



Facilitator Page

WHAT KIND OF CENSORSHIP IS THIS?

Materials

- Provide a printed copy of the Questions for Participants sheet to each participant

Set Up

- Break students into pairs or groups of three.
 - Alternatively, you could present this as a group activity, presenting each scenario to the group and asking them to define what kind of censorship it is.
- Distribute to them the following library-based prompts and, based on what they learned in the Group Lesson, ask them to define the kind of censorship presented in each of the prompts.
- Once each pair or group completes the sheet, reconvene with the entire group and discuss the responses they came up with.

Note to Facilitators

As facilitator, you have a key to responses but you may find yourself interpreting the response differently from the key itself. This is an opportunity to discuss that with the group and emphasize how difficult it can be to reach a consensus on topics such as censorship and best serving your community as a library.

Remind students there may not be a single correct answer and discussion among peers, even when they disagree, is beneficial and encouraged. As facilitator, you may recognize pretty quickly that many of these scenarios require more information to make a decision. The goal here is not for students to have a correct answer. It is for them to discuss the thinking that goes into each scenario and what kind of information they may need in order to define each case.

Questions get trickier and more nuanced—and thus more ripe for discussion—the further along students go in the activity.



Answer Key for Facilitators

WHAT KIND OF CENSORSHIP IS THIS?

1. Redaction.
2. Redaction. This is a real scenario that has played out many times for Maurice Sendak's classic *In The Night Kitchen*.
3. Relocation.
4. It depends entirely on the intent! Was the book removed as part of a normal process of weeding or because it was damaged beyond repair and repurchased? Then it's not a removal. If it was pulled after a complaint or because a library worker objected to it, then it is removal.
5. Restriction. More specifically, this is an opt-in restriction, meaning that the default level of access for anyone under 18 is NO access.
6. This question should generate a lot of discussion and it's based on a real scenario. This would not be any censorship at all on the part of the library nor the patron. It is likely true that the book in question would better find its readership in the religion/theology section than in the general parenting section, as the religion/theology section of the nonfiction collection would have a parenting subsection. There is a great opportunity here to talk with students about how nuanced collection organization is and that sometimes, books do better find their audiences when cataloged differently.
7. Talk about a tricky question here! This is not censorship. We may not know much information about why the teen said the book should be removed, but the library workers who reviewed the title likely figured out the problem: the Cold War ended in 1989, and the book did not mention that. In other words, the book was out of date and thus, needed to be replaced with something more updated. The purchase of a new title might clue in students about this being thoughtful weeding and collection updating.
8. This is a complicated one because it entirely depends on intent. Is this in addition to those books being available in the sections they'd otherwise be shelved? Are the books being removed from their original place and put here? Who will have access to the shelf? Where is the shelf located? There are tons of good conversations to be had on this one.
9. It depends! Are the magazines there because of the content? Or are they behind the desk because of damage those have sustained before and it's a protective measure? The long and short on this one is that it leans more into censorship than not, especially because it might be too intimidating for a young person to ask at the desk for them (and what if the desk is unstaffed at times?).



Answer Key for Facilitators

WHAT KIND OF CENSORSHIP IS THIS?

10. It's a restriction via an opt-in form, rather than a more ethically gray opt-out form. A good conversation could be had about the decision of the library to have restricted level cards in the first place. Who policies those policies? What if someone who has a children's only card enters the teen area and browses those books in the library but doesn't borrow them?
11. This final scenario is purposefully not giving an action the library takes. The conversation should dig into pros/cons of funding decisions, what "inappropriate materials," means, and so forth. If students are stuck on what to do here, some questions you can use to prompt them include: What if the library submits a report to the state acknowledging there are no inappropriate materials without doing anything in the library? What if the library decides to forgo state funding because they don't want to remove material? What does "inappropriate" mean and how does the library toe the line between their ethical duty to provide material and the state pressure to define "inappropriate" in a way that's not up to the Miller Test standard?



Questions for participants

WHAT KIND OF CENSORSHIP IS THIS?

1. A library worker tears a chapter about climate change out of a science book.
2. When going through the picture book collection, a librarian opens up a book that features an image of a child without clothing on. Only the backside of the child is visible. The librarian uses a white marker to draw on a diaper and returns the book to the shelf.
3. After a parent complained about a picture book that talked about pronouns, the book was then cataloged and shelved in the adult section of the library.
4. A novel by Ellen Hopkins was discarded by a library worker.
5. In order to access the adult fiction section of the library, a parent must sign a permission slip for every one of their children under the age of 18.
6. A parent looking for a book about how to support their teen who just came out as trans finds a book on the shelf in the parenting section of the adult nonfiction collection that discusses what the Bible says about LGBTQ+ people. The parent submits a formal challenge to the library through the appropriate complaint form, noting that they did not believe the book was in the right area of the library. The library reviews the title and decides the patron is correct. The book is reshelfed in the religion and theology section of adult nonfiction.
7. A teenager borrows a book from the adult section of the public library for a research paper about contemporary Berlin, Germany. The book, published in 1989, was returned with a note that the book should be removed from the library. There is little more information provided, but once reviewed by library staff, the book is removed. A new book was purchased that covered the history and culture of Berlin, with a publication date of 2019.
8. A library creates a new parenting section in the children's area. The books in that collection cover topics like puberty, death and dying, gender and sexuality, family dynamics, mental health, and more. There are both books for adults and books for children in it.
9. In order to borrow teen magazines, a young person has to ask at the reference desk for them.
10. Until a parent signs a permission slip designating what kind of library card their child can have—one that limits them to the children's section only, one that permits them to the children's and teen section, or one that allows them full access to the library—no one under 18 can enter the library.
11. The state legislature passes a new law. To get funding, public libraries must prove they have no inappropriate materials on the shelf for children under 18.