

# THE BATTLE FOR FREE SPEECH IN SCHOOLS

## Scopes Monkey Trial

1925



John Scopes, a high school science teacher in Tennessee, was put on trial for teaching evolution which violated state law. The trial brought national attention to the debate over the teaching of evolution in schools.

## Tinker V. Des Moines

1962



The Supreme Court rules that students do not lose their freedom of speech rights when they enter a school building, and that schools can only restrict speech if it disrupts the school environment.

## Island Trees School District v. Pico

1982



The Supreme Court Rules that school officials cannot remove books from a library solely because of their content, unless the books are "pervasively vulgar" and lacking in educational value.

## Arizona State Law Banning Ethnic Studies

2010



A law is passed in Arizona that bans ethnic studies programs in public schools, leading to the removal of books and other materials from classrooms. The law is later struck down as unconstitutional.

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In recent weeks, the issue of censorship has come to the forefront of Eaton High School as parents have been advocating to remove a particular book (see article to the right) from the EHS curriculum. This is just one example of how censorship can creep its way into the educational system, stifling the exchange of ideas and hindering the learning process for students.

### Blocked Websites

But it's not just books that are under scrutiny. Many websites and search terms are blocked on school computers. The school's reasoning is to protect students, but it actually limits students' access to important information and ideas. Social studies

# Voices Unleashed: The Fight Against Censorship in Schools

Top Secret

Classified

teacher Mr. Jorgensen said, "I understand why some websites are restricted, but I want students to be prepared for the real world; where there are no filters." Jorgensen has had issues with his classes accessing certain information about historical events, such as the Holocaust. This makes it hard for students to fully understand the topics in which they're studying.

### Dress Code

School dress codes, when taken too far, can also border the line of censorship. A recent controversial topic surrounding Eaton High School has been the no-hat policy. Although a minor restriction, it serves as a symbol of the larger problem of censorship within the educational system. Students are allowed to wear hats on specific occasions, such as

### Social Media

Social media use, especially by teachers, is also a controver-

hat day, but only if they pay a fee. On one hand, the school is allowing students to wear hats, which suggests a degree of freedom and autonomy. On the other hand, the fact that students have to pay a fee to exercise this freedom raises questions about the true nature of this policy. By making hats a privilege that can only be enjoyed on certain days or with a fee, the school is essentially treating freedom of expression as a commodity that can be bought and sold. This may lead to frustration and resentment from the students. Dress codes may be implemented for safety or decency reasons, yet they can also be used to restrict individual expression and reinforce gender stereotypes.

sial topic. Teachers are told to keep their social medias "professional," which promotes the idea of how much power and control the school has over the personal lives of teachers. Regulations and rules need to be put in place by schools to protect the well-being of both students and teachers. This is understandable, but how much is too much?

### Consequences of Censorship

The consequences of censorship are dire, not just for education, but for society as a whole. Censorship can lead to ignorance and intolerance, as people are denied access to a diverse range of ideas and perspectives. It also limits the ability for students to engage in meaningful dialogue and debate, which are essential for a healthy democracy. Mr

Jorgensen said, "We want you guys to have the ability to critically think and there's always going to be different opinions on the same event, but if you can only access one opinion, this restricts students to one narrative. This limits the types of conversations we can have in the classroom." The backlash over the content of *The Kite Runner* raises the question: what topics should and shouldn't be censored in high school? If students are allowed to speak their mind freely, should teachers be allowed to as well? Promoting an inclusive learning environment that encourages students and teachers to explore new ideas and engage in honest dialogue, even if those may be controversial or unpopular, is essential for personal growth. The freedom of expression should be embraced by the education system, not confined.

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The truth about *The Kite Runner* controversy The instruction of *The Kite Runner* to sophomores of EHS has brought new life to controversy about the curriculum of Eaton High School.

As the famous quote by Socrates goes, "remember the mind grows strong through use. Struggle makes power." *The Kite Runner* is one of the most controversial novels in the nation and is taught in the classrooms of Eaton High School. Some of the Eaton community has raised questions about the literary merit of *The Kite Runner* in context to sophomore-aged high school students. The *Kite Runner* explores the idea of redemption and guilt, but the appearance of *The Kite Runner* to a person who has never fully read the book is a story of pedophilia and sex. *The Kite Runner* is much more than a story of sex, however. It is a story of real-world problems, real-world situations. It is necessary to understand these ideas as a young adult as the story of life itself is one of struggle and redemption.

*The Kite Runner* follows the story of Amir, an Afghan boy, who journeys through his childhood with his best friend, Hassan. Hassan is the minority of Afghanistan, a Hazara. Hassan is ridiculed and experiences segregation.

## The controversial *Kite Runner*

At the hands of a stronger Afghan boy, Assef, Hassan is sexually assaulted to prove a point of oppression. Amir is an innocent bystander and must live with the guilt of not standing up for his childhood friend.

Some of the Eaton community was outraged at the vivid details of the scene, stating the scene could not possibly teach sophomores anything valuable. The assault scene simply is a prerequisite to a larger purpose of the story. *The Kite Runner* teaches the story of the redemption of a character whose life is destroyed by guilt. This is what life means. Life is difficult. Life throws curveballs and teaches hard lessons to the ones who are involved. A student can learn the lesson of life. Redemption and guilt. People do bad things every day, big and small, but it is the redemption of humankind that teaches lessons.

Shielding young adults from the lessons of life through a novel shields the student from struggle and redemption. Struggle in life grows a person, and these struggles of life presented in *The Kite Runner* are real-world problems that at one point in life a child must learn. Why not teach it in an educational setting? *The Kite Runner* is involved in the Eaton curriculum to teach the EATON acronym itself. Ownership. Everyone makes mistakes and *The Kite Runner* elaborates

on owning up to a mistake and redeeming oneself. A stands for awareness as Amir must first accept the wrong he committed. *The Kite Runner* is not a story of sex and pedophilia, but a story of life. Redemption for guilt felt is just one of the tough issues in life that humans come face to face with.

Access to books for students across the nation is important as novels educate. There is literary merit to this novel and this story is valuable in the face of young adults. Students around the nation are meant to understand and develop ideas about unique cultures and places around the world.

Unique cultures and ideas that may seem alien to young students are important to understand. Beyond the halls of EHS is a unique world of ideas and the sooner that students can understand this, the better the students will be prepared for life after graduation. Denying students and censoring tough novels and stories is denying students the opportunity to understand the world around them.



The book that sparked the most controversy at EHS