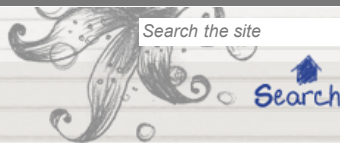


Engage

- join a discussion
- write a blog post
- share a resource



International Reading Association

Help | Login | Logout | JOIN



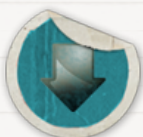
Homepages ▾



My Profile ▾



Community ▾



Resources ▾



Discussions ▾



Events ▾



Blogs ▾



Main Website

Home > Blog Viewer

Blog Viewer

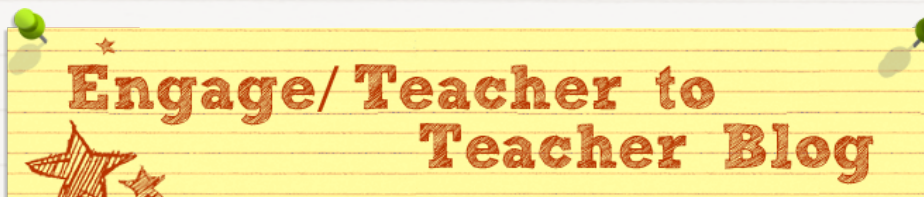
+ Add a New Blog

My Blog | My Contacts | Most Recent | Top Rated | Most Read | UnPublished



5 Questions With... the legendary Judy Blume!

- View Profile
- Add Contact
- Blog This
- Contact Author



Average of 4 Ratings
★★★★★

Your Rating
★★★★★

4 Ratings
2 Comments
2630 Views

5 Questions With...



Judy Blume © Photo © Sigrid Estrada

Judy Blume's books have won hundreds of awards. She is the recipient of the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. Adults as well as children will recognize such Blume titles as ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME, MARGARET; BLUBBER; JUST AS LONG AS WE'RE TOGETHER; and the five book series about the irrepressible Fudge. More than 80 million copies of her books have been sold, and her work has been translated into thirty-one languages.

Judy is a longtime advocate of intellectual freedom. Finding herself at the center of an organized book banning campaign in the 1980s she began to reach out to other writers, as well as teachers and librarians, who were under fire. Since then, she has worked tirelessly with the National Coalition Against Censorship to protect the freedom to read. She is the editor of PLACES I NEVER MEANT TO BE, ORIGINAL STORIES BY CENSORED WRITERS. You can visit her at www.judyblume.com and on Twitter (@judyblume).

On your website, you write, "I believe that censorship grows out of fear." Yet, far and away the top reason for challenging a book is sexually explicit material. How are the two connected?

It doesn't matter what reason is given, whether it's sexuality, language, situation—it's still based on fear. The complaining parent may be thinking, There's something in this book I don't want my child to know. There's something I don't want to talk to my son or daughter about. These are subjects I'm not prepared to discuss. Questions I don't want to answer. I'm afraid if my child reads this, my child will do this. I don't want my child to have the freedom to choose this book.

Your most frequently challenged book is FOREVER, which was first published in 1975. The novel focuses on Katherine and Michael, two high school kids who fall in love and decide to have sex. It's fairly tame by today's standards—especially when stacked against an episode of, say, GOSSIP GIRL—yet FOREVER remains a prime target for censors. Why?

FOREVER is an intimate story in which a girl enjoys her sexuality and she's not punished (Reason One). Is it tame by today's standards? I don't think



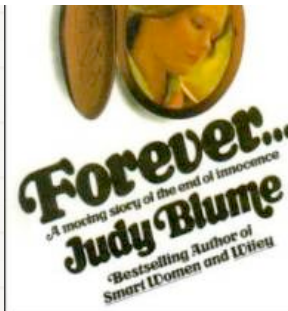
so. Not in that respect. She takes responsibility for her actions, for her sexuality, yet still finds herself hurting the boy she thought she would love forever. Some parents get nervous when they know their daughter or son is reading a sexually explicit story. They may react with anger when they find out accidentally. They almost never read the whole book—only certain passages.

But reading a book like FOREVER can satisfy a young person's curiosity. Norma Klein used to say she had books to read when she was growing up so she didn't have to go out and actually do it. It was the same with me. I had the freedom to read widely. Our home bookshelves were filled with books and in my house reading was a good thing, something to be celebrated. It was a safe way to come of age, a safe way to find out about the world.

DEENIE ranked No. 42 on American Library Association's Top 100 Banned/Challenged Books list for the 1990s, but is missing from the Top 100 list for 2000-2010. What changed between the two decades?

What changed is that DEENIE was successfully banned from so many schools most kids don't even know I wrote it. Certainly the masturbation taboo hasn't changed. At least not the female masturbation taboo. If there's one thing that makes parents crazier than knowing their child is reading about sexual intercourse, it's reading about masturbation. Those who wanted the book banned called it a manual on masturbation, they accused me of teaching their children how to masturbate. This would be funny if only....

Of course most parents want their children to be educated. Most parents don't deny their children the right to choose books to read.



In the introduction to PLACES I NEVER MEANT TO BE: ORIGINAL STORIES BY CENSORED WRITERS, you talk about an editor asking you to remove some potentially objectionable material from TIGER EYES—and how you regrettably “caved in and took out those lines.” Do you feel as if the novel (which, ironically, still ranks as one of the top 100 banned books of all time) suffered as a result of this decision?

I don't like to talk about this because that editor is one of the most important people in my life and he and I have different memories of the situation. However, I did take out those lines and no, the book didn't suffer.

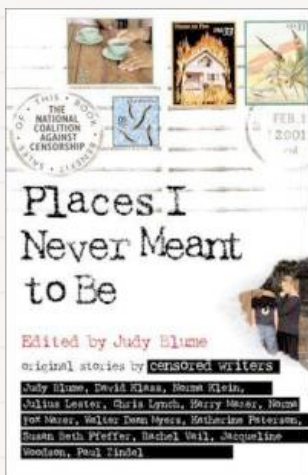
I'm surprised to hear the novel ranks as one of the top 100 banned books. I'm curious about this and what the objections are. It's a very emotional story, the pain of losing a beloved parent and in such an unexpected way. Maybe that's the objection. But the story isn't about the violence of that night. It's about a family trying to recover.

We filmed a movie based on the book a year ago. The producers were concerned it would get a G rating. (That's one difference between books and movies!) The movie was finished over the summer. It hasn't been released yet. It's very true to the book both in story and emotion.

The majority of formal book challenges are instigated by parents. What can teachers do to combat censorship in their schools and communities?

Not going it alone is essential. Always ask for help from the experts. Over the years I've heard from groups of students whose teachers have turned complaints about books into learning situations. When young readers are able to join the conversation the community is often more willing to listen.

For more resources that will help you combat censorship in your community, see Judy's [Book Censorship in Schools: A Resource Guide/Toolkit](#), which was developed by the National Coalition Against Censorship specifically for her website.



© 2011 International Reading Association. Please do not reproduce in any form, electronic or otherwise.

Created By: [Teacher to Teacher, IRA](#) On: Thu, Sep 29, 2011 04:36 PM

Related Resources

No Related Resource entered.

Comments



[James Sievert](#) November 18, 2011 7:36 pm

Not sure I agree with her stance on censorship. While parents can act (and sometimes overreact) based on fear, ultimately they are responsible for their children's growth and development.



[Sarah Ada](#) November 18, 2011 12:32 am

Aside from being an awesome author, Judy Blume has one of the greatest author websites and twitter feeds I've ever seen! This interview is very cool, I would love to do a unit on banned books when I get my own classroom. Judy Blume is a great resource!

PermaLink

Copy and paste the link below into other web pages, documents, or email messages to allow immediate, permanent access to this page. Security settings will remain in place and login will be necessary for protected content.

<http://engage.reading.org/READING/Go.aspx?c=BlogViewer&BlogKey=c9cb42c6-d7a9-46a9-9cd4-c87ff3c3a20c>

You must [login](#) as a member to comment on blog posts, if you are not a member [join!](#)

Tag

Tags/Keywords:

Topic : [5 Questions With](#), [banned books week](#), [censorship](#), [middle grade authors](#), [young adult authors](#)



Powered by Higher Logic's Connected Community