



Discussion Guide

Scenes from a Bookstore: Free Speech Vignettes

Act I: Customer Complaint

- Scene 1: What could the bookseller have done differently?
- Scene 2: What did the bookseller do well?
 - o Remain calm and listen to the customer's complaints.
 - o Explain the store policy for ordering books.
 - o Explain that it would be unfair to stop selling a book to other customers simply because some may find it objectionable. If necessary, politely offer to get the manager so that he/she can talk with the customer about the complaint.
- What other potentially controversial material does your store carry that could prompt complaints from customers?
- TIP : Be sure your store has posted ABFE's "To Our Customers" statement, available at www.BookWeb.org/our-customers, where customers can read it.
- TIP : If your store does not do so already, consider participating in Banned Books Week this year by creating a display of books that have been banned or challenged in the past. Banned Books Week helps educate customers about the need to protect First Amendment rights. For more information about Banned Books Week, visit www.BookWeb.org/abfe/banned-books-week.

Act II: Censorship vs. Selection

- Scene 1: How else could the bookseller respond to the customer's queries?
- Scene 2: What did the bookseller do well?
 - o She offered to order the books and/or call other stores to find them for the customer.
 - o She explained that the store stocks a wide variety of materials and makes an effort to cater to the needs and interests of the community.
 - o She explained that the store doesn't regularly order the books because they don't tend to sell well, not out of any ideological or political bias.

Act III: Customer Privacy

- Scene 1: What did they do wrong? Why is it important to keep customers' personal information private?
- Scene 2: What would you do in this situation?
 - o If you are asked for customer information by a law enforcement official, say "I need to talk to my attorney," and call ABFFE.
- TIP : Does your store have a privacy policy in place explaining that you will not give information about customers' reading choices to law enforcement without a subpoena? We recommend that you post ABFE's "To Our Customers" Statement, available at www.BookWeb.org/our-customers, in a place visible to customers.
- TIP : Distribute ABFE's Guide to Protecting Customer Privacy in Bookstores available at www.BookWeb.org/protecting-customer-privacy.