

Challenged Book Essay - Scoring Rubric

Name: _____

Date: 10/31/2013

Book: I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings Author: Maya Angelou Published: 1969

The purpose of your essay against banning a Challenged Book is to:

- Demonstrate "information competency" by evaluating the logic, relevance and validity of information. You will research:
 - a. book challenges in general,
 - b. why your book has been challenged, and
 - c. what biases were evident in your research.
- Develop and support an argument: Communicate your opinion in a two page persuasive essay that answers the questions: How can the school board support the First Amendment, and how should it respond to efforts to ban this book?
- Properly cite all reference materials (in-text citations for quotes and alphabetical list of references on an MLA formatted work cited page).

Your Challenged Book Essay is worth 50 total points. Projects that earn the highest value for each criterion will reflect thorough research with proper citations, a cohesive argument with support, and college-level writing skills.

Criterion	Available Points	Your Points	Comments
2 page, double-spaced, word processed essay with 12 pt font + works cited page	2	2	Some errors
MLA citation for quotes & 4+ references (must have a quote & works cited page)	6	6	Great!
Freedom from errors. Proofread!	4	4	some needed but good overall
Summary of research: when and where was the book challenged; results; evaluation of arguments (pros & cons)	10	10	Perfect!
Statement of your main points against banning the book (lessons, free speech)	10	9	Specific discussion of lessons could be stronger
Mitigating measures: Policies the school can use to help students handle the issues without banning the book.	10	10	Wonderful!
Your conclusion or claim (thesis) against banning.	8	8	Good.
Total	50	49	

37
12
49

ACDV B50

Professor Hart

October 31, 2013

European style

Challenged Book Essay: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou

The United States is well known for the privileges granted to the American people.

These rights, which are clearly documented in the Constitution, have been carried out for centuries giving citizens a sense of individuality and freedom. Disagreements arise simply when one of those listed freedoms become threatened, and even more so when ^{the} possibility of restricting them is considered, such as banning certain books from our children's school libraries and curriculum. The First Amendment of the Constitution clarifies that we the people of America are protected under law the freedom ^{of} expression and the freedom of speech. Yet, as Kenneth Dunn explains in his "Backsliding on Free Speech" article, some people firmly believe that "the First Amendment simply goes too far." But does the restriction of particular books that include sensitive topics, such as Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, really benefit our children, or does it merely take away important life learning lessons.

Guest
interview
of guest

For years, several novels have been criticized and challenged, predominantly because of

the content the author descriptively includes. Maya Angelou's autobiography, *I Know Why the*

Caged Bird Sings, has continuously been challenged and in 1995 acknowledged as topping the

"most challenged" book list that consisted of over 700 titles, as stated by American Libraries'

"Maya Angelou's 'Most Challenged' Book" article. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* reflects

the life Maya lived during her youth, from going back and forth amongst living with her

grandmother and her parents. ^{frag of the} Majority of the concerns parents had regarding this book take

Research

account of the "violence, sexual content, language, racial slurs and profanity" ("Maya Angelou's 'Most Challenged' Book"). Because of the sensitive topics that embodied the book, Beverly

Goldberg writes in her "Censorship Watch" article that Barry and Sharon Taylor, parents of a

high school student from Annie Arundel County, Maryland, became overwhelmed with the

book's descriptive scenarios ^{which} that it pushed them to collecting 260 signatures requesting for the

book to be banned from schools and libraries. Parents argued that students shouldn't be exposed

to such material and that this novel had "no measurable literary or social value" (Goldberg).

*no contractions
Great!*

Parents made clear arguments against the novel, but even after stating their opinions, the director

of curriculum in the county publicly stated that they had not made a decision whether or not the

book should be removed (Goldberg). Although parents were coming together in what they

believe was a way of protecting their children, they didn't realize that they were ignoring the fact

that even though R-rated content was present, these novels tend to hold significant meanings and

lessons essential for children to expand their minds.

*confusing
the FA strips
books &
prevents
children
from being
stripped?*

Stripping books from shelves and preventing children from being exposed to its contents

is the threat of the First Amendment's freedom of expression. Children should be able to express

their dislikes and likes, and should be able to make decisions on their own ^{about} whether or not they

want to read the book. It's normal for parents to "question book selection, but not to demand

their removal" (Dunn). It's understandable that as parents we only want to protect their children

from such sensitive topics but using censorship as a "cure" shouldn't be an option, because the

best place to bring up these topics would be in a classroom which would help the children's

critical thinking skills (Dunn). Children would be able to analyze such incidents and ^{identify} place

solutions to what they would do. Children become aware of the differences amongst individuals

and what's seen as morally right and wrong. Plus, if you restrict children from certain things,

*free
speech*

most of their actions would result in doing the opposite. Many lessons come from books in literature; it ^{is} only be unfair to constrain these students from any learning material, and I'm sure parents don't like the idea of limiting the resources used to expand the knowledge of children.

Although *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is graphic in content, parents and schools can always come together to form an agreement that supports the wishes of parents, yet at the same ^t wouldn't result in the removal of the book. If teachers wish to include the book in their curriculum, it's only fair for them to send home packets and permission slips for their student's parents to see. Teachers should include the reasons ^{of about} to why this book would benefit the children's learning and what, exactly, ^{are} the objectives regarding this novel. Educators can also include ways that parents can help their students analyze the content in a way that would be appropriate for their age group. Schools can also consider dismissing the idea of using this novel for an entire class use, but instead ^{to} keep the book in the library for individual use. Students would be allowed to check out the book, with a signed permission slip, and use it for individual projects, such as book reports. Teachers can also create specific class discussions in which they thoroughly explain the rights and wrongs of the book. The book can also be considered ^{as} to only ~~be~~ available to older children on campus, such as those children in the junior and senior classes.

Many restrictions can be taken to properly respond to those who want the books to be banned, yet respecting the First Amendment. ^{fray} As Maya Angelou writes in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, "If you're for the right thing, then you do it without thinking" (289). The right thing ^{is} would be to keep the book available for students' use. Great!

In conclusion, Maya Angelou's book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, ^{is} had constantly been challenged by parents to be removed from the libraries and schools of their children. The book may contain adult content and scenarios parents do not wish their children to

be exposed to, but within the content underlies a deeper meaning about life and obstacles.

Children shouldn't be cheated from such a moving a novel merely because parents disagree with what the author has written.

Very nicely done! 😊
Would like to have seen specific
examples from the novel with
lessons that could be learned.

Works Cited

Angelou, Maya. ^{Hali} I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. New York: Ballantine Books, 1969. Print.

Dunn, Kenneth A. "Backsliding On Free Speech." *New Crisis (15591603)* 105.2 (1998): 13.

Academic Search Premier. Web. 15 Oct. 2013.

Goldberg, Beverly. "Censorship Watch." *American Libraries* 29.9 (1998): 15. *Academic*

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"Maya Angelou's 'Most Challenged' Book." *American Libraries* 27.3 (1996): 5. *Academic*

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Good!