

Should we ban certain books?

In the last few years the topic of banning books has become more prominent not just with books themselves but all forms of art including Disney movies, Dr Seuss' books and the author J.K. Rowling. However, as well as being formally banned, some books have been called back and others have had people being told not to buy them when the author has been "cancelled". If people decide, is it acceptable to cancel books?

Some would agree, saying that at times, it is necessary to ban books saying that there are books that contain racist, sexist, and homophobic themes/ideas. A few of Dr. Seuss' books' productions were halted due to the "racial stereotypes" (*Helmore,2021*) that were displayed in these children's books. It is widely accepted that children are impressionable and some worry that if children are exposed to offensive texts like these that they will pick up the attitudes of these texts and which wouldn't be good. "Amazon has also banned Mien Kampf" (*Waterson,2020*) Due to its terrible effects on the Jewish community and its association with Adolph Hitler and Nazi Germany. This would be seen as effective to prevent the radicalisation of people that might read this book and take on some of the wrong and destructive ideas in it and act on them. Finally, some would argue that by buying the books of authors that make offensive comments you are supporting their offensive ideas and so people should be discouraged from buying their books. For example, when the Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling made "transphobic" (*Pyman,2020*) comments on social media, the editor of the world's biggest Harry Potter site told fans not to buy her books. This could be beneficial as not buying Ms. Rowling's books, some believe that they are showing solidarity with the transgender community. I think these points are fairly strong because it would be very dangerous to have some books read by vulnerable groups of people such as children and some who are offended by authors' comments and content within their books could feel more supported if people join together to boycott their products. However, some people's careers could be ruined if they say something offensive and forgiveness isn't very common in "cancel culture"

Some would disagree, saying that banning books is never needed as we can learn from them. For example, when the racist themes of some Disney films were brought into question, instead of removing the movies, they decided to put a warning at the start of these films saying that "we want to acknowledge its harmful impact, learn from it and spark conversation to create a more inclusive future together" (*BBC,2021*). Some could see this as better than just banning the book as they could use it to learn what stereotypes are wrong, equipping them with tools to recognise these stereotypes in real life. The same people would argue that there is a piqued interest for banned books so instead of hiding them (since people will read them anyway) they should be seen as an opportunity to learn. Furthermore, it could be put forward that censoring the types of books that can be read can become dangerous because the decision of which books get banned are usually all relative to the opinions and ideas of the people deciding to ban the books. This makes a huge grey area of what and what is not acceptable in literature. This could be explained by the fact that many people disagree with J.K. Rowling's comments, but some feminists do agree with her (*Dalgety,2020*). Finally, some would say that many of the most successful texts had unconventional ideas that would be considered wrong at the time e.g. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and how he depicts a woman who controls her husband and *The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with his representation of the new theory of evolution. Both these were seen as going against the social norms of the time. They would say that by banning some books we could be denying future generations knowledge of what our times were about. I think that that this point has some strengths but is quite weak. It is a good point that we can learn from offensive books however, the current society is more inclusive of new

ideas than ever and the books that are banned usually represent archaic themes such as racism and homophobia that most likely won't be seen as good by people in the future.

In conclusion I think that certain, extreme books should be banned to prevent people from being manipulated into ideas that aren't acceptable but it should be properly explained to people why the book was banned to teach them about why the things in said banned book aren't okay.