

2011 Banned Books Award Show

program transcript

Welcome ladies and gentlemen to the Zion-Benton Banned Book video awards show. I'm Craig Peterson, young adult librarian for the Zion-Benton Public Library, and, before I introduce our host, let me remind you all that I'm available to provide assistance and support to all high-school teens residing in Zion and Benton townships. That's my primary job duty. Access to resources and library services for teens and adults is available at the YA Zone web site – www.yazone.wordpress.com – and on Facebook – YAGuy – or via email – cpeterson@zblibrary.org. This program was made possible by the outstanding cooperation of New Tech High at Zion-Benton East school. I'd like to introduce the host of this show, New Tech Media Specialist Johannes Anderson.

Johannes Anderson: Thank you, Craig. Earlier this year, the ZB Library approached us with a project to celebrate Banned Books Week by holding a video competition in which teams of students would read books that had been banned or challenged in public and high-school libraries and produce a video about the book and the story of its censorship. What you'll see tonight is the presentation of the finalists for the project and the announcement of the winner. Also on the program are videos of young adult authors reading excerpts from their own books that were challenged or banned, advocacy videos from young adult authors and a personal booktalk on a banned book.

Freedom to read – freedom to choose what we read from a full array of opportunities – is a principle firmly rooted in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Yet would-be censors continue to threaten this freedom even today, when all kinds of bad information and nonsense is freely available on the

worldwide web. Censors still insist on imposing their own values in public and school libraries. Banned Books Week is one way to shine the light on these foes of the First Amendment.

Even if they're well-intentioned, by their actions censors try to limit the freedom of others to choose what they read, see or hear. While their intent might be commendable, this method of protection contains far greater hazards than the exposure to the thoughts and ideas they try to suppress. In *Texas vs. Johnson*, U.S. Supreme Court Justice William Brennan said, "If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable." Individuals, especially parents, are free to restrict what they themselves or their children read, but they cannot call upon public or school libraries to prevent others from reading that material.

Even when the eventual outcome of a challenge allows the book to be restored or stay on a on a library's shelves, which is what happened in the cases of the videos you'll see here tonight, censorship poses a clear and present danger to the First Amendment. Challenges can lead to voluntary restriction of expression by libraries in the future, which seek to avoid controversy.

Although several dozens of challenges and/or bannings continue to occur every year, many of them – surveys indicate about 85 percent – receive no media attention and remain unreported. The best defense against censorship is to shine a light on it. That's the main objective of Banned Books Week.

Video: banned books PSA: Jay Asher, author of *Thirteen reasons why*

Mr. Anderson: Here are the nominees for Best Banned Book Video:

- ***The Supernaturalist*, produced by Jeremy Kreuzcher, Nathan Taylor, Rhani Jordan and Tyler Bartz.**

- ***Grendel*, produced by Zak Oglesby, Alex Pflieger, Donnie Hitt and Traden France.**
- ***Looking for Alaska*, produced by Gabriella Villa and Erin Hopkins**

And now, a video of young adult author Chris Crutcher reading from one of his books that was challenged by censors...

Video: author Chris Crutcher reads from his banned book

Mr. Anderson: To make the presentations of the finalist videos, please welcome Zion-Benton Public Library Trustee Jessica Keddy.

Ms. Keddy: Thank you. The first finalist for best challenged book video is *Looking for Alaska* by John Green. This project was submitted by New Tech students Gabriella Villa and Erin Hopkins. The book was challenged but retained in 11th-grade English classes in Depew, N.Y., in 2008, despite concerns about graphic language and sexual content. In response to challengers, the school sent parents a letter informing them that the novel had won the Michael L. Printz Award for excellence in Young Adult Literature and asked their permission to use it. Only three students were denied permission to read the book, which could indicate that most of the opposition came from people who did not have a student connection to the school.

Ladies and gentlemen, here is their banned book video on *Looking for Alaska*...

Video: banned books PSA: Paolo Bacigalupi, author of *Ship Breaker*

Mr. Anderson: Here is a video booktalk on a banned book by Dana McCarthy, Zion-Benton Public Library Board trustee.

Ms. Keddy: Our next banned book video is *The Supernaturalist* by Eoin Colfer. This project was submitted by New Tech students Jeremy Kreuzscher, Nathan Taylor, Rhani Jordan and Tyler Bartz. Quietly taken off the shelf and censored, it was prominently restored by the Lackawanna, N.Y., school board in 2008, along with several other books, following accusations of censorship by some parents and teachers. The books were pulled from a school library recommended list because of concerns that the books deal with the occult. Sometimes book banners are loud; sometimes they operate in stealth. Ladies and gentlemen, here is their banned book video on *The Supernaturalist*...

Video: Author Lauren Myracle reads from her banned book *TTYL*

Ms. Keddy: Our final nominee for best challenged book video is *Grendel* by John C. Gardner. This project was submitted by New Tech students Zak Oglesby, Alex Pflieger, Donnie Hitt and Traden France. As you'll see in the video, this book has a long history of being banned, as far back as 50 years before the American Revolution. The latest attack from book banners occurred in 2008, when concerns were expressed by some people in the Sherwood, Oregon, community about some of the novel's scenes describing torture and mutilation. The school district retained the novel on the sophomore English honors reading list. Ladies and gentlemen, here is their banned book video on *Grendel*...

Contest recap & winner announcement: **Johannes intro to Jessica**

Mr. Anderson: Now for the moment of truth. All three nominees for the Best Video award are strong candidates, and the vote of

the judges was very close. You hear this at many awards program, but in this case it's true. The judging panel was composed of staff from New Tech and the ZB Library. To announce the winning project, here once again is ZB Library Board Trustee Jessica Keddy.

Ms. Keddy: [Opens envelope] And the winner is ... Looking for Alaska.

Congratulations to Gabriella and Erin, who each win \$20 gift certificates from Pizza House. The finalists' videos will be posted soon on the YA Zone, the library's web site for high school teens. That's our show. Thank you for attending and I hope it inspires all of you to defend freedom to read by shining the light on censorship.