



Reasoning with Ethics

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A Project of The School for Ethical Education | www.ethicsed.org

Ethics in action creates character.

Use this blog to:

1. Lead class discussions in social studies, civics, ethics or advisory classes.
2. Teach students skills to analyze cases with core ethical values.
3. Recognize skills in support of SEE's Tri-Factor Model of ethical functioning.

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Amazon Blocks Book Sales

Amazon is undoubtedly one of the most successful and influential companies in the world. Founded in 1994, its competitive dominance has led Amazon to control over 50% of the market in book sales along with success in many other ventures. Wiki notes Amazon revenues in 2020 exceeded \$386 billion. Needless to say, there are many smaller book vendors that

have gone out of business in the wake of Amazon's market domination. Thus, while private firms have the right to sell or not sell the products they choose when Amazon blocks and bans the sale of a book by its third-party vendors, it is meaningful in the space of publishing.

You can currently find Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (\$22.49) and Karl Marx's, *The Communist Manifesto* (\$6.85) on Amazon Book sales. These texts are associated with ideologies that led to the deaths of tens of millions of people. But as reported by a limited number of news services, Amazon has banned a text that critically analyzes the modern transgender movement. The text, *When Harry Became Sally*, by Ryan Anderson had previously been available on Amazon for two years.

Free speech and cancel culture have been topics of past Reasoning with Ethics blogs. For this particular case, SEE asks students a most basic question. Is the banning of a researched-based text with a controversial topic an ethical issue? Again, SEE respects the right of private businesses to make market-based decisions on what they want to sell. The ethical question includes the reality that Amazon is such a dominant figure in book sales, does this confer any additional ethical responsibility on Amazon to sell books with controversial topics?

Supplemental Links:

Amazon Questioned over Removal of Book by Conservative Author (2-24-21) Wall Street Journal -- <https://www.wsj.com/articles/republican-senators-send-letter-to-jeff-bezos-asking-why-amazon-pulled-book-by-conservative-author-11614212331>

Amazon ends sales of book, Just the News: <https://justthenews.com/nation/technology/prior-removing-transgender-critical-book-amazon-changed-policies-ban-books-hate>

Ryan Anderson is interviewed about Amazon banning his book. Fox News (4:18)- <https://www.foxnews.com/media/amazon-harry-became-sally>

