

"Banning Books" Lesson Plan

Middle School (6-8), Persuasive Writing

Duration: 3 class periods of 45-55 minutes

Adaptation: High School (9-12) "Recommending Literature" Prompt, Persuasive Writing

Banning Books Prompt:

Some members of your school board want to ban certain books from the public library. They feel that these books contain topics unsuitable for young readers. Do you agree that some kinds of books should be banned from the library? Do you disagree?

Write a letter to your school board persuading the members that these books should be banned or that these books should not be banned.

As you write, remember your essay will be scored based on how well you:

- Develop a multi-paragraph response to the assigned topic that clearly communicates your thesis to the audience.
- Support your thesis with meaningful reasons and sufficient details.
- Address the readers' concerns, opposing viewpoints, or counterarguments.
- Organize your essay in a clear and logical manner, including an introduction, body, and conclusion.
- Use well-structured sentences and language that are appropriate for your audience.
- Edit your work to conform to the conventions of standard American English.

Day One: Discuss Censorship (offline)

- 1) In their writers' journals, students respond to the questions: "What is censorship?" and "What is the purpose of censorship?" (4 minutes)
- 2) In pairs, students compare their writing and understanding of the issue. In the meantime, each displays a copy of the actual school policy on the selection process for books and the procedures for handling books that are challenged by the public. (3 minutes)
- 3) Teacher leads a class discussion about censorship and types (media, music, books) of censorship. Teacher guides students through the district policies on book selection. Students write in their journals about the district's reasoning for such policies and whether they agree or disagree with these policies. (15 minutes)
- 4) Teacher announces the school district is being challenged by community members for a book in the library that contains offensive language. (It is best to use a specific book as an example here, preferably something that students have read.) In groups of three or four, students discuss their reactions to this news, considering multiple perspectives. Each group selects a spokesperson to share their reactions with the class. Teacher leads a class discussion about the topic. (18 minutes)
 - a. Should we be able to ban books that contain offensive material?
 - b. What kind of materials should be considered offensive?
 - c. Who should make these decisions, and what kind of process should they use to decide on a particular book?
 - d. How does it make you feel, knowing that material may be censored for your protection?

****Teacher at this point clarifies that the district is NOT actually being challenged, and that it was presented as truth to gauge a genuine reaction from the students.****

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Day Two: Research the Topic (online)

- 1) Students work in pairs to review the following sources. Optional Internet literacy task: use [iSEEK™ Education](#) to search for these sources. (25 minutes)
 - a. [The American Library Association Banned Books Week](#)
 - b. [The First Amendment Center: Case Study- Board of Ed. V. Pico](#)
 - c. [The First Amendment Center: Banned Books](#)
- 2) Students consider the idea that their school is being challenged to remove a book from the library. In groups of four, students assume one of the following roles: administrator, teacher/librarian, school board member, or parent. Students who assume the roles of administrator and teacher/librarian argue against banning the book. Students who assume the roles of school board member and parent argue in favor of banning the book. Students should use information from their research in their arguments. Each group reaches a resolution to the satisfaction of the majority of its members. (12 minutes)
- 3) Each group shares the outcome of their discussion and explains how they reached a resolution. (8 minutes)

Day Three: Planning and Prewriting (online or offline)

- 1) Teacher introduces students to the MY Access!® "Banning Books" prompt and assigns the MY Access! ["Do What" Chart - Prewriting Handout](#) with the [Understanding Prompt Vocabulary or "Do" Words - Prewriting Handout](#). Students work individually as they begin to think about what the prompt is asking them to do. (10 minutes)
- 2) Teacher reviews "Do What" Chart - Prewriting Handout with students, focusing on the verbs in the "Banning Books" writing prompt. (5 minutes)
- 3) Teacher leads students through the first two parts of the [My Access! Persuasive Writing Guide](#). In part one, students refine and review their ideas about censorship by filling in the subject, audience, purpose and voice for their writing. (5 minutes)
- 4) Teacher reminds students of the pros and cons of banning books that have been discussed in preceding lessons. In part two of the My Access! Persuasive Writing Guide, students write down several statements for and against banning books. (15 minutes)
- 5) Students trade the My Access! Persuasive Writing Guide with a partner. Each student adds one idea to his/her partner's chart, one pro and one con. (10 minutes)
- 6) Students return the My Access! Persuasive Writing Guides to the original authors. Students select the three or four ideas they want to develop as they begin writing their essays. (5 minutes)

Teachers can substitute the interactive Persuasive Wizard for the Persuasive Writing Guide to complete this part of the lesson online.