



# Classroom Activity

## Freedom of Artistic Expression: Banned Books

To start this activity, have students browse the “Banned & Challenged Classics” page on the [Banned & Challenged Books site](#), then have them browse the “Books Challenged or Banned in 2016” page on the [Illinois Library Association site](#). Students should then work individually or in groups to answer the discussion questions below. Instructors should then bring the class back together and have students share their responses. For this activity, it is encouraged that the post-discussion activity options are to be completed in class.

### Discussion Questions:

- What similarities do you notice between these two lists? Differences? Are you shocked to see any books on this list?
- Do you think banning books solves any problems? Why or why not? To what extent should education encourage students to explore controversial, uncomfortable topics?
- Have you read any of the books on either list? Did they alter your perception of certain topics? Explain your response. Do you think the book could be rewritten in a way that prevents it from being controversial? Why or why not? What adjustments would you make?
- Salman Rushdie, an author once on the banned books list, states, “one of the problems with defending free speech is you often have to defend people that you find to be outrageous and unpleasant and disgusting.” How can defenders of free speech come to terms with the commitments of free speech and put aside their feelings towards offensive material?

### Post-Discussion Activities:

- Create a poster advocating for or against one the banning of one of the books on either list.
- Redesign a book cover for one of the banned books. Be prepared to explain why you made the design choices you did.

### References & Resources:

- [“Banned & Challenged Classics.”](#) *The American Library Association.*
- Doyle, R. (2017). [“Books Challenged or Banned in 2016.”](#) *Illinois Library Association.*