
The 10 most-challenged books in U.S. libraries have faced complaints in Canada, too

Natalie Stechyson | CBC News | Posted: April 8, 2025 1:21 PM | Last Updated: April 8

Most of the U.S. complaints came from organized advocacy groups rather than parents

Image | Book Ban Florida Lawsuit

Caption: A file photo of banned books taken in Utah. On Monday, the American Library Association released its annual list of most-challenged books, which included Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. (Rick Bowmer/The Associated Press)

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It's always nice to see some old favourites make it onto a new list, right?

Toni Morrison's 1970 classic *The Bluest Eye*, Stephen Chbosky's 1999 YA *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and John Green's 2005 book *Looking for Alaska* have once again been named among the most [challenged library books in the U.S. in 2024](#). [↗](#)

The American Library Association (ALA) released its [annual list of most-challenged books](#) [↗](#) on Monday, which includes new data that reveals the majority of censorship attempts in school and public libraries in the U.S. come from organized movements rather than parents.

Nearly three-quarters, or 72 per cent, of demands to censor books in school and public libraries came from "well-funded," "organized" advocacy groups and government entities that include elected officials, board members and administrators, notes the ALA's report.

These are groups that have "long been dedicated to curbing access to information and ideas," the ALA adds.

Only 16 per cent of demands to censor books came from individual parents.

- [Calls to ban books are on the rise in Canada. So is the opposition to any bans](#)

"The movement to ban books is not a movement of parents, but a movement of partisans who seek to limit our freedom to read and make different choices about things that matter," said Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of ALA's office for intellectual freedom, in a [news release](#). [↗](#)

Many of the challenges, for instance, can be traced to the conservative activist group "Moms for Liberty," and websites like RatedBooks, Caldwell-Stone told The [Associated Press](#) ↗.

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The 10 most-challenged books of 2024

Last year, 2,452 unique titles were challenged, noted the ALA. That's the third-highest number ever documented by the group, which also explained that the numbers are likely even higher due to under-reporting, censorship by exclusions, and legislative restrictions.

Many of the most-challenged books of the last year included 2SLGBTQ+ characters or themes, the ALA noted. They also covered topics of race, racism, equity and social justice.

1. ***All Boys Aren't Blue*, by George M. Johnson** (2020) — A young adult (YA) memoir/manifesto about the trials and triumphs of Black queer boys.
2. ***Gender Queer*, by Maia Kobabe** (2019) — A graphic novel memoir about coming out as non-binary and asexual.
3. (Tie) ***The Bluest Eye*, by Toni Morrison** (1970) — An adult fiction about an 11-year-old Black girl who prays for her eyes to turn blue.
4. (Tied with the above) ***The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, by Stephen Chbosky** (1999) — A coming-of-age novel about an introverted high school freshman.
5. ***Tricks*, by Ellen Hopkins** (2009) — A YA verse novel about five troubled teens.
6. (Tie) ***Looking for Alaska*, by John Green** (2005) — A YA book about a high-school junior searching for answers about life and death after a fatal car crash.
7. (Tied with the above) ***Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*, by Jesse Andrews** (2012) — A YA fiction about a teen forced to rekindle a childhood friendship with a girl dying of cancer.
8. (Tie) ***Crank*, by Ellen Hopkins** (2004) — A YA fiction about the turbulent relationship between a teen girl and crystal meth.
9. (Tied with the above) ***Sold*, by Patricia McCormick** (2006) — A YA fiction about a teen from Nepal sold into sexual slavery in India.

10. ***Flamer*, by Mike Curato (2020)** — A graphic novel about a boy's journey to self-discovery and acceptance.

Image | LIBRARY SUBJECTIVE BOOKS

Caption: Three books entitled *It's Perfectly Normal*, *Let's Talk About It*, and *All Boys Aren't Blue* are pictured at the Vancouver Public Library on May 18, 2023. (Ben Nelms/CBC)

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Book challenges on the rise in Canada

Experts have noted that book bans are [also on an upswing here in Canada](#) [↗]. [CBC reported last year](#) that, according to Canadian librarians, recent challenges primarily involve opposition to books that deal with sexuality, 2SLGBTQ+ themes or gender diversity.

At the same time, [sales of 2SLGBTQ+ fiction in Canada](#) [↗] increased 34 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2024, according to new data released by the industry analysts at BookNet Canada. Library loans of 2SLGBTQ+ titles also increased during this time.

The [Canadian Library Challenges Database](#) [↗], an initiative by Toronto Metropolitan University's Centre for Free Expression, lists 119 titles that were challenged in 2024 and another 30 so far in 2025. (The numbers could be higher, but the database is limited by self-reporting.) The majority of the complaints were for books that were considered "age inappropriate," contained "explicit content" or were "pro-LGBTQIA2S+."

- [Libraries are being accused of offering child porn. Librarians explain why that's not true](#)
- [Ontario librarians say 'they have to be ready' amid growing calls in U.S. to ban books](#)

In a [recent blog post](#), [↗] the Centre for Free Expression explained that in 2024, most complaints were filed by members of the public, most of the challenges happened in Ontario, the top rationale was "age inappropriate," the top requested action was to remove the book and the top action taken by the library, "after careful review of the item, is to retain the item."

According to the database, *All Boys Aren't Blue* was challenged in 2022 and 2023, both times in B.C. *Gender Queer* was challenged six times between 2021 and 2023 in several provinces. *The Bluest Eye* was challenged once in 2023 at a public library in Creston, B.C.

Me and Earl and the Dying Girl was challenged in 2023 and *Crank* was challenged in 2006.

Some of the books challenged so far this year include *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *Sold* and *Looking for Alaska*, as well as some Canadian content like Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (for "violence") and *Fall on Your Knees* by Ann-Marie MacDonald, for being "anti-Christian."

WATCH | Author Louise Penny cancel U.S. book tour:

Media Video | Rosemary Barton Live : Louise Penny says attacks on Canadian sovereignty are 'beyond disconcerting'

Caption: Chief political correspondent Rosemary Barton speaks with Canadian author Louise Penny about cancelling the U.S. dates on her book tour and supporting the Haskell Free Library and Opera House on the Canada-U.S. border.

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