

Literary Controversies

Discussion:

Have you read a short story / poem / novel that was shocking for you?
Have you read a text that was supposed to be shocking and was not?
Would you ban some texts from schools / children libraries?
Has there been a literary controversy in your country recently?
Does literature constitute part of political discourse?

Definition:

Try to define or illustrate the following terms:

Antipathy	Anthropomorphic	Censorship	Eurocentric
Fatwa	Nobel Prize	Obscene	Sexism

Use the terms to explain controversies about the following books:

Lewis Carroll: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*,
Karel Čapek: *Válka s mloky*,
Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales*,
George Orwell: *Animal Farm*,
Salman Rusdie: *The Satanic Verses*.

Reading

Read about two cases of a literary controversy concerning children literature and find out:

1. What book is concerned?
2. What happened to the book?
3. Who did make it happen?
4. Where did it happen?
5. What kind of text refers about the controversy?

A. An 8-year-old in Berkeley, California carried on the community's tradition of activism by having two sexist books removed from a local bookstore. KC is the daughter of science-fiction writer Constance Cooper, who wrote about the incident on her website. Mother and daughter were at Half Price Books when Ms Cooper heard her daughter call her over, saying: 'Mama, you have to look at this!' KC held up two versions of a book called 'How to Survive (Almost) Anything!'. One was a 'Girls Only' version, while the other was 'Boys Only'. When KC opened the table of contents, she found something that made her 'truly irate'. While the boys had chapters on how to survive crocodile attacks, a plane crash and a flash flood, girls were being taught how to survive a fashion disaster and breakouts. What upset KC the most was the 'How to Survive a Camping Trip Disaster' since camping is one of her favorite pastimes. 'Camping may not always be a girl's top choice of activity' the first comic reads, depicting a girl daydreaming of sunbathing on a beach.

KC insisted that they tell the store manager about the books, but before they could do it an employee came up to ask if she could help. According to Ms Cooper, the employee was horrified. 'She agreed that the books were offensive, and although we hadn't requested it, she yanked all copies (boy and girl) from the shelf.' The employee took the extra step to get the books banned from the store, and gave KC a coupon to buy a different book. When they went home KC continued to express her distaste for the books by writing a book review, which she had her parents type out and post on Amazon for her. On the website, that review seems to have been posted by a user called 'GB'. 'Hi. I am an 8 year old girl and I saw some very offensive books. In the girl's book it said that girls don't like camping and in the boy's book it said boys like exploring nature and all that fun stuff, while girls don't. All I had to read was the table of contents and it made me cry. Do not buy these books for your daughter, or it may make her cry like I did.' After Ms Cooper wrote about the incident, she did receive some negative response from people who argued against censorship - something she didn't believe was the point of the story. 'What I'd personally like people to take away from the incident is that it's good to recognize harmful stereotypes, it's OK to speak out against them and that even at age eight, you can have some influence as a consumer,' Ms Cooper told MailOnline.

B. Sijie, *Dai. Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*. Knopf; Chatto. Pulled from the Federal Way's, Wash. Todd Beamer High School English classes and library (2004) by the superintendent, who overruled a committee of educators and parents that unanimously recommended keeping the book. The novel about censorship was considered sexually explicit and inappropriate for high-school students. Source: July 2004.

Language Analysis:

Try to fill in the gaps and decide which of the excerpts comes from a book that used to be censored:

1. "Indeed I had. What will you think of my _____? I believed you to be wishing, expecting my _____."

"My _____ must have been in fault, but not intentionally, I assure you. I never meant to deceive you, but my spirits might often lead me wrong. How you must have hated me after *that evening?*"

"Hate you! I was angry perhaps at first, but my anger soon began to take a proper direction."

"I am almost afraid of asking what you thought of me, when we met at Pemberley. You blamed me for coming?"

"No indeed; I felt nothing but surprise."

2. She lay still, in a kind of sleep, always in a kind of sleep. The activity, _____ was his, all his; she could strive for herself no more. Even the tightness of his arms round her, even the intense movement of his body, and the springing _____, was a kind of sleep, from which she did not begin to rouse till he had finished and lay softly panting against her breast.

3. Funny my _____ stopped at half past four. Dust. Shark liver oil they use to clean could do it myself. Save. Was that just when he, she?

O, he did. Into her. She did. Done.

_____!

Mr Bloom with careful hand recomposed his wet shirt. O Lord, that little limping devil. Begins to feel cold and clammy. Aftereffect not pleasant. Still you have to get rid of it somehow. They don't care. Complimented perhaps. Go home to nicey bread and milky and say night prayers with the kiddies.

Sources:

Reading A: **Elementary feminism: 8-year-old daughter of science fiction writer helps gets sexist kids books banned from shop.**

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2442729/Constance-Coopers-daughter-gets-sexist-kids-books-banned-shop.html#ixzz3bvpTM8Wk>

Reading B: **Books challenged or banned in 2004-2005.**

http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/banned/bannedbooksweek/ideasandresources/free_downloads/2005banned.pdf

Analysis 1: Austen, Jane: **Pride and Prejudice.**

<http://www.pemberley.com/etext/PandP/chapter58.htm>

Analysis 2: Lawrence, D.H.: **Lady Chatterley's Lover.**

http://www.classic-novels.com/author/lawrence/lady_chatterleys_lover/ladychatterley025.shtml

Analysis 3: Joyce, James: **Ulysses.**

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4300/4300-h/4300-h.htm>