

Let's Not Ban Books, Kamloops

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Thursday, March 27, 2014

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Ban me? Burn me? Fear me?

OK, Kamloops, take a cool soothing breath while I take a short break today to not talk about the [rebooting of the Occupy Movement in 8 days](#).

I know most of you in The Loops are doing just fine and that most of you are OK with literature, including that which challenges our comfort zone. After all, we revere Shakespeare and he was a crude, vulgar dude, when he wasn't being extraordinarily profound.

But if you actually go through the process of banning *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, the whole world of thinking people will begin an almost eternal [#SlowClap](#) unlike you've never seen:

Kamloops-area father Dean Audet says students shouldn't be reading the bestselling coming-of-age novel

- from [Ban The Perks of Being a Wallflower from schools, says B.C. dad](#)

I taught high school English for a long time. I rarely had objections to the material I was teaching. When I did, a reasonable amount of discussion and explanation always resolved concerns. Always. Maybe I was just lucky.

People with stunning academic careers and PhD's help design the provincial book list [[take a peak here](#)]. Teachers drew from that list. Plus, in our professional judgement, we brought in other materials.

Our job is to teach critical thinking, self-awareness, capacity to understand society and how to interact with it.

Fear is something that happens, though. People are afraid of how rough elements of society will affect

themselves and others.

Take Emma Watson. Famous from the Harry Potter movies, she missed growing up in a way that most teens in developed countries experience. But she starred in the movie version of the novel, which became a catalyst of self-understanding for her. Interesting? Read about it:

She admits that her initial forays into dating were unhappy, and credits The Perks of Being a Wallflower with giving her a new, more positive outlook on love.

In the movie, a light-hearted coming-of-age drama with insights into adolescent angst, she adopts an American accent to play Sam, a waif-like Smiths fanatic with a knack for falling in love with the wrong guy until she meets the self-effacing Charlie, played by Logan Lerman.

“When I started dating I had this kind of Romeo and Juliet, fateful romantic idea about love which was almost that you were a victim and there was a lot of pain involved and that was how it should be,” she says. “Shakespeare said the course of true love never did run smooth, and I had this sense that it had to be painful. It was such a revelation in Perks of Being a Wallflower to realise that it shouldn’t be that way and that you get to choose who you love and who you decide to give your heart to.

“It sounds like a cliché but I also learnt that you’re not going to fall for the right person until you really love yourself and feel good about how you are.” She pauses, looking slightly embarrassed, and says: “Well, that was revelatory to me.”

- from [Emma Watson, interview: why she’s happy to be over Harry Potter](#)

It was no accident that Shakespeare's influence showed up in there.

When something comes up that challenges our sense of security, we need to face it somehow. Perhaps you don't let your pre-teen children know about Crimea, airliners that vanish, the federal government cutting \$36 billion from Medicare starting next Tuesday [[which you probably didn't know about](#)], or how students at UBC and St. Mary's chanted about raping teen girls.

You can keep your pre-teen kids in the dark, or you can be bold and responsible and when issues come up, and it's age-appropriate, you talk with them about what the world is really like.

"Suicide by gunshot, boyfriend punches girl in the face hard, Grade 4 girl letting boys feel her breast, teenage boy having sex with a dog, and it just goes on and on and gets worse from there," says Audet.

"Watching sister and boyfriend having sex, graphic step-by-step instructions on how to masturbate, graphic pornographic conversation, child molestation," he adds.

In the real world, children and teens have to deal with suicide by gunshot and other means, boyfriends punching a girl in the face hard, Grade 4 girls letting boys feel their breast, teenage boys having sex with a dog, watching people have sex, graphic pornographic conversations, child molestation and lots of other troubling or perfectly natural things that also happen to be disturbing.

Our job as parents is to be honest with our children and help them learn about the world the way it really is, and do our best to help them have the capacity to make the best decisions they can in life. All while providing a stable context so they know people have their back and that as we grow up we seek out people to support us as we support them. That's community.

Fear is a part of this growth process.

And we need to address that too. Which is why Kamloops gets to go through the process of a pretty public discussion about how they want their community to continue on in the 21st century, instead of getting added to this quite frankly [embarrassing list of book banners](#).

Seriously, Kamloops, you don't want me to add you to this list. Because I'll do it. I have a Wikipedia account and I'm not afraid to use it.

But if you want to see the kind of effect this book/movie has on people, [just listen to them](#). And if it means something to you, let [Stephen Chbosky](#) know. And also let him know that when someone wants to ban Salinger's *Catcher*, then someone else wants to do the same to HIS book, then we all know he's made it!

But I have faith in you, Kamloops. And so does Hermione Granger. We've got your back!