**ASSIGNMENT:**

1. Read the 2 articles below titled:
   * **Excerpt from: Parental Concerns About Book Content Should Not Be Dismissed**
   * **Excerpt from: Teens Need Bold Books**
2. Choose 1 of the questions below to answer.
3. Answer the question and write and essay. Remember to include:

* an introduction with a thesis
* discussion and conclusion
* supporting examples, experiences, observations, details, and description
* summaries and/or paraphrases from the original source material (excerpts)
* provided
* at least one direct quotation from the original source material (excerpts) provided
* appropriate lead-in phrases (phrases like “according to…”)
* proper in-text citation in MLA, APA, or Chicago style. (You do not need to rewrite
* the bibliographic entry.

4. Read through your draft. Is it thoughtful, organized, and clear? Check spelling and grammar.

**Questions: (Choose 1 to answer)**

Each of these articles explores the issue of “who chooses what young people read,” and

how these choices can affect, reflect, or oppose the values and identities that young people

themselves may hold dear or are exploring. They also explore how much teachers and

parents control what young people read.

1. Write a thoughtful essay in which you explore the degree to which you have found people

like you reflected in the literature you’ve been assigned to read, or the books, movies, TV

shows, and other “stories” that you encounter. How did this representation make you think

about your identity compared to what the story portrayed as “normal” or “strange,” “good” or

“bad”? Refer to the excerpted articles as you develop your essay.

2. Reference the excerpted articles as you write a thoughtful essay in which you explore

the degree to which teachers and parents should control what young people read or watch,

or the games they should play. In what specific ways have you been affected by what they

have given you to read for better or for worse?

**Excerpts: (Read both)**

**Except 1: from Parental Concerns About Book Content Should Not Be Dismissed**

Suzanne M. Beasterfield is an English instructor at Dixie State College of Utah. Her areas of interest include parent-teacher interactions regarding literature and curriculum. [A] woman at church approached me with a problem. She told me that her daughter was supposed to be reading The Catcher in the Rye starting the next day, and that she had asked for an alternative but that the new book—something I had never heard of—was "too graphic" to be acceptable. Could I…help her find a suitable alternative to suggest to the department chair the next day?… I came up with a short list and called the woman later that evening. We had an interesting discussion. I had gratefully dived into this task believing that *The Catcher in the Rye* is not essential to a teenager's education and that there were other well-written coming-of-age books that would do. Unfortunately this woman didn't stop at Salinger: she wanted to know if there were alternatives to *Lord of the Flies…Of Mice and Men*…and *A Prayer for Owen Meany*…. I tried my best defenses for each of the books. I felt that my argument for *Lord of the Flies* was particularly persuasive, but she didn't budge.

I turned the conversation around. What was she looking for? Not all of the books she was resisting were sexually explicit, particularly violent, or full of profanity. She answered that she felt that so much of high school literature took people to a dark place. Even if one puts a positive spin on the themes, they are still heavy and dark. She wanted happy endings, inspirational stories that left one feeling good at the end. She wanted books that showed people experiencing punishment and remorse for bad behavior (her primary issue with Lord of the Flies was that even the bad boys were rescued). She wanted her children to continue to love reading—as they had when they were younger—and she felt that the school's curriculum was damaging their love of books.

…The question in my mind changed from "How do I justify these works?" to "Why do we choose what we do in English classrooms?" I'm not saying that any of the works we teach in schools are not worthy…but how could I answer a parent who asked if there wasn't something just as brilliantly written that showed her values? The canon has already been attacked for years on the basis of its exclusion of works written by women, for example, or for failing to represent the experiences of other

marginalized peoples. And here was a mother telling me that her experience and her story were not being told—that she was one of the people in the margins….I don't think that students should read books that portray their particular religion, class, or race exclusively; that kind of relativism seems as dangerous as fitting everyone into the same mold. After all, one of the best reasons to read is to understand other people and places. But if a mother can't see anything of herself or her worldview in the books her son or daughter is reading at school, that's a problem, too.

Source Citation

Beasterfield, Suzanne M. "Parental Concerns About Book Content Should Not Be Dismissed." *Book Banning.* Ed. Thomas Riggs. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2012. At Issue. Rpt. from "A Battle Reconsidered: Second Thoughts on Book Censorship and Conservative Parents." English Journal 97.3 (Jan. 2008). Opposing Viewpoints In Context. Web. 16 Sept. 2013.

**Except 2: from Teens Need Bold Books**

Don Gallo was an English professor at Central Connecticut State University for more than twenty years and has edited numerous anthologies of short stories for young adults. Whether it comes from fear of different ideas or from a need for power over others, most challenges to books used in schools and provided in libraries come from individuals and groups that do not want young people to make decisions for themselves. Comments I have heard and read from book banners suggest that they do not want their children to open their minds to new and different possibilities, do not want them to consider other points of view, do not want them to think. They do not trust teenagers to make right choices. And they do not trust educated teachers and librarians who have dedicated their lives to helping kids find the books they need for their intellectual development and emotional well-being.

…I have heard and read comments from too many school librarians who, fearing to upset a parent or an administrator or the majority of adults in their community, are afraid to order certain books. In an effort to not offend one individual or even many, they ignore the needs of others. I've heard too many librarians ask for "safe" books, books that won't cause a controversy….Good books have always caused people to think, and since few of us think alike, controversy is guaranteed. To be able to face life outside their protective homes and classrooms, teenagers need access to books that allow them to see the bigger world. And there's no better place to explore the larger, diverse, often scary world than from the safe distance a book provides. Denying teenagers access to a controversial book denies them a better future.

Teens need books like those reviewed in this column, not only for their intellectual, emotional, and moral growth but also for the hope that if today's kids can become comfortable thinking for themselves, the future of this country will be better served. So we must be bold and courageous in our choices of books and in our teaching. And maybe in the future there will be fewer attacks on books because today's teens will be tomorrow's adults who better understand the value of diverse viewpoints and experiences.

Source Citation

Gallo, Don. "Teens Need Bold Books." Book Banning. Ed. Thomas Riggs. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2012. At Issue. Rpt. from "Censorship, Clear Thinking, and Bold Books for Teens." English Journal 97.3 (Jan. 2008). Opposing Viewpoints In Context. Web. 16 Sept. 2013.

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