United States was [Bone](#) by Jeff Smith. In 2014, CBLDF also aided against high-profile attempts to ban Marjane Satrapi’s [Persepolis](#) and Alison Bechdel’s [Fun Home](#), and three comics made ALA's list of most challenged books: [Persepolis](#), Raina Telgemeier's [Drama](#), and Brian K. Vaughan and Fiona Staples' [Saga](#). In 2015, CBLDF defended [Drama](#), the graphic novel edition of Neil Gaiman's [The Graveyard Book](#), Gilbert Hernandez's [Palomar](#), and Jillian and Mariko Tamaki's [This One Summer](#) from challenges around the country. CBLDF has a full listing of comics that have been banned or challenged [here](#).

**Why are comics in libraries?**

In addition to being a popular form of storytelling that appeals to readers of all ages, comics are a unique and powerful way to encourage literacy. Because of the synergy between art and text, comics are particularly good for reluctant readers, English learners, and patrons who have learning disorders, such as dyslexia. The skills readers develop from reading comics provide a practical foundation for other kinds of learning. From verbal and visual literacy to critical thinking and memory, comics are a great medium to get communities reading!

**What does CBLDF do to help?**

CBLDF assists librarians by providing [access to resources](#) and writing letters of support in cases where comics and books are challenged. In the past year, CBLDF has opposed several challenges, and the Fund stands ready to address new ones when they occur. CBLDF is also an active sponsor of [Banned Books Week](#) and the Kids' Right To Read Project, initiatives that create tools and perform activities that defend the freedom to read.

**What is Banned Books Week?**

Banned Books Week is the national celebration of the freedom to read. Launched in 1982 to draw attention to the problem of book censorship in the United States, Banned Books Week is held during the last week of September. This year, Banned Books Week will be held September 27 - October 3, and it will celebrate the freedom to read young adult books!

**What can I do to help?**

You can make a difference in protecting the freedom to read! This Banned Books Week, make a difference by engaging your community with a banned comics event or display, making a contribution to CBLDF, or spreading the word online. Visit [www.cbldf.org](http://www.cbldf.org) to learn more!