



## The Day They Came to Arrest the Book

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### The Work

The character Nora Baines's assignment of Mark Twain's classic novel as required reading is challenged by a student and his father for its use of the word "nigger." They want the book removed from the school. This is not the first attempt at censorship in the school; a former librarian had resigned because of the principal's pressuring her to remove other questionable books. When the principal asks Baines not to teach *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, she refuses and requests that the novel be submitted to a school censorship committee. She continues to teach the novel; some students leave her class, but one black student remains, feeling that he should make up his own mind. The lively debate that ensues touches on all sides of the censorship problem and First Amendment rights.

Objections to Hentoff's novel have focused on the way it allegedly encourages students to disobey school administrators. One student, for example, after carefully thinking things over, decides that the school's principal is wrong to ban the book, and the teacher is right to assign it. In 1990 the novel was challenged in the Albermarle Middle School in Charlottesville, Virginia, for being inflammatory and encouraging students to defy legitimate authority.

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