

How the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Helps Teachers Teach the Literature They Love to Teach AND Quell the Censors

*Through the literature we teach, we want our students to explore the hard topics about people and life.
We need to be prepared, though, to defend the texts we teach.*

Watch the Video on NCTE's 25-Year History of Promoting "The Students' Right to Read" Get the Resources You Need to Prevent Censorship

<http://www.ncte.org/action/anti-censorship>

Why and How We Choose the Literature We Teach?

"I learned that choosing the right novel or other reading material to meet the needs and interests of the students as well as the course objectives can become a monumental task, but a satisfying one." —Ray Lawson, "Teaching: The Life," *SLATE Newsletter*, March 2006.

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
--from *NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts*

"We as teachers recognize that regardless of literary merit, it is important to choose books which meet the objectives of our courses."—Dennis Boatman, Betti Gregg, Nicole Haueter, Chris Kenoyer, Mary Nett, Scott Parker, Madge Peterson, Twila Wood in "Sample Presentation to the Book Reconsideration Committee in Defense of Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*" from *NCTE CD Rationales for Challenged Books*, Volume 2.

Make sure your school has a policy for the adoption of instructional materials: See NCTE's *Guidelines for the Selection of Materials in English Language Arts Classrooms* at <http://www.ncte.org/about/issues/censorship/five/116515.htm>

What to Do When You Need Help

Make sure your school has a policy for handling challenges to instructional materials: See NCTE's *The Students' Right to Read* at <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/cens/107616.htm>

Contact NCTE through the NCTE Intellectual Freedom Center: <http://www.ncte.org/about/issues/censorship>

Make sure you have a rationale for teaching the literature you have chosen. Use NCTE's sample rationales, instructions for writing a rationale, and CDs (*Rationales for Challenged Books*) as resources: <http://www.ncte.org/about/issues/censorship/five/108603.htm>

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Use the following form for writing your own rationale.

Write Your Own Rationale Form

Like the rationales on the NCTE CDs, your own rationales will serve you best if they contain the following information.

Grade Level and Audience

Plot Summary

Theoretical Support and Redeeming Values

How the Work Ties into the Curriculum and Standards

Literary Qualities and Summary of Reviews

Sensitive Subjects in the Text/Possible Objections

How Sensitive Subjects and Possible Objections Will Be Handled in Class

Teaching Objectives

Teaching Methods

Assignments

Alternative Texts to This One

References