

Censorship in Literature

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What are the impacts of censorship of literature?

Introduction

Censorship is defined as the suppression or removal of writing, artistic work, etc. that are considered obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security

Reasons for Censorship in Literature

- Political issues
- Obscenities
- Religious concerns
- Security threats

Some examples:

- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, published 1885 and immediately banned for obscene racial language
- Harry Potter series, written by J.K. Rowling, censored for witchcraft
- *The Hate U Give*, by Angie Thomas, banned for anti-police message, drug use, racial slurs

Self-censorship

- Authors avoiding certain topics
- Fear of backlash
- Political climate
- Free to speak your mind

Diversity

- Marginalized voices oppressed
- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Malcolm X and Alex Haley → banned for “Black Nationalism” and “anti-white statements”
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee → racial language, racism

Underground Literature

- Clandestine literature → self publishing
- Evasion of censorship or law
- “underground presses” used historically
- Since the mid 1960s in the U.S., underground literature → radical literature, opinions

Example

- *The Afro American Journal* published in Seattle from 1967-72
- Journal published articles from the Black Panther Party, the Nation of Islam
- All radical, sometimes controversial opinions
- Transition from nonviolent civil disobedience to militant belief in Black nationalism

Image for reference from the Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project:



Works Cited

- Gibson, James L., and Joseph L. Sutherland. "Keeping your mouth shut: Spiraling Self-censorship in the United States." *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 138, no. 3, 9 June 2023, pp. 361–376, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3647099>.
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