

moral independence implied in being an educated moral person, we must foster in students moral humility, moral courage, moral integrity, moral perseverance, moral empathy, and moral fair-mindedness (fig. 2).

These moral traits are compatible with all moral perspectives. When students learn to think critically about moral issues and hence acquire some moral virtues, they can then develop their moral thinking within any moral tradition they choose. Critical thinking does not compel or coerce students to come to any particular substantive moral conclusions or to adopt any particular substantive moral point of view. Neither does it imply moral relativism, for it emphasizes the need for the same high intellectual standards in moral reasoning and judgment that are the foundation of any *bona fide* domain of knowledge. Furthermore, because moral judgment and reasoning presuppose, and are subject to, the same intellectual principles and standards that educated people use in all domains of learning, it is possible to integrate consideration of moral issues into diverse subject areas, certainly, in any case, into the study of literature, science, history, and civics and society. Let us consider each of these areas very briefly.

### Ethics and Literature

Good literature represents and reveals, to the reflective critical reader, the deeper meanings and universal problems of everyday life. Most of these problems have an important moral dimension. They are the kinds of problems all of us must think about and solve for ourselves; no one can tell us the "right" answers: Who am I? What should I believe in? How can I decide what is fair and what is unfair? Do I have to be fair to my enemies? What rights do I have? What responsibilities?

Stimulating students to reflect upon questions like these in relationship to story episodes and their own experiences enables them to draw upon their own developing moral feelings and ideas, to reason about them in a systematic way, to tie them together

and see where they lead. Careful reflection on episodes in literature—characters making sound or unsound moral judgments, sometimes ignoring basic moral principles or twisting them to serve their vested interests, sometimes displaying moral courage or cowardice, often caught in the throes of a moral dilemma—helps students to develop a basic moral outlook on life. Furthermore, because moral issues are deeply embedded in everyday life, they are easily found in liter-

ature. However, it is important to realize that moral issues in literature, like the moral issues of everyday life, are rarely simplistic, and students will typically generate opposing viewpoints about how to respond to them.

As teachers of literature we should not impose authoritative interpretations upon students. We should facilitate the development by students of reasoned, reflective, and coherent approaches of their own. Some, as a result of their parental and religious

### You Can Combat Censorship

Roz Udow

If threatened with censorship controversies, you can speak out to inform people about the dangers of censorship to a free society. You can talk to friends, neighbors, and colleagues; inform the press; contact organizations; and organize citizens' groups to speak up at school board meetings to support board action in affirming teachers' academic freedom rights and students' rights to know.

For help in these efforts, you can also call upon the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC). A nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, NCAC unites a broad range of professional, educational, artistic, labor, civil rights, and religious groups—including ASCD—in their common conviction that freedom of thought, inquiry, and expression must be defended.

Founded in 1974, NCAC engages in public awareness and advocacy at both the national and local levels. The Coalition's purpose is: "to promote and defend First Amendment values of freedom of thought, inquiry, and expression; to encourage, support, and coordinate activities of national organizations in opposition to censorship; to oppose restraints on open communication and to support access to information; to encourage understanding that restrictions on the free interchange of ideas threaten religious, moral, political, artistic, and intellectual freedom."

Among its many functions, NCAC:

- assists community groups and individuals with strategies and resources for resisting censorship and creating a climate hospitable to free expression;
  - operates a national clearinghouse on school censorship litigation, which issues reports and collects and disseminates up-to-date information to writers, scholars, lawyers, and the public at large;
  - monitors legislation with First Amendment implications at the national and state levels and compiles and disseminates materials on First Amendment-related issues.
- NCAC sponsors a special program, *Countering Censorship in the Schools*, to:
- advise and give direct assistance to schools and citizens in local communities when censorship controversies erupt;
  - work through its 41 participating organizations to assist them in anticensorship activities;
  - research and publish *Books on Trial*, a report on school book-banning court cases, through its national clearinghouse on Book-Banning Litigation.

To become a "Friend" of NCAC, send your name, address, and zip code with a tax-deductible contribution of \$25 or more to the National Coalition Against Censorship, 132 W. 43rd St., New York, NY 10036. "Friends" receive our newsletter, *Censorship News*, and special reports such as *Books on Trial*.

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—Roz Udow is Director for Education and Public Affairs, National Coalition Against Censorship, 132 W. 43rd St., New York, NY 10036.

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