



## **Index on Censorship's Banned Books Week reading list**

What's the best way of participating in this year's Banned Books Week UK? Reading a banned book of course!

That's why the Index on Censorship team has compiled our list of the top 10 banned books to read this year. How many can you get through?

### **1. The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka**

This seminal masterpiece follows the story of salesman Gregor Samsa who wakes up to find himself transformed into a giant cockroach.

The book was banned by the Soviet Union for being decadent and despairing. It was also banned by Nazi Germany for being "degenerate", connected to Kafka's Jewish heritage.

### **2. This Book is Gay by Juno Dawson**

A funny, witty and informative book exploring what it means to grow up as LGBTQ+. The book is a resource for young people wanting to understand and explore their own identities.

The book is one of the most targeted by book bans in the USA and has also been taken off shelves in the UK.

### **3. Metro by Magdy El Shafee**

Dubbed the first graphic novel of the Arab world, Metro depicts the financial and social insecurity for young people living in modern day Cairo.

On its release in 2008, the book was quickly banned in Egypt for "offending public morals".

### **4. Dogs of Europe by Alhierd Baharevich**

One of the most significant novels of modern Belarusian literature, The Dogs of Europe by Aljirdas Bakharevich is a deep, multi-layered story about identity, totalitarianism and the fate of man in a changing world.

In May 2022, the book was banned in Belarus.

## **5. The Well of Loneliness by Radclyffe Hall**

The Well of Loneliness tells the story of Stephen, who hunts, wears trousers and cuts her hair short - and gradually comes to realise that she is attracted to women.

The novel was banned for obscenity when published in 1928 and all copies in Britain were ordered to be destroyed.

## **6. The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood**

One of the most critically acclaimed dystopian novels, The Handmaid's Tale takes place in the Republic of Gilead - a totalitarian state that has overthrown the United States government - where handmaids have only one function: to breed.

The novel is one of the most frequently banned books in the US.

## **7. The Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie**

Perhaps one of the most famously banned books of the twentieth century, The Satanic Verses is a magic realist epic novel following the lives of two characters, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha.

Since its publication in 1988, The Satanic Verses has been banned in many countries including Iran, India, Saudi Arabia and others. In 1989, the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, issued a fatwa against Rushdie for "blasphemy".

Rushdie, and many of those who translated the book, were continuously targeted. Hitoshi Igarashi, the Japanese translator of the book, was murdered in 1991. In August 2022, Rushdie was stabbed multiple times at an event in New York. He miraculously survived.

## **8. The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison**

The first novel by Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye follows the story of a young African-American girl named Pecola who grew up following the Great Depression.

The book was listed as one of the ten most challenged books in the USA in 2024 by the American Library Association.

## **9. The Man Died: The Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka by Wole Soyinka**

The Man Died is a record of Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka's imprisonment during the Nigerian Civil War.

In 1984, a Nigerian court banned the book. Two years later, Soyinka was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.



## **10. No Enemies, No Hatred by Liu Xiaobo**

No Enemies, No Hatred is a selection of poems and essays by Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo. The collection spans two decades, telling the story of Liu's continued struggle for freedom and democracy in China.

Liu faced consistent harassment and persecution by the state throughout his life, eventually leading to his death behind bars in 2017. All of Liu's work is banned in China today and even mention of his name is censored across the country and on social media.

### **All things Banned Books...**

Index on Censorship is the UK partner for the [Banned Books Week Coalition](#) in the USA, founded in 1982. Every year, the American Libraries Association and other Banned Books Week partners publish helpful lists, such as the most 'banned books' that year. The below reading lists give you a flavour for some of the types of books that are being banned across the pond....

- [Top 10 Most Challenged Books of 2024](#)
- [The Most Challenged and Banned Books](#)
- [Books that were banned and the reasons why](#)
- [Directory of Banned Books](#)
- [Banned Books List 2025](#)

### **The UK and beyond**

While we have some studies into the nature and number of books being 'banned' or silently removed from shelves here in the UK, we do not currently have an official mechanism to monitor or track this. Banned Books Week UK is an opportunity to spotlight the issues of book banning, both past and present, and nationally and internationally, as a first step to raising awareness about the issue. Please join in the campaign, make some noise and celebrate the freedom to read!

### **Contact**

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