



# Southwest Valley libraries join in Banned Books Week

**Annemarie Moody**

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Fans of author Roald Dahl may be surprised to know that one of his best-known books, *James and the Giant Peach*, was banned in the 1990s in children's libraries.

The glowing green, magical crocodile tongues that mutate the giant peach reminded concerned parents of drugs, among other complaints.

This and hundreds of other works are being celebrated at libraries in the Southwest Valley and elsewhere as part of Banned Books Week.

"There's materials I wouldn't want to read, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't be available to those who want it," said Avondale Old Town librarian Daphne Purchase. "We support the ALA (American Library Association) in not banning books. We feel like if a book offends, you can exercise your right not to check it out. Other people have the right to have access to it."

The Avondale Old Town library is offering a \$25 Harkins Theatres gift certificate to anyone who reads or listens to a banned book. The library also is providing reading lists of banned books and giving away once-banned books.

The first 15 children who come to a reading of *The Giver* at 4 p.m. Tuesday will get a copy of Lois Lowry's Newbery Medal winner.

Banned books are ones that have been removed from a library or school system, and "challenged" books describe materials people have attempted to get banned.

The American Library Association and the American Booksellers Association, among others, sponsor the week, running through next Saturday.

Controversial books range from classic literature like Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* to hot-button autobiographies like *Private Parts* by Howard Stern to international blockbusters like the *Harry Potter* series.

J.K. Rowling's series represented the most-challenged books between 2000 and 2005, according to the American Library Association.

This year, Avondale's libraries also are screening a documentary *The Hollywood Librarian*, a blend of film clips and interviews with real librarians.

The film takes on the popular image of a librarian as a stiff, bespectacled spinster and asks librarians what they really do every day, what they love about their jobs and their frustrations.

Avondale is the only library in the Valley to show the movie, and proceeds from the event will go toward new language-learning materials.

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- Ariadne
- Posted: Oct 1, 2007 at 7:19 AM
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Wow -- one of the best books about life in the Deep South, about racism in general, and the flip side of that -- generosity and integrity. And there are people who want to BAN To Kill a Mockingbird? Even the movie was great, with Gregory Peck.

There is NEVER, EVER, EVER, a reason to ban a book. Why? Oh, but then there are the "but..but..this book is dangerous..that book is offensive.."

I think this quote sums up why banning ANY book EVER is a bad idea:

"Beware of he who would deny you access to information, for in his heart he dreams himself your master."

If we keep banning everything until we are so plain vanilla that no one is allowed to have a unique thought, only the privileged in society will be truly free. They will have access to what the general populous has banned -- they will be able to pursue enlightenment, not the average American. Is that what you want?

It's not what I want. I should never be allowed to tell YOU what you should or shouldn't read. No one should ever be allowed to tell you that. Reading is learning, whether experiencing a different point of view, exposing history, unravelling the nature of the universe, opening the mind, or teaching you how to make a quiche.

And yes, even the books that are the most offensive shouldn't be banned. Otherwise, when will the time come when what YOU like to read is suddenly on someone's hitlist?

Book burning was a common Soviet practice. Book burning is a practice of dictatorships and totalitarian states -- Stalin had mounds of books burned. The Nazis burned books.

In a much-publicized media event between Khrushchev (Soviet leader at the time) and Nixon in 1959, as the Cold War continued to heat up, regarding whether or not the American people would hear Khrushchev's words (Khrushchev was very dubious that the American people would get a translation of his words and be allowed to hear what he had to say -- and considering it was a somewhat impromptu discussion not of the normal 'media' type -- I can see, coming from Khrushchev's 'world,' the Soviet Union, why he might doubt that the American people would be allowed to read his words), Nixon said this:

"There is not a day in the United States when we cannot read what you say. When Kozlov was speaking in California about peace, you were talking here in somewhat different terms. This was reported extensively in the American press. Never make a statement here if you don't want it to be read in the United States. I can promise you every word you say will be translated into English."

His point was that Americans were free -- free to know what was generally going on in the world, free to read the semi-public comments between Khrushchev and Nixon.

When faced with the very dark list of book burners throughout history -- why would ANYONE want to encourage such a thing? If you don't like a book, PUT IT DOWN.

But please, please don't try to take it out of someone else's hand! Unless you really want to be the Thought-Control Police? Stalin and Hitler certainly tried their best at it.

- Lori8119
- Posted: Oct 1, 2007 at 10:39 AM
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Banning books is offensive to me!

Too many arrogant people think they are the moral monitor. Get a life. (When are they going to ban the Holy Bible? That has more sin in it than any other book that has been published.)

- tolleson2
- Posted: Oct 1, 2007 at 12:37 PM
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The good thing is that Avondale kids cannot read English so its no loss there.

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