

Quotes About Censorship

“There are worse crimes than burning books. One of them is not reading them.”
– Joseph Brodsky

“We change people through conversation, not censorship.”
-- Jay-Z

“Adam was but human—this explains it all. He did not want the apple for the apple's sake, he wanted it only because it was forbidden. The mistake was in not forbidding the serpent; then he would have eaten the serpent.”
– Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*

“Who is more to be pitied, a writer bound and gagged by policemen or one living in perfect freedom who has nothing more to say?”
– Kurt Vonnegut

“There must be something in books, something we can't imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house; there must be something there. You don't stay for nothing.”
– Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*

“The burning of a book is a sad, sad sight, for even though a book is nothing but ink and paper, it feels as if the ideas contained in the book are disappearing as the pages turn to ashes and the cover and binding--which is the term for the stitching and glue that holds the pages together--blacken and curl as the flames do their wicked work. When someone is burning a book, they are showing utter contempt for all of the thinking that produced its ideas, all of the labor that went into its words and sentences, and all of the trouble that befell the author . . .”
– Lemony Snicket, *The Penultimate Peril*

“Don't join the book burners. Don't think you're going to conceal faults by concealing evidence that they ever existed. Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book...”
– Dwight D. Eisenhower

“What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist.”
– Salman Rushdie

“If all printers were determined not to print anything till they were sure it would offend nobody, there would be very little printed.”
– Benjamin Franklin

“All these people talk so eloquently about getting back to good old-fashioned values. Well, as an old poop I can remember back to when we had those old-fashioned values, and I say let's get back to

the good old-fashioned First Amendment of the good old-fashioned Constitution of the United States -- and to hell with the censors! Give me knowledge or give me death!"

– Kurt Vonnegut

"There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches."

– Ray Bradbury

"Where they have burned books, they will end in burning human beings."

– Heinrich Heine

"Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear."

– Harry S. Truman

"[I]t's not just the books under fire now that worry me. It is the books that will never be written. The books that will never be read. And all due to the fear of censorship. As always, young readers will be the real losers."

– Judy Blume

"Children deprived of words become school dropouts; dropouts deprived of hope behave delinquently. Amateur censors blame delinquency on reading immoral books and magazines, when in fact, the inability to read anything is the basic trouble."

– Peter S. Jennison

"Censorship ends in logical completeness when nobody is allowed to read any books except the books that nobody reads."

– George Bernard Shaw

"Free societies...are societies in motion, and with motion comes tension, dissent, friction. Free people strike sparks, and those sparks are the best evidence of freedom's existence."

"There is no such thing as a dirty word. Nor is there a word so powerful, that it's going to send the listener to the lake of fire upon hearing it."

– Frank Zappa

"Books can not be killed by fire. People die, but books never die. No man and no force can abolish memory... In this war, we know, books are weapons. And it is a part of your dedication always to make them weapons for man's freedom."

– Franklin D. Roosevelt

“Torch every book.
Burn every page.
Char every word to ash.
Ideas are incombustible.
And therein lies your real fear.”
– Ellen Hopkins

“One cannot and must not try to erase the past merely because it does not fit the present.”
– Golda Meir

“To prohibit the reading of certain books is to declare the inhabitants to be either fools or slaves.”
– Claude Adrien Helvétius

“All censorships exist to prevent anyone from challenging current conceptions and existing institutions. All progress is initiated by challenging current conceptions, and executed by supplanting existing institutions. Consequently, the first condition of progress is the removal of censorship.”
– George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*

“I wrote a song about dental floss but did anyone's teeth get cleaner?”
– Frank Zappa

“All of us can think of a book... that we hope none of our children or any other children have taken off the shelf. But if I have the right to remove that book from the shelf - that work I abhor - then you also have exactly the same right and so does everyone else. And then we have no books left on the shelf for any of us.”
– Katherine Paterson

“Only the nonreader fears books. ”
– Richard Peck

“To forbid us anything is to make us have a mind for it.”
– Michel de Montaigne, *Montaigne: Essays*

“Withholding information is the essence of tyranny. Control of the flow of information is the tool of the dictatorship.”
– Bruce Coville

“Every burned book or house enlightens the world; every suppressed or expunged word reverberates through the earth from side to side.”
– Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: First Series*

Thoughts from Caroline Cooney (banned book author): *"Here's my view on challenges: they are simply free speech. Of course at any time, any reader may state disapproval of a book. I am respectful of parents who keep up with what their children read and have the guts to announce publicly that they don't like the title assigned and wish it removed. The fact that I might disagree is irrelevant. We protect free speech..."*

Chief Justice John Roberts: "As a nation we have chosen a different course - to protect even hurtful speech on public issues to ensure that we do not stifle public debate."

Justice Stephen Breyer: "You have to draw a line, you have to stick to a line. The line has to be that that free speech is there, not for people we like, and not for people who have popular views, it's there for people we hate.

"It's there for the ones who are the most bigoted, terrible, awful – awful! – people you can think of. And it's there for them because if it isn't there for them, maybe someday it wouldn't be there for us."