

## Editorial

### Sheltered students are disadvantaged

In his *Areopagitica*, 17th-century writer John Milton argues that if truth and falsity are allowed to battle freely in the marketplace of information, truth always will win out. Confronted with good and evil, people will learn to distinguish between the two and choose good, Milton maintains that no one can know good without first confronting evil.

As wise as Milton's words seem, many people in the 20th century have forgotten to heed his message. And thus, parents have worked to ban certain books in their children's schools. They have told teachers that some literary works are not appropriate reading material for elementary, junior high and senior high students.

Teachers and students discussed this issue at a meeting of the Nebraska Council of Teachers of English this weekend. They expressed doubts about how students were to confront real issues if they were not allowed to read about them in literature. It seems some parents are ready to ban any books that contain dreaded four-letter words, sexual scenes or unorthodox ideas.

But these parents make the mistake of thinking all such words, scenes and ideas are dangerous. They forget that many of these are presented in contexts that allow students to evaluate them for themselves or with the guidance of a teacher.

Furthermore, such words, scenes and ideas are not always used gratuitously. For instance, among the books banned in various parts of the country is Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*.

Some parents have criticized *Huckleberry Finn* for portraying racism and using the word "nigger." However, the whole purpose of Mark Twain's book is to show how destructive and stupid racism is. As Huckleberry and his friend Jim, a runaway slave, float down the Mississippi River, Huck learns that Jim is just as much a human being as any white man. He sees that Jim has the same emotions and needs as any other human being. All the way along, Huck questions the wisdom of a society that buys and sells human beings. *Huckleberry Finn* is a statement against the very racism many criticize it for presenting.

Like many of the books banned, *Huckleberry Finn* explores an issue that students will face in their lives. Surely, students need to be exposed to those ideas so they can deal with them outside the classroom.

Some would say classics like Shakespeare's plays would be safer fare for students. But anyone who has studied the works of the great bard knows that he too can have his bawdy moments. But there are too many significant lessons in a single Shakespeare play to allow the banning of his works. And besides, as Shakespeare himself might argue, sex and other "off-limit" topics are part of life. To be honest, an author must deal with them.

Let's give students some credit. If allowed to, they can think for themselves and decide whether to accept the ideas they find in literature. That exercise will prepare them for a time when they are faced with controversies of their own. If we shelter students, they won't be ready for that battle of ideas that Milton thought so important.

Do we want future generations to be unthinking and unprepared or do we want them to be able to cope with and analyze the world around them? The world is not always as neat, tidy and proper as we would like. And if we must protect children, the best way to do it is to get them ready for that world.



### Sheldon display obscene

A trip to the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery has always been an exciting experience, but this time it was a frightening one. It is exciting when one stands in awe of the perfection of hand and pen on exhibit, frightening when illicit sexual perversion is mislabeled as art.

With the recent media attention to the display of student work at the Sheldon, I wanted to see the work myself. The largest crowd in the gallery last week seemed to congregate around the hot item, the photo essay depicting homosexuality.

I had never before realized that homosexual behavior captured on film would classify as art. I had not known that the story of Mark and Doug and their sexual experience was material appropriate for public view. I had not been educated in art appreciation, and thus was not aware that when men wait in public restrooms for other men, what you really have is art.

This "artistic endeavor" that Dave Thompson referred to in his editorial (Daily Nebraskan, April 22) is what the U.S. Supreme Court refers to as pornography, thereby without the protection of the First Amendment. In *Miller vs. California* (1973), the Court established obscenity as



### Falklands stage set for disaster

This then is the state of the world.

In the Atlantic Ocean, the British fleet has been steaming half-speed ahead toward the Falkland Islands. Above the fleet and in the fray, the American secretary of state has jetted full-speed ahead, from Argentina to Britain and home again.

At the northern end of this oceanic shuttle zone, Britain's Maggie Thatcher has vowed, "Failure? The possibilities do not exist." At the southern end, Argentina's



### Ellen Goodman

dictator Leopoldo Galtieri has vowed to "fight against colonialism in all its forms." On the ground again, Haig can be heard squawking, "Time is running out."

Each country is convinced that history, if not also God, is on its side. Each country proclaims its readiness to reduce the other, and perhaps the 1,800 Falklanders and their 70,000 sheep, to rubble to prove the point. Each may vaguely remember that one of the natural inhabitants of these bleak islands is the albatross.

From a distance, it is popular to look upon this scene as if it were just a throwback to an earlier, vaguely irrational period of gunboat diplomacy. International relations as staged by Gilbert and Sullivan.

But I don't see this as a revival. What I see here is mainstream state-of-the-art foreign affairs. An active aggression and an instant threat to match it. Two leaders who want to hang on to their jobs. Two countries posturing their way to the brink because of personal ego, national pride and party politics.

I see another classic setup for disaster, created by leaders that historian Barbara Tuchman once described as "woodenheaded in the act of woodenheadedness."

I don't say this lightly. I spent a good part of Ground Zero Week listening to and reading speeches about war, nuclear war. I saw the markers — within this radius of Ground Zero there is nothing but a silent crater, within this radius firestorms and fallout — and I saw people at these events.

Most of them, most of us, would like to believe in the orderly, rational conduct of foreign affairs. They would like to believe in authority and feel safe within a "policy."

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### Letters

April 22 Daily Nebraskan: David Thompson's editorial entitled "Free expression smothered by lack of thought."

Having recently been the subject of Thompson's sensitive and sensible examination, and having received, as a result, one of the more reasonable press interviews it has been my pleasure to receive. I am more than impressed with this young man. His editorial only further confirmed my faith in him. His voice lends a major share of dignity to the Daily Nebraskan and to the voice of UNL's student body.

Dale Wilson  
Graduate student  
Theater

### Argentine policy praised

I would like to commend the Argentine people for their heroic struggle to recover the Falkland Islands. I express hope for their success.

If the situation takes a turn for the worst, I would recommend the Argentine government offer to compensate Great Britain for the Falkland Islands.

I would, nonetheless, have Argentina remain steadfast in retaining Argentine sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands.

Why is it necessary for the British to lay claim over an island situated miles from their own native habitat and territory? It seems ironic the British would engage in an

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work which depicts or describes sexual conduct in a patently offensive way. In addition, the community has the right to make such discretionary decisions.

If this is art, why isn't heterosexual activity art? If Sheldon wanted to appeal to the prurient interests of its audience, the quality of the exhibit would have been improved by posting a favorite skin magazine.

If the purpose of the display was to expose the public to quality work by students, this material should have been removed to make room for more of the art that other artists produce. The museum is full of great student work.

It is a shame that the financial supporters of the gallery were never allowed to see the outstanding quality of nearly all the student work.

Mark Hoerth  
Sophomore  
Electrical engineering

### Editorial voices reason

My God! Finally, a voice of calm, reasoned sanity is raised. Just when it seemed that the point had been reached where only silliness and over-emotionalism would follow, when both sides seemed to be scurrying for lawyer offices and worse; just when the whole situation had been reduced to unfounded claims and obscene phone calls, there it was — a clear, firm and fair look at the whole situation, and it was right there on page 4 of the