

Lesson Plan

Banning Books?

Book: *Toni Morrison*

Series: Black Voices on Race

Level: Navigator

Objective

To have students write an essay articulating and defending an opinion on whether books should be banned.

Supplies

- *Toni Morrison* book
- Paper and pencils

Before the Activity

Read through the *Toni Morrison* book, or assign it to students to read on their own.

Activity

Throughout her career as a writer, professor, and editor, Toni Morrison often focused on representation. Turn to page 14 and invite a volunteer to read the sidebar, which talks about representation and diversity in media, out loud:

Representation is how media show different communities. For example, one movie may stereotype Black people. Another movie may show Black people as complex human beings. Representation also has to do with whether communities are featured at all. For instance, a movie with only white actors lacks Black representation. Good representation allows people to see themselves. It confirms that their experiences matter. Diversity in media develops people's appreciation for different cultures. It also strengthens people's respect for humankind.

Representation can build awareness and understanding. However, including some topics in writing and other forms of media can cause controversy. Some viewers may become upset or even advocate for certain books or topics to be banned. To explore this idea further, turn to the special feature (“A Closer Look: Banned Books”) on pages 24–25 and read it aloud to students.

After reading the special feature, ask students to take out a paper and pencil and write a persuasive essay answering the following questions:

- Do you think schools and governments should be allowed to ban books? Why or why not?

The essay should have the following structure:

- An introductory paragraph that includes a thesis statement, in which the student clearly argues for or against banning books.
- Three body paragraphs, each one providing unique supporting evidence for the thesis statement and specific examples where appropriate. This information can be drawn from the book, or it can come from students' own ideas and experience.
- A concluding paragraph that sums up the student's argument and closes the essay in an original way.

Evaluation

Collect the essays and give each student up to 35 points:

- 5 points for an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement that clearly takes a stand on whether books should be banned
- 5 points for each of the three body paragraphs that provides clear support for the thesis statement
- 5 points for a concluding paragraph that summarizes the student's argument
- 5 points for a well-organized and persuasive argument
- 5 points for writing that is relatively free of grammatical and spelling errors

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' reading standards for informational text, grade 7 (RI 7.1), and writing standards, grade 7 (W 7.1).