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## Banning books? Bad news

**By: Brooke Robertson**

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My senior year of high school was marked by a few controversial citywide events, chief of which was a vicious battle over whether Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye" should be taught in a high school junior honors English class.

One of the 11th grader's parents pushed to have the school (not mine, by the way), and then the school district, ban the book for containing material that was "pornographic" in nature and inappropriate for children.

I'll admit that the book is controversial - it deals with incest and rape and nearly every other nightmarish event that parents hope and pray never happens to their children. But is that reason enough to ban the book entirely from the school system?

Well, the Kern High School District didn't think so. Although the book evaded the leering eye of a few overprotective parents, it doesn't mean that all controversial books have; this is not an isolated event.

Over the years, books such as Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter" and Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451" - all of which are now beloved classics - have been banned for various reasons.

This week marks the 26th anniversary of Banned Books Week, a nationwide event that champions "the freedom to choose or the freedom to express one's opinion even if that opinion might be considered unorthodox or unpopular and stresses the importance of ensuring the availability of those unorthodox or unpopular viewpoints to all who wish to read them," according to the American Library Association's Web site. The organization puts on the event every year during the last week of September.

In honor of this week, "The Hollywood Librarian," a 2006 documentary that looks at real librarians vis-à-vis those portrayed in the film industry, will be showing in the newly renovated Cuesta College library tomorrow at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. A question-and-answer session will follow the 2 p.m. showing.

"Its got a little bit of everything - emotional points, funny ones (including a montage of every librarian ever saying 'shh') and some great interviews," said Jennifer Corea, a librarian at the college who has all ready seen the film twice.

"It imprints a lot of information about how libraries and librarians are perceived and what place they hold in the community."

Written and directed by Ann Seidl, a former librarian, the 95-minute-long film is the first full-length documentary to feature librarians.

The cost for the Cuesta College viewing of the film is \$5 to \$8.

Also in conjunction with Banned Books Week, branches of the San Luis Obispo County Library - those in Morro Bay and Atascadero - are displaying posters of books that have been banned in different times and places. These books are available for check-out.

One final thought: In his 1953 speech "The One Un-American Act," then Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas wrote, "Restriction of free thought and free speech is the most dangerous of all subversions. It is the one un-American act that could most easily defeat us."

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