

# What They Banned and Why

## The 20 Most Banned Books in Florida

### Florida's Book Ban Crisis

Florida leads the nation in book banning for the **third consecutive year** with **2,304 book bans** during the 2024-2025 school year — more than any other state. Over **700 books** were removed from Florida K-12 schools in 2023-2024 alone.

The law driving the crisis: **HB 1069 (2023)**, signed by Governor Ron DeSantis, requires schools to remove any book challenged for 'sexual conduct' before it even receives a review. One parent, one complaint — and a book disappears from every child in the district. A second law, **HB 1285 (2024)**, limits challenges from non-parents — but does not reverse a single existing ban.

### The 20 Most Banned Books in Florida

#### 1. The Bluest Eye — Toni Morrison

**Banned in:** Banned in 31+ Florida counties | **Why:** Explores racism, sexual violence, and Black identity

Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison's debut novel — the single most banned book in Florida. An 11-year-old Black girl prays for blue eyes so the world will find her beautiful. The American Library Association calls it an essential work of American literature. Florida banned it in more counties than any other title.

#### 2. All Boys Aren't Blue — George M. Johnson

**Banned in:** Multiple districts statewide | **Why:** LGBTQ+ memoir discussing Black queer identity

The #1 Most Challenged Book in America according to the ALA for two consecutive years. A New York Times bestseller. A young adult memoir about growing up Black and queer — dealing with bullying, family, identity, consent, and Black joy. Featured on Good Morning America, NBC Nightly News, and the Today Show.

#### 3. Gender Queer: A Memoir — Maia Kobabe

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** Graphic memoir about nonbinary identity

The most banned book in the United States. A 2020 ALA Alex Award winner. A graphic memoir about self-identity, adolescence, and navigating a world that doesn't have words for who you are. Started as a way to explain nonbinary and asexual identity to the author's family. Banned for explaining — not promoting — difference.

#### 4. A Court of Mist and Fury — Sarah J. Maas

**Banned in:** 18+ instances | **Why:** Fantasy novel with romantic/sexual content

Part of the bestselling Court of Thorns and Roses series. A #1 New York Times bestseller. Fantasy fiction with romantic content involving adult characters. Sarah J. Maas is the third most banned author in Florida.

### 5. *A Clockwork Orange* — **Anthony Burgess**

**Banned in:** 23+ instances nationwide, multiple FL districts | **Why:** Violence and disturbing content

One of Esquire's 50 Best Sci-Fi Books of All Time. A classic dystopian novel taught in high school and university literature courses worldwide. A 'savagely satirical on the distortions of the single and collective minds.' Banned for the same violence that made it a defining work of 20th century literature.

### 6. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* — **Stephen Chbosky**

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** Depicts teen sexuality, drug use, mental health

A #1 New York Times bestseller with millions of copies in print. Called 'a timeless story for every young person who needs to understand they are not alone' by Judy Blume. An American Library Association Best Book for Young Adults. One of the most widely read coming-of-age novels of the past thirty years.

### 7. *Tricks* — **Ellen Hopkins**

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** Addresses sex trafficking and prostitution

A #1 New York Times bestseller. Five teenagers from different backgrounds whose lives intersect through survival, exploitation, and the search for love. Ellen Hopkins is one of the most banned authors in America — her verse novels address the hardest realities of young people's lives.

### 8. *Forever...* — **Judy Blume**

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** Teen sexuality without negative consequences

A Time Best YA Book of All Time. A groundbreaking novel about first love and first sexual experience that has been challenged for 50 years since 1975. Judy Blume has been one of the most challenged authors in America for five decades — precisely because she writes honestly about what teenagers actually experience.

### 9. *Crank* — **Ellen Hopkins**

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** Drug addiction and its consequences

A #1 New York Times bestseller and the first in Ellen Hopkins' Crank trilogy. Based on the author's own daughter's addiction to methamphetamine. A raw, unflinching portrait of how addiction destroys a life — banned for depicting the very consequences it was written to warn against.

### 10. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* — **Alison Bechdel**

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** LGBTQ+ graphic memoir

A National Book Critics Circle Award finalist. Adapted into a Tony Award-winning Broadway musical. A graphic memoir about family, sexuality, and a daughter coming to understand her father after his death. Required reading in hundreds of college courses. Banned for being honest.

### 11. *Thirteen Reasons Why* — **Jay Asher**

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** Suicide and sexual assault

The #1 New York Times and international bestseller. Adapted into a Netflix original series. A story about a teenager's suicide told through the cassette tapes she left behind. Includes crisis resources. Banned for addressing the subject it was written to help prevent.

## 12. *Nineteen Minutes* — *Jodi Picoult*

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** School shooting and its aftermath

From the New York Times bestselling author of *My Sister's Keeper*. A novel about a school shooting and its devastating impact on a small town — examining fault, difference, and the human capacity for both violence and healing. Banned for depicting the very type of tragedy that has become an American epidemic.

## 13. *Speak* — *Laurie Halse Anderson*

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** Sexual assault and trauma

A National Book Award Finalist with over 3.5 million copies sold. A Michael L. Printz Honor Book. A Time Magazine Best YA Book of All Time. A novel about a rape survivor who finds her voice. The author called Florida's removal 'not protecting children.' Translated into 35 languages. Banned for helping survivors speak.

## 14. *Felix Ever After* — *Kacen Callender*

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** Transgender identity and romance

A Stonewall Book Award winner. A Time Magazine Best YA Book of All Time. A coming-of-age story about a Black transgender teen navigating identity, love, and self-discovery at a competitive arts school. Described by Publishers Weekly as 'an anti-racist' essential read. Banned for existing.

## 15. *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* — *Malinda Lo*

**Banned in:** 19+ instances | **Why:** Lesbian relationship in 1950s San Francisco

Winner of the National Book Award and Stonewall Book Award. A New York Times bestseller set in San Francisco's Chinatown during the Red Scare. A historical novel about two teenage girls falling in love in 1954 — when being discovered could mean destruction. Called 'the queer romance we've been waiting for' by Ms. Magazine.

## 16. *A Court of Frost and Starlight* — *Sarah J. Maas*

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** Fantasy romance series

Part of the #1 bestselling Court of Thorns and Roses series. A bridging novel following characters recovering from war and building a future. Sarah J. Maas is the third most banned author in Florida across multiple titles in the series.

## 17. *Storm and Fury* — *Jennifer L. Armentrout*

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** Supernatural romance

From the #1 New York Times bestselling author of *The Primal of Blood and Bone*. A paranormal fantasy about an eighteen-year-old with a supernatural gift hiding among shape-shifting Warden protectors. Romantic fantasy fiction removed from school shelves.

## 18. *Pet* — *Akwaeke Emezi*

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** Trans character, monsters/demons

A National Book Award Finalist and Stonewall Book Award Winner. One of Time Magazine's 100 Best YA Books of All Time. A genre-defying novel about a girl who discovers that monsters still exist — and that uncovering them requires courage. Banned for featuring a transgender protagonist who is also the hero.

## 19. *The Ship We Built* — Lexie Bean

**Banned in:** Multiple districts | **Why:** Trans main character

A middle grade novel — for young readers — about a child who doesn't fit the boxes assigned by others, who finds community through letters released into the world. Called 'incredibly good; by turns raw, sweet, horrifying, tender, and hopeful' by Laurie Halse Anderson. Banned in elementary school libraries.

## 20. *Sold* — Patricia McCormick

**Banned in:** 20+ instances | **Why:** Sex trafficking in Nepal

A National Book Award Finalist with over a million copies in print. The story of a thirteen-year-old girl sold into prostitution by her stepfather in Nepal. Co-author of *I Am Malala*. A book that exists to create empathy for trafficking victims — banned for depicting the very crime it humanizes.

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## Why These Books?

According to PEN America's analysis, Florida's book bans disproportionately target:

- **65%** — Books with LGBTQ+ characters or themes
- **40%** — Books by authors of color or featuring characters of color
- **38%** — Books addressing racism and racial justice
- **25%** — Books with sexual content — often age-appropriate

## The Most Banned Authors in Florida

- Stephen King — Most banned (206 instances, 87 titles)
- Ellen Hopkins — Second most banned
- Sarah J. Maas — Third most banned
- Jodi Picoult — Frequently challenged bestselling author
- Laurie Halse Anderson — Repeatedly targeted for books about sexual assault and eating disorders

***"There are no books banned in Florida." — Florida Department of Education (2024)***  
***Reality: 2,304 documented bans in one school year. Florida leads the nation. "Never before in the life of any living American have so many books been systematically removed from school libraries." — PEN America***

## What You Can Do

- Read a banned book. Then give it to someone else to read.
- Attend your school board meeting and speak during public comment.
- Support the Florida Freedom to Read Project — [floridafreedomtoread.com](http://floridafreedomtoread.com)

- Support PEN America's legal challenges to Florida's ban regime — [pen.org](https://pen.org)
- Vote in school board elections. These races are decided by hundreds of votes.
- Donate banned books to your local Little Free Library.

***"The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame." — Oscar Wilde***