

A close-up photograph of a woman with brown eyes and freckles, wearing a green headscarf. Her mouth is covered with a piece of bright red tape. In the background, another woman is visible, also with red tape over her mouth, but she is out of focus. The word "Censorship" is written in white text in the upper right corner of the image.

# Censorship

# Global Perspectives for International Travelers

## What is censorship?

**Censoring** – to examine in order to suppress or delete anything considered objectionable

### More than a bleep

Censorship is more than strict rules against nudity or the bleeps heard when someone curses on radio or television. Censorship may include different rules, ideas, or concepts depending on where you are in the world. Whenever you travel, you should always be mindful of the fact that your destination country's outlook on censorship might starkly contrast with what you have been taught is acceptable or unacceptable in your home country. What is permissible in one country may lead to being arrested in another. It is a good idea to stay abreast of the history and laws for your destination country when traveling. Write down some specifics below.

Destination Country: \_\_\_\_\_



What do you know about censorship and freedom of speech in your destination country?

### Censorship exercise

Imagine that you are the only high school student in your home country selected to attend the annual CWT (Countries Working Together) conference in France. Not only are you excited to experience Paris for the first time, but you are anxious to meet with international students your age to discuss global issues and develop methods to solve them. After a considerably productive week in the City of Light, you are eager to relay the information from the conference to your local branch of the organization. Upon arrival, your luggage is confiscated at the airport. When your belongings are returned, you notice that your laptop and folder with notes from the conference are missing. Enraged, you ask security for the whereabouts of your belongings and they reply that they will be delivered to your home as soon as possible. You leave the airport angry and confused as to why your personal items and materials from the conference were taken away. One week later, you receive your computer and folder from the conference, only to discover several files from the conference have been deleted from your hard drive and vital information from the folder has been removed and blacked out.



How would you feel in this situation? Have any of your rights been violated?



## Examples of censorship

### Common Types of Censorship

#### Moral Censorship

The act of removing or withholding content that is deemed morally questionable.

#### Military and Intelligence Censorship

The act of keeping military and intelligence information and tactics confidential and out of the hands of the enemy. This type of censorship can also include editing wartime videos that are shown to the public.

#### Political Censorship

The act of a government withholding information from the public in an attempt to prevent rebellion or massive chaos.

#### Religious Censorship

The process of removing content considered offensive or blasphemous by a certain faith.

### Dare to Imagine...

1. Trying to log on to one of your favorite social networking websites and not being able to because your country issued a ban prohibiting access.
  - In 2010, Pakistan and Bangladesh put a ban on Facebook due to a page that encouraged people to draw the Prophet Muhammad.
2. Losing your job due to something you said on Twitter.
  - In 2010, a CNN employee of 20 years was fired for tweeting the following phrase, “Sad to hear of the passing of Sayyed Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah. One of Hezbollah’s giants I respect a lot.”
3. Not being able to read your favorite books, watch your favorite movies, or listen to your favorite songs.
  - During the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1975) in Spain, books and media that suggested liberal or socialist views were banned.
4. Facing death because of something you wrote.
  - In 399 BC, Socrates was charged for impiety and corrupting the youth through his writings. Not only were his works banned from the public, but he was executed.



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As you can see, censorship comes in many different forms. Here are some questions to consider.

1. Is censorship necessary? Why or why not?  

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2. Is there a “reasonable” amount of censorship?  

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3. Can censorship encourage ignorance and/or limit expression? Why or why not?  

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4. How might censorship delay or prevent nations from working together?  

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5. Who decides what should be censored? Should censorship regulation reside in the hands of the government? The people? Should the level of censorship be handled on a case-by-case basis?  

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If you have never experienced any of the scenarios listed in this journal, consider yourself fortunate enough to live in a place and time that has allowed you an ample amount of freedom to express yourself. Throughout history, several nations have stifled the voices of their citizens by implementing strict censorship rules and promising harsh consequences to those who broke them.

Think about if you were forced to live in a country that regulated everything you watched on television or imposed a high filter on your web searches. Consider what you know about the censorship in your home country, and ask yourself are they censoring too much or too little?

## Think About It...

While we may have protected freedom of speech, which allows us to express our thoughts and opinions freely, what are some of the consequences? Should “hate speech” that promotes violence or racist views, for example, be tolerated?



**Censorship Activity:**

On the letter on the right, omit the following:

- Names of locations or phrases/words that indicate whereabouts
- Names of people
- Names of movies
- The word 'pictures'



How did the meaning of the letter change after it was censored? How might censorship be useful? How might it be detrimental?

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