COMMON CORE STANDARDS & BANNED BOOKS WEEK
A Thematic Guide to Introducing Banned and Challenged Books in the Classroom

The Terrorist by Caroline B. Cooney • The Drowning of Stephan Jones by Bette Greene • Deliver Us from Evie by M. E. Kerr • Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack by M. E. Kerr • Gentlehands by M. E. Kerr • “Hello,” I Lied by M. E. Kerr • Night Kites by M. E. Kerr

PAT SCALES
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“Books and ideas are the most effective weapons against intolerance and ignorance.”
—Lyndon Baines Johnson

Banned Books Week is celebrated the last full week in September and strives to make the public aware of books that have been banned or challenged in schools and public libraries, as well as in bookstores and other venues. Founded in 1982, the event is sponsored by the American Library Association, American Booksellers Association, American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, American Society of Journalists and Authors, and the Association of American Publishers. The activities that champion the freedom to read during Banned Books Week include displays of banned or challenged books and read-outs in communities across the nation. In 2012, the American Library Association marked the 30th anniversary of Banned Books Week by asking libraries in every state to participate in a virtual read-out. Recordings of these read-outs and of writers talking about challenges to their books are posted on a Banned Books Week Channel on YouTube. Students should understand that they do have the freedom to read, and they should use this week to become aware of attempts to abridge their rights.

For sixteen-year-old Laura Williams, the main character in The Terrorist by Caroline B. Cooney, living in London has been an adjustment from her typical American teenage life. She and Billy, her younger brother, attend London International Academy with students from around the world. Laura has never known anyone who has lived with terrorism until she meets Jehran, an Iranian girl who escaped an arranged marriage by coming to London. Then Billy is killed in a London tube station by a terrorist bomb, and Laura sets out to find his killer. Jehran devises a scheme that involves using Billy’s passport to get to the United States, but she needs Laura to pull off her plan. Laura is so stricken with grief and focused on solving the murder that she doesn’t see through Jehran’s plot until it’s almost too late.

Sixteen-year-old Carla Wayland, the main character of The Drowning of Stephan Jones by Bette Greene, is the only child of a single mother and social activist in Rachetville, Arkansas. Carla is so eager to “fit in” and gain the affection of star athlete Andy Harris that she temporarily abandons her better judgment and ignores Andy’s aggressive behavior. Andy’s idea of fun is to harass two gay guys from a neighboring town, and on prom night he is responsible for the drowning of one of them. At this point, Carla sees hatred in Andy’s heart, and hypocrisy in the entire Harris family and the Baptist church they attend.

Deliver Us from Evie is set in a small farming town in Missouri where everyone’s lifestyle is in full view. Parr Burrman is the sixteen-year-old son of a farmer and attends the local high school where kids tease him
about his “brother,” Evie. Parr’s mother suspects that her daughter is a lesbian but doesn’t give up trying to make her a “girlie girl.” When Evie takes off with Patsy Duff, the daughter of a wealthy banker and attends boarding school near St. Louis, Parr is relieved that the truth is out about his sister. The Duffs are in shock, and everyone in town is talking, including Parr’s new girlfriend who seems accepting of the news. The Burrman farm suffers great loss in a flood, and Evie comes back for a brief visit, but leaves with reassurance that she is always welcome by her family. Patsy Duff isn’t so lucky. She is alone, except for Evie, and remains in New York while Evie is away.

In *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack*, fifteen-year-old Tucker Woolf is adjusting to a new school in Brooklyn when he meets Dinky (Susan) Hocker, an obese girl whose mother cares more about rehabilitating drug addicts than she does her own daughter. Tucker is infatuated with Natalie Line, Dinky’s troubled cousin who lives with them. When he invites Natalie to a school dance, she refuses to go unless Dinky has a date. Overweight classmate P. John Knight seems the perfect candidate. The four become friends, but the Hockers and Tucker’s father are disturbed by P. John’s politics and “radical” views. When the group falls apart, Dinky finds a dramatic way to embarrass her mother and Tucker manages to help Dinky’s father see beyond his daughter’s size.

In *Gentlehands*, Skye Pennington is a rich girl who spends the summer at her family’s seaside Long Island estate. Buddy Boyle is the son of a policeman in nearby Seaville where he works at a local soda shop. Skye is older than Buddy, but the two are attracted to one another and engage in a summer fling that sometimes involves visiting Buddy’s polished but elusive grandfather. Grandfather Trenker offers sage advice to Buddy, and introduces him to art, music, and literature. Then everything comes to an abrupt halt when Mr. De Lucca, a reporter, uncovers a dark secret that involves Buddy’s grandfather.

In “Hello,” *I Lied*, seventeen-year-old Lang Penner is spending the summer with his mother in the caretaker’s cottage at Roundelay, the East Hampton estate of retired rock star, Ben Nevada. Few people know that Lang is gay, but in a rare conversation with Nevada, Lang confesses his torn thoughts about coming out to his friends, and shares his plans to move in with his boyfriend Alex, who is three years older and a Broadway actor. Nevada is hosting a teenage girl from France for the summer, and decides that Lang is a “safe” choice to show her around town. When Lang becomes attracted to her, he becomes more torn and begins to wonder if he can have it both ways.

At first glance, it appears that seventeen-year-old Erick Rudd, the main character in *Night Kites*, is a typical teenage boy with a “puppy love” relationship with his girlfriend, Dill. Then his conventional life spins out of control when he falls for Nicki Marr, the impulsive and seductive girlfriend of his best friend, Jack. She is more socially experienced than Erik, and is content with the daring life of nonconformity. Erik is confused by the sudden turn in his relationships with Dill and Jack, and is struggling with his new “unconventional” social status when he learns that his beloved older brother, Pete, has AIDS. As Erik and his parents face Pete’s fate, they must also find a way to accept his homosexuality and deal with the social consequences that his illness may cause in their small town of Seaville, New York.

**PRE-READING ACTIVITY**

Read the First Amendment aloud in class. Ask students to annotate the five freedoms protected under the First Amendment. Engage the class in a discussion about how these five freedoms apply to their lives. Then instruct them to survey twenty adults in their neighborhood and ask the following questions:
» What are the five freedoms protected by the First Amendment?
» Which of these freedoms supports the freedom to read?
» Do children have First Amendment rights?

Ask students to construct a bar graph to illustrate the results of their survey, and write a summary paragraph. After each student has shared their graphs, ask the class to draw a conclusion about adults’ understanding of the First Amendment.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in History/Social Studies: Craft & Structure RH. 8-10.4; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 8-10.4, SL. 8-10.5; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 8-10.2.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

The media, politicians, school administrators, and some parents search for someone or something to blame for every new act of violence or bullying reported by local and national news. Too often, books become their target. Discuss where Andy and his crowd learn their bigoted and violent behavior in The Drowning of Stephan Jones by Bette Greene. Debate whether they may have rethought their behavior had they read a book like Greene's novel. Discuss the violence in The Terrorist by Caroline B. Cooney. Where does Jehran learn her behavior? It's almost too late when Laura learns who really killed her brother. She didn't make this mistake because of a book. Why is it important for students to read books that open their eyes to the social and political issues in their world and beyond?

In 2000, the American Library Association reported challenges to The Terrorist in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Montgomery County, Maryland, because “the book negatively portrays the Islamic religion and Arabs.” In both cases, a committee considered the challenge and voted to retain the book. Cite evidence from the novel that parents who brought the challenges may have used to support their claim that the book is anti-Arab. Billy and Laura Williams attend London International Academy. How does the school promote tolerance of all cultures and religions?

How is Laura Williams attempting to be a typical American teenager in an international environment? There are other students from the Middle East at Laura's school. How are they different from Jehran? Trace Jehran's behavior from the time Laura first meets her. Explain how Laura misses the hints that Jehran is involved in Billy's death.

Discuss how the conflicts in M. E. Kerr's novels deal with a dichotomy of social classes. Explain how Grandfather Trenker understands and supports Buddy's relationship with Skye Pennington more than his parents do in Gentlehands. How do Skye's parents receive Buddy? Contrast the Burrman and Duff families in Deliver Us from Evie. Compare Andy Harris's father in The Drowning of Stephan Jones with Patsy Duff’s father in Deliver Us from Evie. How do they use money, power and religion to bully others, especially those from a lower social class?

Many of M. E. Kerr's characters are concerned with appearance, or how they are perceived. Cite specific scenes in Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack where appearance is important to Dinky's mother and
Tucker’s father. How does Parr Burrman’s mother in Deliver Us from Evie worry about how she is perceived among people in the small Missouri community in which they live? In Night Kites, Erick’s dad tells him that he isn’t to tell anyone about Pete’s illness. Debate whether this is because he worries about what others will think, or because of his own prejudices toward gays? In Bette Greene's The Drowning of Stephan Jones, Carla Wayland alters her personal appearance and beliefs to win Andy Harris’s affection. What does she learn about the consequences of losing one’s sense of self? Discuss which of M. E. Kerr’s characters Carla Wayland might befriend.

Often people challenge works of literature that they feel are “unsuited for age group.” In 1997, the American Library Association reported that Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack was removed from elementary schools in Kent, Washington, because of complaints of “vulgarity” and “defamation of the word of God in the work.” The challenger in this case didn’t site “unsuited for age group,” but the book is marketed for ages 12 and up. Debate whether elementary age students could relate to the themes in the novel. How is the book better suited for young adults?

A parent in Florida challenged Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack because the book is “sacrilegious and morally subversive.” Discuss the meaning of “subversive.” What passages in the novel might this parent quote to support her claim? How might Dinky Hocker respond to a person who attempts to censor her story?

Discuss the fractured relationship between the main teenage characters and their parents in Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack and Gentlehands. How is Mrs. Hocker insensitive to Dinky’s needs? How does her need to be a “do-gooder” interfere with doing what is best for her daughter? What is Tucker’s role in opening Mr. Hocker’s eyes to Dinky’s emotional needs? Why is Buddy’s father in Gentlehands so unsupportive of his son’s relationship with Skye Pennington and Grandfather Trenker?

Debate the following 1983 challenge to Gentlehands in Virginia: “The book is ‘anti-Semitic and glamorizes drug abuse and makes drugs tempting to teenagers.’ ” Discuss what message M. E. Kerr intends for teens to get from this novel.

In 2004, The Drowning of Stephan Jones was challenged along with fifteen other young adult books with gay-positive themes. All indications are that the challenge was brought by an organized group similar to Parents Against Bad Books in Schools in Virginia. Why do they call The Drowning of Stephan Jones “gay-positive”? Discuss how Deliver us from Evie, Night Kites, “Hello,” I Lied, and The Drowning of Stephan Jones are about intolerance. At the beginning of Deliver Us from Evie, kids ask Parr Burrman about his “brother,” Evie. How does Parr react? Why is he reluctant to tell his parents? Analyze the scene when Parr talks with his mother about Evie’s sexuality. (p. 65–66) Erik talks openly with his mom about his sexual orientation in “Hello,” I Lied. Explain how this type of open conversation about tough topics promotes tolerance and a positive parent/teen relationship.

Evie leaves home with Patsy Duff in Deliver Us from Evie. Explain what Evie means by “Don’t miss me, Parr. Think of me, but don’t miss me.” (p. 140) How does Evie’s family miss her, in spite of her request? Discuss whether anyone in Patsy’s family misses her.

Lang, the main character in “Hello,” I Lied, had planned for the summer in East Hampton to be his coming out. How is he torn between comfort and conformity? Discuss how this is a common trait in most of M. E. Kerr’s characters. How is Carla Wayland also torn in The Drowning of Stephan Jones?
Ask students to define hate speech. How are Evie in *Deliver Us from Evie* and Frank Montgomery and Stephan Jones in *The Drowning of Stephan Jones* victims of hate speech? Compare and contrast how the characters deal with it. Discuss how hate speech is a symptom of prejudice and bigotry.

M. E. Kerr deals with homosexual themes in *Night Kites, Deliver Us from Evie*, and “Hello,” *I Lied*. Compare and contrast the way Evie's parents deal with her sexual orientation to the way Pete's parents deal with his. Discuss how Evie's parents are more accepting than Patsy's. How does this explain Evie's willingness to stay in touch with her family? Pete's mother is the first to learn that he has AIDS. Why is it easier for Pete to tell her before he tells his father? In “Hello,” *I Lied*, Lang's mother thinks that it's too soon for him to decide whether he is gay.

Discuss the endings to each of the novels. Which novel ends with the most hope? Explain the symbolism at the end of *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack* when Dinky's father refers to her as Susan. Discuss the metaphor at the end of the *Deliver Us from Evie* when Evie's father says, “You made tracks for a better station in life.” (p. 175)

In *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack*, Tucker’s father quotes a Chinese saying: “Man is what man hears he is, at keyhole.” (p. 16) How does the quote apply to Tucker, Natalie, Dinky, and P. John? Define anachronism. Why does Tucker's mother believe the Chinese saying is now an anachronism? Have students apply the Chinese saying to the main characters in each novel.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 8-10.1, RL. 8-10.2, RL. 8-10.3; Craft & Structure RL. 8-10.4, RL. 8-10.5, RL. 8-10.6; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 8-10.1, SL. 8-10.3; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 8-10.4, SL. 8-10.6; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 8-10.1.

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

According to the American Library Association, the most common reasons people give for challenging books are:

- Sexually explicit
- Offensive language
- Unsuitd to age group
- Occult
- Violence
- Homosexual theme
- Promotes a particular religious viewpoint
- Nudity

Tape a staged a talk show for Banned Books Week that discusses challenges to books for the above reasons. Guests should include: parents who support and oppose specific books, students whose First Amendment rights are violated when books are removed from school libraries, a school librarian, an English teacher, a school principal, a school board member, and an ACLU attorney. Students in the audience should be prepared to ask relevant questions.
Stage a dialogue between the main characters and their parents in the novels used in this guide. Prepare questions that promote an open conversation about the conflicts in the novels. What advice might the characters and parents offer one another. Ask them to comment on the controversial issues in their stories.

Ask students to write an essay that interprets the following quote from Oscar Wilde: “The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame.” Instruct them to use direct quotes from the novels in this guide to illustrate points.

Carla Wayland, the main character in *The Drowning of Stephan Jones* by Bette Greene, is the daughter of a librarian who is dealing with a book censorship issue. Have students take a position on the issue and write a guest editorial for the Rachetville, Arkansas, newspaper. Encourage peer editing for clarity, spelling, and grammar.

In *Gentlehands*, Grandfather Trenker says, “Obstacles are challenges for winners, and excuses for losers.” Ask students to select one novel and write an essay titled “Obstacles: Winners and Losers.” Instruct them to use direct quotes from the novel to support their claims.

In 1995, an English teacher at a high school in New Hampshire was fired when she refused to remove *The Drowning of Stephan Jones* from her classroom. Write a letter to the superintendent of schools that a student may have written supporting the book, and calling for the reinstatement of the teacher. Find an appropriate quote about censorship to use in the argument.

In *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack*, Tucker hangs out at libraries, and has a secret desire to become a librarian. Design a Banned Books Week exhibit for Tucker’s favorite library in Brooklyn Heights. Include a
written reason for the challenge to each book in the display and plan to give a book talk on a book that is challenged in each category. Students may find the following resource helpful: http://www.ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top100

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 8-10.4; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 8-10.8; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. SL. 8-10.4.

Have students use books in the library or websites to research Stephen Pico and write a profile of him and his fight to save the books at the Island Trees School District for a publication called Teens and the First Amendment. Use quotes from Pico and the Supreme Court justices who dealt with the case in 1982.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 8-10.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 8-10.7, W. 8-10.8; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 8-10.1, L. 8-10.2; Knowledge of Language L. 8-10.3.

Since September 11, 2001, some Americans have labeled all Muslims “the enemy,” vandalized mosques across the nation, and bullied Muslim Americans. Have students define “profiling.” Divide the class into three groups and ask them to use books in the library, magazine and newspaper articles, and websites to explore one of the following examples of racial, religious, or cultural profiling in American History: African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement; Japanese Americans and internment camps during World War II; Latinos and illegal immigration. Instruct each group to prepare a PowerPoint presentation that draws a parallel between this type of profiling and the profiling of Muslim Americans. Encourage them to use photographs, clip art, quotes, or images of primary resources to illustrate the topic, and distinguish various points of view. A concluding slide should present a “big” question for the class to discuss. Distribute an annotated list of referenced sources and a bibliography of five works of fiction that deal with the topic.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards Reading Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 8-10.1, RI. 8-10.3; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 8-10. 8, RI/ 8-10.9; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 8-10.1; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 8-10.4, SL. 8-10.5; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 8-10.2; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 8-10.6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 8-10.8, W. 8-10.9.

WEBSITES WITH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom
http://www.ala.org/offices/oif

The National Coalition Against Censorship
http://ncac.org

The Freedom to Read Foundation
http://www.ftrf.org
The American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression
http://www.abffe.org

The First Amendment Center
http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org

People for the American Way
http://www.pfaw.org

The Thomas Jefferson Center
http://tjcenter.org

COMMON CORE LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS REFERENCED IN THIS GUIDE

Reading Literature

KEY IDEAS & DETAILS
RL. 8-10.1 – Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports or an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL. 8-10.2 – Determine a theme or central ideas of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL. 8-10.3 – Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

CRAFT & STRUCTURE
RL. 8-10.4 – Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

RL. 8-10.5 – Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

RL. 8-10.6 – Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader create such effects as suspense or humor.

Reading Informational Text

KEY IDEAS & DETAILS
RI. 8-10.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI. 8-10.3 – Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g. through comparisons, analogies, or categories).
INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS
RI. 8-10.8 – Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

RI. 8-10.9 – Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters or fact or interpretation.

Language
CONVENTIONS OF STANDARD ENGLISH
L. 8-10.1 – Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L. 8-10.2 – Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Knowledge of Language
L. 8-10.3 – Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Speaking & Listening
COMPREHENSION & COLLABORATION
SL. 8-10.1 – Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL. 8-10.3 – Delineate a speakers’ argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS
SL. 8-10.4 – Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details, use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation

SL. 8-10.5 – Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

SL. 8-10.6 – Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Writing
TEXT TYPES & PURPOSES
W. 8-10.1 – Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
W. 8-10.2 – Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION OF WRITING
W. 8-10.4 – Produce clear and coherent writing to which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W. 8-10.5 - With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

W. 8-10.6 – Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

RESEARCH TO BUILD & PRESENT KNOWLEDGE
W. 8-10.7 – Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

W. 8-10.8 – Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format.

W. 8-10.9 – Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

History/Social Studies

CRAFT & STRUCTURE
RH. 8-10.4 – Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
EBOOKS BY BETTE GREENE

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Available wherever ebooks are sold
EBOOKS BY M. E. KERR
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OPEN ROAD INTEGRATED MEDIA
Open Road Integrated Media is a digital publisher and multimedia content company. Open Road creates connections between authors and their audiences by marketing its ebooks through a new proprietary online platform, which uses premium video content and social media.

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