

wants, and to defend books against small pressure groups that want to restrict book access for the general population.

In situations where some of my very popular books were restricted or banned from school libraries, it was the response of the majority of parents that led to them being reinstated. Librarians should remember that public opinion can function to keep books in circulation as well as take them out.

**Bob Munsch** is a storyteller who makes up stories in front of audiences. He has published 24 books for children.

### From Kathy Stinson



These notes are excerpted from my part in a panel discussion on “Censorship begins at home” for Freedom to Read Week 1992.

My first personal involvement in the censorship issue came with the publication of *The bare naked book* in 1986.

When I began to discover that some schools were carrying all my books except this one, alarm bells went off for me—Why, this is censorship! I thought.

Gradually though, as I heard librarians talk about their reasons for including it, or not, in their collections, I began to see not having *The bare naked book* in a school library more as a matter of book selection than one of censorship; it *would* be censorship if a school decided to have

the book in the library but removed it because a parent came in and complained.

But I do have a niggling concern about arriving at this conclusion. Does my acceptance of schools not having *The bare naked book* in their collections give principals or teacher-librarians permission, whenever it’s convenient, to hide behind the “book selection” argument, when in fact, for some of them, not choosing to have this (or any other) book might have more to do with fear of controversy than with any professional concerns? If this is what is happening, is it not a form of censorship after all—censorship by anticipation?

It’s not that I can’t sympathize with the educator’s dread of confrontation, or of having to spend time and energy on a book challenge that they’d rather spend on doing their job, but I think some school personnel must examine the reasons behind their choices, and be prepared to stand behind them. Those who do this

deserve our highest praise.

Those who do not, who avoid books that might cause them hassles, allowing onto their shelves only “safe” books unlikely to raise controversy, must be prepared for the eventuality that there will be few books on those shelves for children to choose from. (*Red is best* will not be there because someone might find the disobedient protagonist objectionable, for example. Someone else might object to the negative mother, or the faceless father, in *Big or little? Right?*)

Since the teacher-librarian’s job is above all to open up the world of books to children, those who deny kids access to a book they know in their hearts has value for them, because “somebody” *might* object to it, are quite simply, failing to do their job.

**Kathy Stinson**, author of twelve books, is best known for her picture books, among them *Red is best* (Annick 1982), *Mom and dad don’t live together any more* (Annick 1984), and *Who is sleeping in Aunty’s bed?* (Oxford 1991). Her first young adult novel, *Fish House secrets*, was published by Thistle-down Press in 1992. Oxford University Press will publish *The ball book*, an entertaining and informative work of non-fiction, in 1993.

### From John Batt

When my daughter Eleanora was born, stories began to appear in my head. I wrote them down, and then I began to tell them at libraries and festivals. They were a hit with the kids and the adults: “A mixture of fun and emotions with a liberal sprinkling of good morals” was the way one person described my performance.

Unfortunately, I encountered censorship. One story which incorporated three common childhood beliefs caused me to be banned from Essex County Public Schools. This tale has a sick child taking a ride on a Unicorn’s back through space and time to be healed. First stop...Santa...second stop...a manger. Her faith in each is appropriately rewarded.

Santa Claus is an international institution; Christmas is a national holiday;

