

# Why Children are Unlikely to Understand these References in Peanut Cartoons

Writing on the ever popular *Peanuts* cartoon strip in [\*The Atlantic\*](#), Jonathan Merritt makes an interesting observation about the prevalence with which Charles Schulz incorporated religion into his comics:

*[“More than 560 of Schulz’s nearly 17,800 Peanuts newspaper strips contain a religious, spiritual, or theological reference. To put this into perspective, Schulz only produced 61 strips featuring the famous scene where Lucy pulls the football away from Charlie Brown as he tries to kick it.”](#)*

The reason for this, Merritt explains, was not only Schulz’s religious beliefs, but also the fact that he was well-versed and acquainted with the Bible and other religious writings:

*“Schulz converted to Christianity shortly after returning from a deployment in World War II, and the experience sparked a love inside of him for sacred literature. He became a voracious reader of theological commentaries, and the margins of his personal Bible were filled with hand-written notes. ...*

*This may be why many of the religious references in the Peanuts were drawn directly from sacred texts. In June of 1952, the somewhat sad and self-deprecating Charlie Brown borrowed Solomon’s words from Ecclesiastes 1:14: “All is vanity!” ...*

*Sometimes the Bible references were clearly cited. When he catches Snoopy taking food out of the refrigerator, Charlie Brown pulls out a Bible and quotes from the Ten Commandments: “Look, it says here in Exodus, ‘Thou shall not steal.’”*

*Snoopy borrows his book, flips the page and hands it back. "Deuteronomy 25:4 ..." Charlie Brown reads, "Thou shall not muzzle the ox while he treads out the grain."*

*But often, they were more cryptic. ... In a famous strip from 1959, Linus built a sandcastle that the rain washed away. Linus concludes, "There's a lesson to be learned here, but I don't know what it is ..." But many readers would have recognized the allusion to Jesus's parable about a man who built his house on sand in Matthew 7, and Schulz later said that this was exactly what he intended."*

Such observations are interesting, particularly in light of the recent release of the American Library Association's [banned book list](#). Number six on the list of most banned books in 2015? The Holy Bible.

According to [The Guardian](#), this is the Bible's first time on the list, and it likely made the line-up because many "object... to its presence in libraries and schools over its 'religious viewpoint'."

But in the eagerness to remove the Bible from our libraries and schools because of its "religious viewpoint," will we also remove an important culture reference? If we fail to teach its content even from a historical or literary viewpoint, will many of today's children fail to understand important inferences in literature, movies, government, and popular culture?

Charles Schulz seems to have understood the central role the Bible played in Western Civilization, and because of this, he freely incorporated references to it in his cartoons. Unfortunately, it seems those references are destined to be lost on *Peanut* audiences in the years ahead.