Fahrenheit 451
By Ray Bradbury

Saturday, January 21st at 1pm

Discuss the book
Enjoy snacks
Help "burn" 100 books

Copies available at the Desk
Open to middle school students
(Others by invite)

Done in cooperation with the We the People Grant

Town of Esopus Library
945-330-5580

Check us out at http://wiredteensny.blogspot.com
Arkansas Parent Demands Removal of 70 Titles

The parent of a middle-schooler in the Fayetteville (Ark.) Public Schools has threatened to file requests for reconsideration of 70 books in the system’s school-library collections unless the titles are removed and a parent board is established to oversee materials selection. Characterizing all 70 titles as sexually explicit, Laurie Taylor said in a June 22 e-mail to members of the school board and the district superintendent that her recent examination of the FPS library holdings unearthed books with passages about “threesomes, teenage sexual foreplay, detailed sexual escapades, explicit homosexual affairs, despicable language, dangerous instruction, and promotion of sexual behavior.”


“The magnitude of the request is overwhelming,” Fayetteville school Superintendent Bob New said in the June 23 Northwest Arkansas Times, noting that the review policy “might have to be amended” if Taylor follows through.

The e-mail came almost a month after the Fayetteville school board voted 4–3 to move three sex-education books to the parent section of the system’s middle- and high-school libraries in response to three other requests for reconsideration Taylor made earlier this year. The relocation of Robie Harris’s often-challenged It’s Perfectly Normal and It’s So Amazing and Jeremy Daldry’s The Teenage Guy’s Survival Guide places them out of reach of Fayetteville students in most cases.

Posted June 24, 2005.
Summary:
This program was organized in cooperation with the We the People Bookshelf grant. It was intended for middle school students, but high school students would also find this enjoyable. Copies of the book Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury were ordered for all participants through inter-library loan six weeks prior to the meeting date. We discussed the book and censorship in the United States. Many of the teens were surprised to learn that books are still being banned in our country. To inform the public, 100 titles were chosen for symbolic burning. Teens chose titles from ALA’s 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2000, as well as popular titles they were sure would be missed. These books were wrapped in red paper and placed back on the shelves. However, none of the burned books were allowed to circulate for one month. Several articles explaining recent incidents of book banning and challenging were posted throughout the library. The response was amazing! People were outraged to think that books were forbidden in this country.

Instructions:
✓ The success of this program was due in part to an eye-catching flier. The fire image is located on Microsoft Word and really catches the patron’s attention. Be sure to include the idea that books will be burned. This will likely upset some adults or library trustees, but it peaks a teen’s curiosity as well.
✓ Red wrapping paper can be purchased inexpensively at department stores after Christmas. Local craft stores may also carry rolls of red paper or large sheets of construction paper.
✓ If time allows, show the movie version of the book originally released in 1966, and now available on DVD. This can be especially helpful to teens that are having trouble “getting into” the book. (I would not recommend showing the movie and wrapping the books all in the same day—much too long).
✓ Prepare your supplies ahead of time. Stock up on tape, scissors, black markers, and red paper. It is crucial that snacks are served, so make arrangements to keep the area tidy or clean up after.

Implementation:
In order to ensure a positive turnout, I enlisted some of my regular teens. They were not only happy to participate, but invited friends as well. Ten students showed up the day of the program, but a few others who had read the book and wanted to help burn were unable to attend. To include these teens we saved 20 titles for them to select and burn.

Try to keep the initial discussion session to a minimum—more can be covered while burning. Present the lists of challenged/banned books as possible victims and let them
loose in the stacks with a specific number of books to grab. My students chose a mixture of controversial titles and those that they knew would be missed (ex. Danielle Steel’s latest novel). Now the burning can begin. Provide the students with scratch paper to jot down the title, author, and call number of the book before they wrap it. This information is then written on the wrapped cover. Save these sheets so that a master list of burned books can be created and posted. Let the teens lead the discussion. Use recent examples collected from American Libraries to keep the discussion on target. Once the wrapping is done, return the books to the shelves. Be sure to notify all staff and volunteers that the books are not to be unwrapped or circulated for one month.

Explain these odd books to your patrons by creating a display. Attach the censorship articles to fire-shaped pieces of construction paper. Create a bulletin board that asks “Are books still banned in the U.S.? You bet the 1st Amendment they are!” Construct a fireplace and include controversial titles not already burned, along with the flame news articles. Post your list of burned books in the library, on your webpage, or in the local paper (our local paper wasn’t interested, but it doesn’t hurt to try).

**Intended Audience:**
This program works best with teenage students. Some of my younger teens had difficulty making sense of the book. If you have a younger group, showing the movie version prior to the discussion date, can help. Not only does the plot become clearer, but you can also discuss differences between the two versions.

**Publicity:**
I was lucky to have a strong group of active teens that couldn’t resist the opportunity to do something that annoyed adults—several older patrons commented on the inappropriateness of a library hosting a book burning. Distribute your eye-catching fliers at local shops (Stewart’s and Panera are popular with teens and have community message boards). Contact your local newspaper with news of a book burning! Ask for permission to make an announcement at the local middle and/or high school. Post information to your website or blog (http://wiredtensnny.blogspot.com check out December 2005 and February 2006).

**Results:**
This program was so successful that several teens that participated and some that missed out wanted to recreate the burning for Banned Books Week. Dozens of patrons commented on the fact that they were unaware of such acts of censorship in our country. Many could not believe the titles and authors so commonly challenged (Lowry, L’Engle, Blume, Sendak, Dahl). We distribute BBW materials every year, but this is the first time in the seven years that I have worked in Esopus that people really took notice and were upset by what is occurring in our country.

*Note: When titles were requested through inter-library loan, our staff marked the item as “missing” and made a note of this status change. When the books were unwrapped, all the items were returned to “checked in” status.*