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# BOGUS BANNED BOOKS WEEK BITES

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# BOGUS BANNED BOOKS WEEK BITES

Curtsy to the Annoyed Librarian

## Celebrate "Banned" Books Week!

September 30, 2009 On Monday I must have gotten as confused as the ALA. Here I was writing about Band Books, and the whole time I should have been writing about "Banned" Books, which is what the ALA prattles on about. "Banned" Books are those books that are widely available everywhere in the country that the ALA gets so excited about. Anyway, sorry for the confusion, on both our parts.

What's sad about the ALA "Banned" Books Week is the lengths they go to in order to make themselves more important than they actually are. It's nice that they care about books one week a year, because it gives us a respite from hearing how gaming is going to save libraries, but it's not like we're in any danger of censorship in any meaningful sense. As a comparison, think about the stupid suicide book in Australia. It seems that book was actually censored, and that kind of thing just doesn't happen in America. To defend the presence of some stupid kid's book in a classroom against some rube in Bumflap, GA is one thing, but to claim that by doing so you're fighting "censorship" for our freedom is just sad.

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Check out the odd "[terms and definitions](#)" from the ALA's own website. According to the ALA, censorship is, "A change in the access status of material, based on the content of the work and made by a governing authority or its representatives." It's obvious that this definition is designed to support the ALA's skewed meaning of terms. This definition doesn't even account for the definition of censorship as "government's prior restraint on publication," which is a basic meaning of censorship that everyone but the ALA understands. "Change in the access status of material," in addition to sounding like it was written by a tone deaf committee, does *not* cover cases of the government refusing to allow a book's publication. In other words, it doesn't cover cases of actual censorship. A state censoring a book doesn't "change its access status." It keeps the "access status" exactly as it had always been.

It's only saving grace as a definition of censorship is that it does acknowledge that the agent of censorship must be "a governing authority or its representatives." But this is undercut as the absurd definition continues, "Such changes include exclusion, restriction, removal, or age/grade level changes." Grade level changes? Oh, goodness, apparently "governing authority" doesn't mean what most people would assume it means, i.e., the government. You know, those people who govern and who have authority. A school principal, for example, is only a "governing authority" in the most limited sense. A public library isn't a "governing authority" or its representative at all in any sense you could give to it. Yet if a book in a public library were challenged as inappropriate for the children's section and it was reclassified into the adult section, the ALA would have to say the book had been "censored."

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The ALA's definition of censorship has no relationship whatsoever to what everyone else in the entire world understands by the word. It's incoherent and self-serving. That hasn't stopped plenty of librarians for going along for the ride. It's a little dispiriting, because there's no point in having intellectual freedom if there is no intellectual capacity.

**And for your added reading pleasure, here is some SWEET COMMENTARY.**