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Word Generation - Unit 1.07

Focus Words

access | civil | despite | integrate | promote

WEEKLY PASSAGE

Each year, people try to keep certain books out of schools and libraries. They feel that students should not have **access** to literature about subjects they consider inappropriate for young readers. Many popular books have been challenged or banned in recent years. The list includes *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. *Harry Potter* is even on the list.

Some people think that youth should be protected from difficult issues, such as racism or violence. They also think that books can give kids bad ideas. Other people suggest that youth are facing tough issues in their lives already. If those issues are **integrated** into meaningful stories, young people might find books helpful for understanding their own lives. For example, when a novel incorporates a problem such as racism, it can help kids dealing with prejudice to feel less alone. It might also help them to see how their actions can affect other people.

Librarians and teachers try to **promote** positive attitudes toward reading. They like to see students fully engaged with relevant literature. Some librarians and teachers want censored books to be accessible to students because they are often interesting to read. Many American citizens argue that book banning and other types of censorship violate their **civil** rights.

Should students have the freedom to read anything they choose **despite** the possible risks?

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Unit 1.07

Censorship: Who should decide what young people read?

FOCUS WORDS OF THE WEEK

access : (noun) opportunity to use; right to use

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

civil : (adjective) involving citizens or citizenship

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

despite : (preposition) even with

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

integrate : (verb) to make part of

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

promote : (verb) to encourage

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

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Unit 1.07

Censorship: Who should decide what young people read?

PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

The American **Civil** Liberties Union (ACLU) **promotes** individual rights and liberties. The ACLU believes that defending civil liberties is always important, **despite** the fact that people strongly disagree about certain situations. In 1999, the ACLU sued the town of Wichita Falls, Texas for restricting **access** to two children's books. The books, *Daddy's Roommate* and *Heather has Two Mommies*, have gay and lesbian characters. Some citizens had signed a petition complaining about the books. Then, the books were moved to the adult section of the library.

At the time, the move was legal. The law in Wichita Falls said that if 300 people signed a petition, a children's book could be moved to the adult section. ACLU members said moving the book was just like hiding it. All children's books, they said, should be **integrated** into the children's section of the library.

Option 1: The population of Wichita Falls is about 100,000. Which statement is true?

A) 300 people is less than 1% of the population

B) 300 people is about 3% of the population

C) 300 people is more than a third of the population

D) 300 people is about 5% of the population

Option 2: If 300 of 100,000 residents signed the petition against the two children's books, what is the probability that a resident chosen at random signed the petition?

Discussion Question: The **civil** code of Wichita Falls allowed a small percentage of the city's residents to control **access** to certain books. Some people said this was fair. They said that communities have a right to **promote** certain values, and that libraries should reflect these values. If a book offends people, it should be removed. Other people disagreed, saying that the library should **integrate** the views of all different groups, **despite** the fact that some groups might disagree with each other. Which view seems right to you?

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Censorship: Who Should Decide What Young People Read?

THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY

"I heard that our principal, Ms. Jackson, is going to ban *Captain Underpants* from the school library," says Haley.

"Hold on a second," says Ms. Kahn, "let me head off that rumor before it goes viral. Ms. Jackson and some of us teachers were talking about the American Library Association's annual list of books that people have tried to ban from libraries and schools, and she mentioned that the *Captain Underpants* series of graphic novels were at the top of the list two years in a row, in 2012 and 2013. But as far as I know, neither Ms. Jackson nor anyone else is talking about banning any books at our school."

"How did restricting kids' **access** to *Captain Underpants* reach the top of anybody's list?" says Max. "There must be a lot of worse books that deserve to be banned more."

"That's not even the point," says Haley. "Nobody should be banning anything. People on opposite sides of various issues might feel like banning each other's favorite books, but that's not how we should deal with disagreements. Better to just take censorship off the table **despite** our not liking a lot of what gets written. We should talk with each other in a **civil** way about the things we disagree about."

"Well, I disagree with that," says Marian. "I don't think we should tolerate books and magazines that **promote** disrespect."

Jamal joined in the conversation. "I write for the student paper, and we've had the issue of censorship come up there. Every once in a while, a parent says the school shouldn't let students say certain things. Our faculty sponsor, Mr. Lee, always talks with us about considering the feelings and ideas of the critics. He encourages us to **integrate** opposing views into our arguments, but he defends our right to express ourselves and take on any topic."

"There are obviously a lot of different dimensions to the issue of censorship," says Ms. Kahn. "I wonder if anyone has done any research on young people's attitudes towards censorship in schools. Maybe some of you could see what you can find out about that."

→ Haley, Max, Marian, and Jamal find a Gallup Youth Survey from 2005, and share its results with the class.

For this survey, 549 teenagers age 13-17 were asked whether or not they thought it was okay for public schools to impose each of the three following restrictions:

Is it okay for public schools to...	Yes	No
restrict bad language in student writing assignments?	75%	25%
limit what students are allowed to write about in school newspapers?	45%	55%
ban books and periodicals that school officials consider offensive?	44%	56%

✎ This survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 5%. Given that margin of error, is it possible to say which of the three restrictions was most acceptable to students? Is it possible to say which was least acceptable to students?

Take the survey as a class. Are your class's results similar to those of the original Gallup Youth Survey?

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Censorship: Who should decide what young people read?

DEBATING THE ISSUE

Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A Students should be free to read anything they want to because books that deal with tough issues can help young people cope with these things in their own lives. Youth can learn better ways to respond to drugs or racism or violence if they can read about characters facing those issues.

B Students should be free to read anything they want to because having access to censored books will promote reading. Censored books are often very interesting to read, and younger readers are more likely to become engaged in books that integrate issues relevant to their lives.

C Adults should carefully select appropriate books to keep students from from being upset by books that deal with mature issues like drugs, racism, or violence. Young readers are not ready to handle these topics, so reading about such issues might make them depressed or frightened.

D Adults should carefully select appropriate books for students so kids will not learn about harmful ideas or behaviors. Reading a book with violent or racist characters might lead young students to think that violence and racism are okay.

E _____

_____

_____

Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

_____

_____

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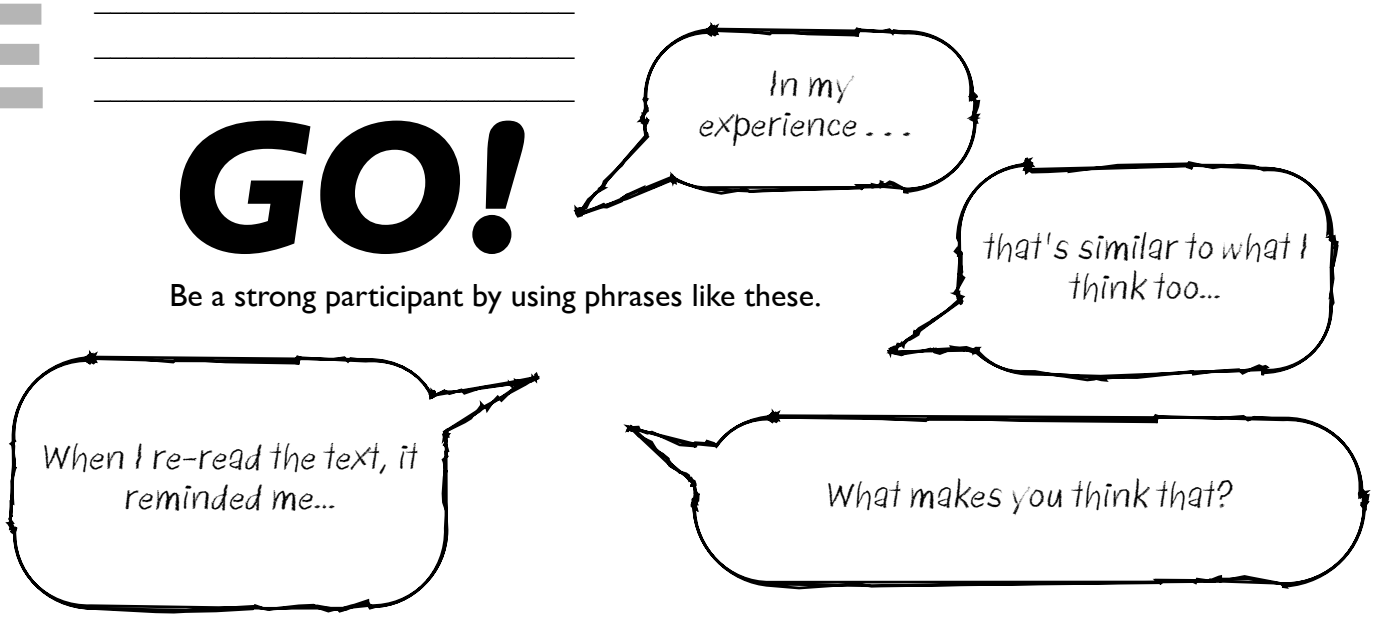
GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.



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Censorship: Who should decide what young people read?

Should students have the freedom to read anything they want?

WRITE ABOUT IT

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples.
Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

Focus Words

access | civil | despite | integrate | promote

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