

**BANNED: WHEN REAL LIFE FICTION MEETS THE CENSOR**  
**Award-winning author Chris Crutcher**  
**Monday Sept. 28<sup>th</sup> 9:50-11:05 PAC**

Overview:

Countless stories drawn from his work as a mental health expert and child protection advocate have made author Chris Crutcher's novels realistic, compelling and unflinchingly truthful. Incest, rape, abortion, racism, and neglect are as common in his pro-bono therapy practice as they are in his compelling books. But what happens when this gritty real life fiction flags the conservative censor? How does this candid author respond? And why does winning the battle really matter? Crutcher will map out his history with and response to being challenged and banned for more than two decades.

Themes:

Crutcher's works deal with many controversial themes including homosexuality, racism, murder (accidental and intentional), the affects of rage on victims and perpetrators, suicide, rape, child abuse, child molestation, domestic violence, drugs, therapy, outcasts, the legal system, CPS, and bullying.

How can you tie into this presentation?

- Social issue themes addressed in literature and their purpose/impact (would be a good primary source for students and could lead to paper topic ideas...)
- Issues of banned books, free speech, censorship, and free access to information
- Power of writing; Chris is known for his wry humorous style, strong character voices, and realistic dialogue
- Education themes are addressed in his settings surrounding schools and late adolescence

Resources:

**Books on Censorship:**

Literature suppressed on sexual grounds	PS56.E7 S68 2006
Literature suppressed on social grounds	Z658.U5 S69 2006
Literature suppressed on religious grounds	BL65.C45 B35 2006
Literature suppressed on political grounds	Z658.U5 K37 2006
120 Banned books	Z658.U5 K35 2005
100 Banned books	REF Z658.U5 K35 1999

**Works by Crutcher:**

Teaching the Selected Works of Chris Crutcher	PS3553.R786 Z69
Whale Talk	PZ7.C89 Wh 2001
Deadline	PZ7.C89 De 2007
Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes	PS7.C89 Ss 2003
King of the Mild Frontier (Autobio)	PS3553.R786 Z5 2003
Athletic Shorts: Short Stories	PZ7.C89 At 2002
Ironman	PZ7.C89 Ir 1995
Sledding Hill	PZ7.C89 Sl 2005
Chinese Handcuffs	on order

**Articles:**

Academic Search Premier-- type in: "Chris Crutcher" and interview  
Academic Onefile/PowerSearch---type in "Crutcher, Chris" as a subject search to find interviews, reviews, and more...

**Websites:**

Chris Crutcher's Site for bio and censorship info

He has been honored with dozens of awards and honors including the CLA's 2005 St. Katharine Drexel Award, *Writer Magazine's* 2004 Writers Who Make A Difference Award, the ALA's 2000 Margaret A. Edwards Lifetime Achievement Award, the NCTE's 1998 National Intellectual Freedom Award and the ALAN Award.

[www.chriscrutcher.com](http://www.chriscrutcher.com)

American Library Association's Banned Books Site

<http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/bannedbooksweek/index.cfm>

**Sample Passages showing Crutcher's tragic/comic style:**

"Everyone knows Chris's story: born addicted to crack cocaine, then got a double dose of shit just after his first birthday when his mother's boyfriend wrapped his face in Saran Wrap to make him stop crying. At his sentencing the boyfriend said he only wanted to make Chris pass out, not cause permanent brain damage. Oops." p. 14 Whale Talk

TJ tries to stop a group from killing a fawn. "Even with all that commotion the fawn wouldn't go far [from its mother], and there was nothing left to do but to throw myself over it. To me, and in my imagination that would be better than to witness this killing. Wyberg and Barbour tried to peel me back, slapping the back of my head and kicking my ribs, and in the chaos the deer kicked a three-inch gash in my forehead, but I held on like a bulldogger and Rich couldn't get a clean body shot. I will forever remember the sensation of that animal going slack in my hold as the bullet went through his temple...the following Monday morning I pulled on my bloody T-shirt and jeans and for the next five days, wore them to school like a soldier draped in his war-torn flag, telling everyone who asked and most who didn't where the blood came from..." Whale Talk pgs 37-38.

Angus Bethune's parents divorced when he was a child. Both now have same-sex partners.

I'm big.

And they named me Angus.

"Angus is a cow," I complained to my stepmother, Bella, the day in first grade I came home from school early for punching the bearer of that sad information in the stomach.

"Your mother must have had a good reason for naming you that," she said.

"For naming me after a cow?"...

"Angus is a cow," I said to my mother when she got home from her job at Westhead Trucking.

"Your father's uncle was named Angus," she said, stripping off her outer shirt with a loud sigh, then plopping into her easy chair with a beer, wearing nothing but her bra, a bra, I might add, that would well have floated an ejected fighter pilot to safety.

"So my father's uncle was named after a cow too," I said. "What did *he* think of that?"

"Actually," Mom said, "I think he was kind of proud. He was quite a farmer, you know."

"Jesus help me," I said, and went to my room. --"Angus Bethune" Athletic Shorts p. 8-9