# NOTES ON THE BANNED BOOKS ACTIVITY

**Introduction**

Many of the students enrolled in FYS will be at least somewhat familiar with the concept of banning books; they may have even have read some banned books, or perhaps their parents have prohibited them from doing do. This is meant to be a “practice” activity that instructors can use during the term to prepare students for the final; it can be used as-is, or instructors are free to go beyond the Document Library and provide (or work with students to locate) additional materials as well.

# The Scenario

The scenario instructs students to present their response in the form of an email message. They will, of course, know what an email looks like, and an example of the form is included in the Document Library. Using the proper form will be a factor in the final-exam grade, so instructors may wish to have their students practice that as part of this activity.

# Document 1: Email from your principal, forwarding the parent’s complaint and asking for a response.

The key statements in this document can be found in the parent’s complaint:

 “I’ve been told the movie is even worse” speaks to the parent’s credibility. The objection to the assignment is based, at least in part, on secondhand information, so how much weight should be given to it?

 “Children who see violent movies…often go on to commit violent acts themselves” repeats a common-but- often-unexamined claim. Document 6 is meant to help students think critically about that statement.

# Document 2: Publisher’s advertisement for *The Hunger Games*

This document is meant to give students a sense of what the book in question is all about. It is a publisher’s advertisement, so it will of course present a positive view of the book. The question of perspective (or “spin,” or “bias”) could be a good topic for class discussion.

# Document 3: The American Library Association’s “Freedom to Read” statement

As you can imagine, the ALA has a great deal to say on the subject of banning books. This document can be used as a free-standing defense of the “freedom to read,” or instructors and students could choose to explore the wealth of other information on the ALA’s websites, especially <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/banned>.

# Document 4: Greenville Parents’ Bill of Rights

This document is meant to provide the other side of the book-banning and censorship arguments. It was created especially for this activity; similar real-world sites include Parents Against Bad Books in Schools ([www.pabbis.com](http://www.pabbis.com/)).

# Document 5: Movie review from FamilyFriendlyMovies.com

The assignment in question involves not just reading a book, but watching the movie adaptation as well. As the website states, the review is written from “a Christian perspective”; students may wish to consider how much weight it should carry with those who do not necessarily share the reviewer’s faith.

# Document 6: Pro/Con: Is Hollywood largely to blame for the nation’s social problems?

Like the “Freedom to Read” statement, this is a kind of “gateway” document: it can stand on its own, or instructors may wish to have students explore similar materials. The CQ Researcher, a database to which Marshall subscribes, is an excellent place to begin researching most “hot topics” of the day; the one on “School Censorship,” for example, is especially relevant to this activity.

**Document 7: Banned Books Week: Suzanne Collins’ “The Hunger Games” Blog**

This document is meant to provide an “independent” opinion on the why *The* *Hunger Games* book was banned. It questions the two basis for banning the book, violence and being sexually explicit. The author agrees with the violence part, but states that because some parents don’t believe their children are ready for it doesn’t mean that they should prohibit other children from reading it. This would help the argument of keeping the assignment.