

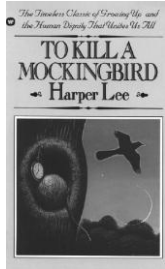
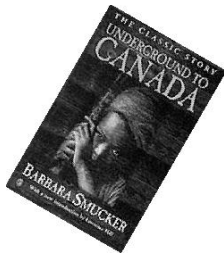
Challenged Young Adult Books of Today

Many more young adult books have faced challenges within the last fifteen years as the number of young adult fiction books published increases. Here is a brief look at books for young adults that have been challenged or banned in Canada from 1990 onwards. This list is adapted from the Freedom to Read week website on censored books with additions from the ALA website and other sources.



Beware: "Bad" Books

- 1990** A Parent's group in Essex County Ontario challenges Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*. The book features graphic violence, profanity and sexual content. The book remains on high school reading lists
- 1991** A student in an Ontario high school asks that Timothy Findlay's book *The Wars* be removed from the curriculum. The student felt that the books depiction of a soldier's rape pressured students to accept homosexuality. The school board ruled that the book could continue to be taught at upper high school levels
- 1992** *The Indian in the Cupboard* by Lynne Reid Banks is temporarily removed from school libraries by the Kamloops BC school board. They considered the book to show offensive treatment of aboriginal peoples.
- 1993** *Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher* by Bruce Coville is challenged by a parents group in Ontario because it "hints at New Age religion"
- 1994** A teacher in and Alberta was ordered to stop teaching Shirley Jackson's story *The Witch* which was include in an anthology approved for use in schools. The story and one other were cut out of the anthology and returned to students
- 1995** Fundamentalist religious groups in Alberta, Ontario and Manitoba challenge the language arts series *Impressions* by Jack and David Booth. The objection is that the series promotes the occult and Satanism
- 1996** *FoxFire* by Joyce Carol Oates was challenged by a parents group when it appeared on an optional reading list for high school students. The parents were concerned with the books depictions of a teenage gang, violence and sexual content.



- 1997** | An anthology of LGBT fiction for teens called *Not the Only One* is recommended for removal for the school system by Calgary's Board of Education Director. The book was deemed inappropriate and removed from schools because of homosexual content.
- 1998** | The book *Baby Be-Bop* by Francesca Lia Block is removed from a Calgary high school library because it features homosexual characters and situations.
- 1999 to 2003** | Several books in the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling are challenged in several Newfoundland and Ontario schools. Some parents find that the books' depiction of wizardry and violence are inappropriate for young readers.
- 2002** | A group of parents and teachers in Nova Scotia voice objections to *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, *Underground to Canada* and *In the Heat of the Night* being taught in local schools. They believed that these books would promote racial stereotyping amongst students.
- 2003** | *A Little Piece of Ground* by Elizabeth Laird is challenged by a Canadian bookseller who says that it is racist propaganda. The book tells the story of a Palestinian boy in an Israeli occupied area.

Books on Trial: *Whale Talk*



Crutcher, Chris. *Whale Talk*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2001. 220 pp. ISBN 0-06-029369-1.

"Whale Talk" is a smart book. It is easy to see why it has been challenged, as it deals with subjects from domestic abuse to racism to bullying to molestation. But it does it well, with tact and realism.

It is fairly obvious that Crutcher himself was a family therapist and child protection specialist when reading his book. T.J. borders on being unbelievably astute and worldly for a high school senior, although his raging hormones are alluded to on more than one occasion. That said, T.J.'s sex life is only implied, and T.J.'s passionate love for his girlfriend plays a surprisingly small role in the plot. T.J.'s relationship with his parents is admirable, as most of his relationships are, especially with a challenged boy at school who gets bullied by the class thugs. There are so many more issues that crop up throughout the novel (including death) that it is surprising that often it has been challenged on language alone. That said, this is not an unrealistically tragic novel. In fact, it is a novel about triumph. Is T.J. your average 17-year-old? No. But he is believable, as are the issues that surround him, and that is the most important part. Not only could virtually every teen relate to at least one character within the story, but the story is told with wisdom and realism.

