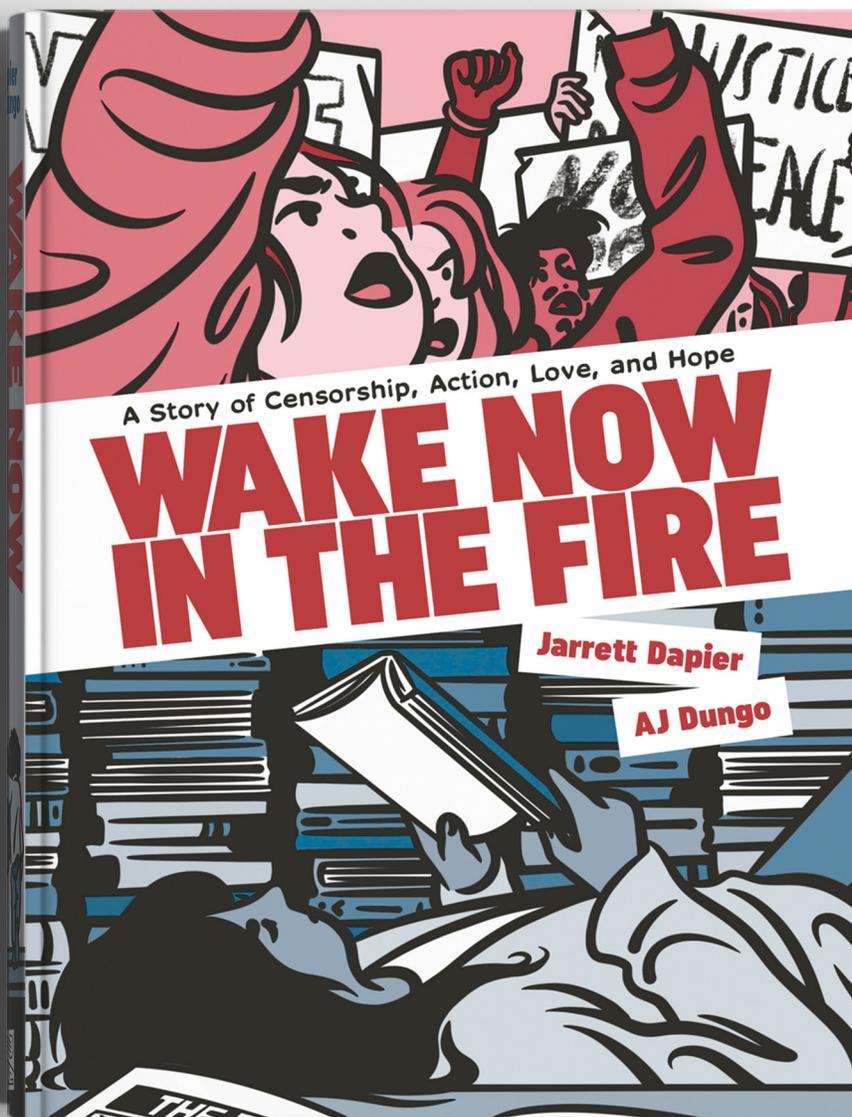


WAKE NOW IN THE FIRE

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION GUIDE



TEN SPEED GRAPHIC

ABOUT THE BOOK

Wake Now in the Fire is a young adult graphic novel based on real-life events: the 2013 removal of Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* from Chicago Public Schools. The narrative follows a diverse group of students as they investigate the ban, organize a protest and sit-in, document district miscommunication, and ultimately help reverse the decision. Along the way, they navigate personal struggles, loyalty, trauma, and the power of community.

WHY TEACHING THIS BOOK IS IMPORTANT

This graphic novel supports:

- Critical thinking about censorship, media literacy, and power structures.
- Identity exploration through multiple voices and culturally diverse characters.
- Youth empowerment with examples of collective action grounded in real history.
- Social-emotional learning, including belonging, resilience, and safe activism.
- Academic connections in ELA, social studies, civics, journalism, and art.

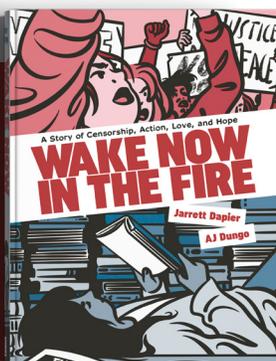
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Analyze the impact of censorship on identity, community, and democracy.
- Evaluate how grassroots movements form and succeed.
- Interpret multiple perspectives and understand how personal experiences shape activism.
- Examine how journalism, documentation, and truth seeking function in civic life.
- Connect themes in the novel to current events, book bans, and freedom-to-read issues.

SUGGESTED APPROACH FOR PARTICIPANTS

- Listen with curiosity and generosity.
- Challenge ideas, not people.
- Speak from your own experience.
- Step up or backwards to balance voices where needed.
- Acknowledge that multiple truths can exist at once.



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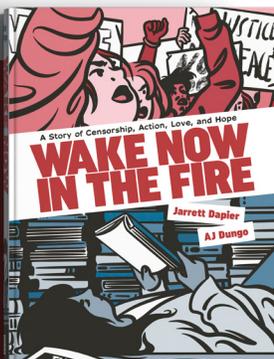
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IDEAS

- **The right to read:** Access to stories is linked to representation, identity, and liberation.
- **Youth agency:** Teens have the power to influence institutions and public decisions.
- **Truth & transparency:** Journalism and documentation are essential for accountable governance.
- **Community in action:** Movements grow when people contribute in different ways.
- **Healing & solidarity:** Personal struggles often intersect with public activism.

SUGGESTED RELATED QUESTIONS

1. Why does access to literature matter?
2. What happens when institutions decide what stories are “appropriate”?
3. Who gets to shape public memory, and who gets erased from it?
4. What motivates young people to act for justice?
5. How do journalism and documentation protect democracy?
6. What does safe and responsible civic engagement look like for young people today?
7. How do our identities shape the way we participate in movements?



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WARM-UP QUESTIONS

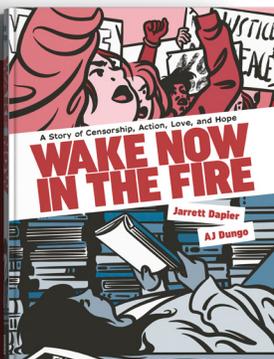
1. What is your initial reaction to the book being removed from schools without explanation?
2. Which character's perspective resonated with you most, and why?
3. Does the graphic novel format affect your understanding of the story?

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER

4. Several characters are dealing with personal pain. How do these internal struggles shape their activism?
5. The school and district give unclear reasons for removing *Persepolis*. Why is transparency important in education?
6. What role does the library—and Ms. Suong—play in the movement? Why are libraries so often central to intellectual freedom?
7. Compare how Kendall, Aoife, Miguel, and others contribute differently to the movement. What does this say about “who counts” as an activist?

MEDIA LITERACY

8. Why does Jackson decide to file an FOIA request? How does this model real investigative journalism?
9. How do rumors, partial information, and social media shape the students' actions and emotions?
10. When CPS issues an official statement, how do students analyze it? How can we critically evaluate institutional messages in real life?



WAKE NOW IN THE FIRE



These activities can be used with individual classes, small groups, or as a part of whole-school programming

CLOSE READING

Students select a panel or spread from the book and analyze the following elements:

- Visual choices
- Symbolism
- Color
- Body language
- Text/imagery relationship

CHARACTER CROSSROADS

Select a key decision moment from within the book. It could be any of the following:

- Aditi dropping Model UN to take a leadership role in the Banned Books Club
- Kendall confronting Aoife after they speak to Principal Dixon
- Weston writing his essay
- Or something else of your own choosing

Write a short reflection on the moment you select. Think about the pressures that shaped it and what might have guided the character.

FACT-CHECKING A NARRATIVE

Provide students with two conflicting “statements.” An example from the book could be CPS emails vs. public statements. Invite the students to practice the following:

- Identifying claims
- Distinguishing fact from interpretation
- Writing a neutral, factual summary
- Spotting missing information

Follow-up activity: Write a student op-ed

Suggested prompt: *Why does the freedom to read matter for our generation?* (N.B., this activity requires no political stance.)

ROLE PLAY / SCHOOL POLICY

Ask students (in groups) to imagine they are responsible for setting out the recommendations for a book selection policy for a school library.

Each group is required to:

- Define inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- Outline a review process.
- Write a transparency plan.
- Present an implementation plan to the rest of the class as a “board.”

INTRODUCTION TO FOIA

Introduce the following ideas to students:

- What an FOIA request is.
- Why transparency laws exist.
- What types of public information are accessible.

Once discussed, ask students to draft (not submit) a fictional FOIA request related to the events in the book.

FREEDOM-TO-READ CREATIVE IDEAS

Explore the lists of existing banned books (you can access lists online via organizations like PEN America, the Office of Intellectual Freedom, and the National Coalition Against Censorship).

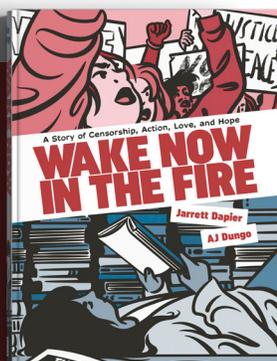
Ask students to create bookmarks, posters, book reviews, or mini zines about a challenged or banned book. This can become a hallway or library display.

CIVIC MAPPING

Ask students to create a visual map of all the groups within the book who have the power to influence decisions: students, teachers, librarians, principal, district office, media, etc.

Discuss:

Where does your own influence lie in a school community?



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PERSONAL VALUES REFLECTION

Ask students to write privately about one or any of the following:

- A time they felt unheard
- A moment when they spoke up
- Something they wish adults understood

IDENTITY & COMMUNITY

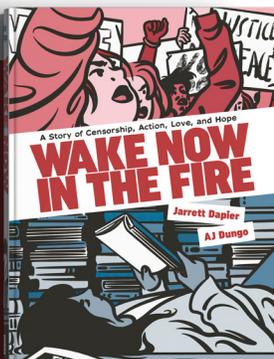
Use characters from the book (Aoife, Kendall, Miguel, Aditi) to discuss the following questions:

- How do personal identities shape the fight for intellectual freedom?
- What identities do you bring into discussions about fairness or representation?

SAFE ACTIVISM

Ask students to brainstorm the following:

- Safe ways they can participate in their communities.
- How to evaluate potential perceived risks.
- How to decide what “participation” means for them (e.g., starting conversations, reading widely, making art, writing articles, joining clubs, building resource lists, and volunteering).

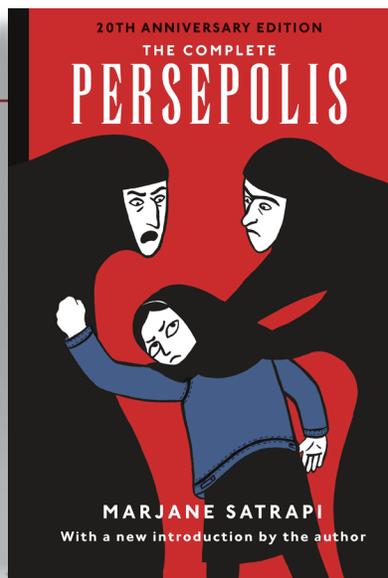


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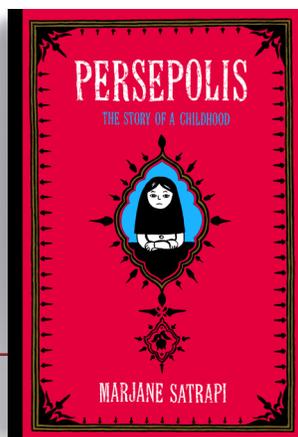


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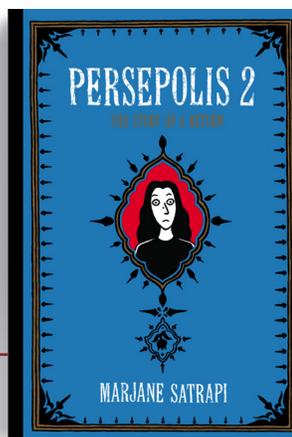
READ THE BOOKS THAT STARTED IT ALL . . .



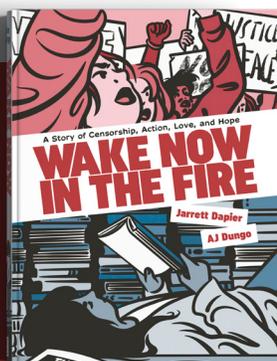
*The Complete Persepolis
20th anniversary edition*



*Persepolis: The Story of
a Childhood*



*Persepolis 2: The Story
of a Return*



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GRAPHIC NOVELS ON ACTIVISM & HISTORY

- *MARCH* trilogy by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin, Illustrated by Nate Powell
- *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei, Justin Eisinger, Steven Scott, Illustrated by Harmony Becker
- *Banned Book Club* by Kim Hyun Sook, Ryan Estrada, Illustrated by Hyung-Ju Ko

NOVELS EXPLORING RESISTANCE & IDENTITY

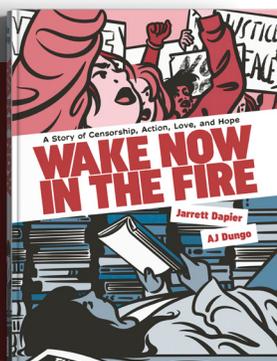
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *This Book Won't Burn* by Samira Ahmed
- *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely

ORGANIZATIONS DEFENDING THE FREEDOM-TO-READ

- American Association of School Librarians (ALA) Office of Intellectual Freedom
- National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC)
- PEN America, Index of School Book Bans

If you enjoyed *Wake Now in the Fire*, here are some other places where you can discover more brilliant work by like-minded people:

- Visit your local zine libraries
- School journalism clubs
- Community mural or comics programs



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