

Why 'Uncomfortable' Books Like 'To Kill a Mockingbird' Are Precisely the Ones Kids Should be Reading

Another book has made the infamous "banned books" list.

The public school district in Biloxi, Mississippi [decided to pull](#) *To Kill a Mockingbird* from the eighth grade reading curriculum this year because, district officials said, "There is some language in the book that makes people uncomfortable."

If the language in *To Kill a Mockingbird* makes thirteen-year-olds "uncomfortable," then I assume the school district is also insisting they stay off Twitter and never listen to rap music.

Thankfully, this action [angered many observers](#) because the majority of people who have encountered the book understand its value. If you haven't read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, you should drop everything and go read it right now. It's a fantastic piece of literature (as well as an incredible movie starring Gregory Peck) written by [Pulitzer Prize winner Harper Lee](#), but more importantly, it teaches moral lessons that are still relevant today.

The book is about life in the South during the Great Depression, specifically the life of a black man named Tom Robinson who had been framed for raping a white woman. Local lawyer Atticus Finch agrees to defend the innocent man, angering the racist white community who subject him and his children to abuse. Despite proving Robinson's innocence, the jury still convicts him because of the color of his skin. I won't spoil the ending for you if you haven't read it, but it is even more violent and sad (but with a bit of a happy

ending).

To Kill a Mockingbird isn't a true story, but it accurately depicts the racism of the 1930s. Does racism make you uncomfortable? It should. It's a horrific part of our country's history—something we should remember, not avoid. But what's most disheartening about the school district censoring *To Kill a Mockingbird* is that it undermines our country's attempts to understand and heal racial divides. How are we supposed to learn from the past (and improve the present) if we're ignoring significant pieces of history because it might make someone "uncomfortable?"

Many critics have lodged [complaints](#) about the Millennial generation being "snowflakes" because we're so fragile and need safe spaces to hide away from the evil world, but [not everything terrible](#) about Millennials is our fault (and [not all Millennials are terrible](#)). Who do you think protected us from all these "uncomfortable" things to make us so fragile? And who do you think handed out all those participation trophies to make sure no one's feelings got hurt? (Participation trophies are a waste of money and just collect dust; please stop handing them out for every little thing). If you think Millennials [have life too easy](#) or cry at even the hint of criticism, then don't try to protect them or the next generation. Reading the n-word in a historical novel and learning the awful context behind it is a much better lesson to shape young minds than hearing it constantly used in rap songs.

Kids need to be reading books like *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to help them understand the past and gain insights into human nature. Obviously we shouldn't be showing kindergarteners graphic pictures of lynchings, but protecting them from ideas and experiences that children and teenagers can handle does more harm than good.

History is messy, which is why it is so vital for young people to read compelling historical fiction like *To Kill a Mockingbird* that portrays these complications. Yes, learning about the past means hearing about bad people like Stalin and Hitler, and being exposed to the hateful words and deeds of others. But it also means learning about good people like Harriet Tubman and Nelson Mandela; and even now-controversial figures [like Christopher Columbus](#). The point of history is to learn from the good *and* the bad, to explore the nuances of human nature by trying to understand the choices people in the past made, and why. Reading realistic novels set in the past is one way to do this.

We're not going to learn anything if we skip over important pieces of history and avoid challenging literature merely because it might make people "uncomfortable." A good education *should* make people uncomfortable.

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