

## Process Paper

We chose our topic after stumbling upon a blog about popular young-adult fiction author John Green's book, *Looking For Alaska*, being taken out of U.S. bookstores and libraries because of the mentions of underage smoking and drinking. As the three of us are exceptionally avid readers and value representation of diversity, we were surprised to find that expression in literature has been and still is being limited and censored. We were interested in the reasons and impacts of book censorship, and decided to research deeper into the topic of book censorship. From research, we were able to learn about the frequently censored author, Judy Blume, who has not only been the center of censorship, but has also fought against her bans. Her efforts against book censorship ultimately helped us settle on her viewpoints for our project.

Throughout research, we were able to recognize Judy Blume's effects on the growing youth. Once we had a clearer idea on censorship, we looked for primary sources specifically on Blume's efforts and effects on both authors and readers. One of our most helpful sources was *Everything I Needed to Know About Being a Girl I Learned from Judy Blume*, a book written by various authors about their encounters with growing up and having different characters to relate to from Judy Blume's books. This source was able to successfully convey Judy Blume's impacts on youth, and was critical in helping us develop our impacts section on our website. Even though Judy Blume's efforts have been perceived as "obscene" and "premature" by parents, her books have given children the "need-to-knows" on navigating pubescence.

We chose to make a website for a variety of reasons. With a website, we were able to combine both student composed words and historical media to effectively communicate our argument. This was better than recording a documentary, which relied heavily on large amounts of media that our topic couldn't accommodate, or writing a paper, which limited our historical argument by reducing media. A website allowed us to work more efficiently during the pandemic by splitting work online, discussing through calls, and editing digitally.

Our topic connects to this year's National History Day theme, debate and diplomacy, because of the many views for and against book censorship and the diplomatic actions that have been attempted and made to solve this controversy. These debates included the perspectives of not only the youth and authors but also parents, activists, and even classroom librarians and bookstore owners. Blume understands the negative consequences of under-education caused by book censorship, but also understands to a certain extent parents' fear of their children learning potentially mature topics. Through diplomatic actions, she has fought against conservative movements with the help of anti-censorship organizations. She has demonstrated that through potentially mature but relatable topics explored in literature, the youth could be represented in her stories, and promoted inclusiveness and acceptance of minorities creating more diverse communities. Ultimately, Blume gave readers reasons to advocate for their own freedom of expression.