



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 25, 2011

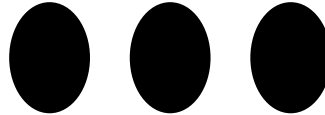
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## School Reading List Features Controversial Texts

Written by Haruki Murakami, *Norwegian*

*Wood* is described by one reviewer as “a poignant story of one college student’s romantic coming of age.” A synopsis of the book explains:

Toru, a quiet and preternaturally serious young college student in Tokyo, is devoted to Naoko, a beautiful and introspective young woman, but their mutual passion is marked by the tragic death of their best friend years before. Toru begins to adapt to campus life and the loneliness and isolation he faces there, but Naoko finds the pressures and responsibilities of life unbearable. As she retreats further into her own world, Toru finds himself reaching out to others and drawn to a fiercely independent and sexually liberated young woman.



The book also features a scene in which a 31-year-old woman and a 13-year-old girl engage in sexual relations. Fox Nation [reports](#) that *Norwegian Wood* was on a list for incoming sophomores in an English honors class.

A description of *Tweak*, written by Nic Sheff, reads:

Nic Sheff was drunk for the first time at age eleven. In the years that followed, he would regularly smoke pot, do cocaine and Ecstasy, and develop addictions to crystal meth and heroin. Even so, he felt like he would always be able to quit and put his life together whenever he needed to. It took a violent relapse one summer in California to convince him otherwise. In a voice that is raw and honest, Nic spares no detail in telling us the compelling, heartbreaking, and true story of his relapse and the road to recovery. As we watch Nic plunge the mental and physical depths of drug addiction, he paints a picture for us of a person at odds with his past, with his family, with his substances, and with himself. It’s a harrowing portrait — but not one without hope.

*Tweak* also depicts a homosexual orgy in one scene.

Assigned by the Williamstown, New Jersey, school district Monroe Township Schools, these books are required readings for high-school and middle-school students. Parents, angered by the graphic content of these novels, forced the school district to apologize.

One mother, Robin Myers, commented about the subject matter, “I don’t think that’s relevant for any teenager. I was just kind of in shock.”

Chuck Earling, superintendent of Monroe Township Schools, admitted,



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Some of the language is inappropriate. We were not trying to create controversy. We were just trying to get students to read. There were some words and language that seemed inappropriate as far as the parents and some of the kids were concerned.

As a result of the protests, the school district pulled the books from the summer reading list.

*The Blaze* remarked,

In a misguided effort to keep ahead of the curve, school districts are substituting classic literature — that has served to educate millions of students for decades — with graphic books that are perhaps only intended to push a social and political agenda on the students who read them.

What's particularly disturbing to many parents is that a number of classic novels have been [banned](#) from the classroom — including J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* — because of some of the material present in the novels. Yet parents note that school districts such as in New Jersey are comfortable requiring reading materials that depict homosexual orgies, heavy drug use, and lesbian sex scenes between a minor and an adult.

Similarly, the Tucson school district in Arizona took no issue with the anti-capitalist, anti-American reading materials [required](#) in an ethnic studies curriculum that prompted parents to complain. Interestingly, when parents mentioned some of the specific words and phrases in the books, they were reprimanded by school board members and asked not to use “inappropriate language” during the public meeting.

Likewise, Aimee Taylor, the mother of a high-school senior in New Hampshire, felt compelled to remove her son from his school after learning that his personal finance class was [assigned](#) a book entitled *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, a book that refers to Jesus Christ as a “wine-guzzling vagrant and precocious socialist.”

Fox News reported on the story:

The book is a first-person account of author Barbara Ehrenreich's attempts to make ends meet while working minimum wage jobs in Florida, Maine, and Minnesota. But in addition to taking aim at the American Dream, and arguing for a higher minimum wage, Taylor says Ehrenreich also takes aim at Christians and other groups in the book and uses foul language.

When Taylor addressed her issues with the school board, she was told that upon careful review, the book was determined to be well within the confines of appropriate material. The review committee assembled by the school district observed, “The book provided valuable insight into the circumstances of the working poor and an opportunity for students to demonstrate the mastery of the ‘Financial Impact’ competency.”

Taylor elected to remove her son from the school and complete the remainder of his schooling at home as a result.

This most recent issue in New Jersey reconfirms to concerned parents of public schoolers that they must diligently oversee the material being presented to their children in the classroom.

In January, the National Home Education Research [completed](#) a study that revealed that the trend towards homeschooling continues to show steady growth. As the number of incidents such as those in New Jersey, Tucson, and New Hampshire mount, it seems certain that homeschooling will increasingly be viewed as a viable alternative to public schooling.



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