

Europeana Learning Scenario

(Museum Educators)

Title

Is censorship still here?

Author(s)

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Abstract

For citizens of modern Europe, it might seem that censorship is part of the past, but is it? Censorship nowadays might not be that obvious, but it still exists. This museum education learning scenario aims to explore censorship in its many shapes and forms through looking at a variety of cultural heritage artefacts. It encourages the participants to discuss and reflect on ways censorship has been used in the past and how it manifests itself today. It raises awareness of freedom of speech as one of the cornerstones of democracy, but also asks questions such as: what are the boundaries of freedom to express one's opinion?

Keywords

Censorship, freedom of speech, human rights, democracy, press freedom

Table of summary

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Subject	This learning scenario can be used to enrich the curriculum of history, citizenship and social sciences.
Topic	Censorship, human rights.
Age of participants	13 - 16
Suitable setting for implementation	This learning scenario can be implemented in the physical museum environment or online. In case it's implemented in the museum you will need suitable equipment to be able to show the digital cultural heritage artefacts (screen, tablets or smartphones).
Activity time	1h 10'
Online educational material	2020 World Press Freedom Index Which Countries Censor the Internet Today? Top 10 Most Challenged Books Lists Banned & Challenged Classics Liam Olson reads "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian"

	Selected digital items from your museum collection that tell the story about censorship.
Offline educational material	Selected items from your museum collection that tell the story about censorship. White board or large piece of paper, markers
Europeana resources used	Europeana blogpost 'Book Censorship and Banned Books: The Index Librorum Prohibitorum' Europeana blogpost 'Banned Authors – who got on the Index Librorum Prohibitorum?' Officer writing home - National Library of Scotland A censored registered letter -Europeana 1914-1918 Censored postcards -Europeana 1914-1918 New Year's postcard -Universität Osnabrück Historische Bildpostkarten Cartoon 'Njet!' -The Royal Library: The National Library of Denmark and Copenhagen University Library List of forbidden books I -National Library of Latvia List of forbidden books II -National Library of Latvia All Through the Night -Lithuanian Art Museum Samizdat -Europeana 1989 Censored Dresses -KIM.bl

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Integration into the curriculum

This learning scenario corresponds with the topic of democracy, human rights and learning about different political regimes and ideologies which is embedded in the Latvian National Curriculum for Social Sciences (grade 7 to 9).

Aim of the educational activity

Participants explore cultural heritage artefacts to learn about the concept of censorship to understand that it has existed for centuries and still exists today. They are encouraged to reflect on how censorship manifests itself in their own society and how it affects their own life and freedom.

Outcome of the educational activity

Participants will be aware of censorship in the past and reflect on how it impacts their own life.

21st century skills

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving - participants discuss and reflect on censorship and think of ways to raise awareness about it in their social environment.

Media & Technological Literacy - participants discuss how to communicate ethically in an online environment.

Communication - participants express their own opinion about censorship, learn to accept the opinion of others.

Collaboration - participants work in groups to design a social media activity.

Activities

Name of activity	Procedure	Time
Introduction	Participants are asked to share what they already know about censorship and what is their attitude towards it. If the lesson is happening online, tools such as Google Jamboard or Mentimeter can be used to share their ideas and attitudes. Answers of participants can be used to determine any misconceptions and decide on aspects that need to be addressed.	5'
Exploring cultural heritage artefacts and discussion	<p>Discover what cultural heritage artefacts from the Europeana website say about censorship. Decide which of these examples combined with the artefacts from your museum's collection best tell the story of censorship. Participants should be encouraged to ask questions and express opinions.</p> <p>Look at Europeana blog posts 'Index Librorum Prohibitorum' and 'Banned Authors – who got on the Index Librorum Prohibitorum?' Participants are asked to comment on authors included in this list - have they heard of any of them and why do they think these authors used to be forbidden?</p> <p>Are books still banned nowadays? Most countries in Europe have strict anti-censorship laws, but from time to time we come across instances of censorship, often in schools. Look at these lists of Top 10 Most Challenged Books and/or Banned & Challenged Classics compiled by The American Library Association. What are the most common reasons to ban or challenge books nowadays? It's great if some of the participants already have experience with some of the books included in these lists.</p> <p>Some political regimes have used censorship as an instrument to control and repress society. What does this cartoon tell us about Soviet regime? Look at The List of forbidden books I and The List of forbidden books II. They are both issued in Riga with two years interval. The earliest list has been issued by the government of Karlis Ulmanis' authoritarian regime, but the second one by the Soviet government.</p> <p>Censorship goes hand in hand with military conflicts. A censored registered letter and Censored postcards from WWI are witnesses of this. Some rare examples have escaped censorship, like this hand drawn New Year's postcard that can now tell a story of what these soldiers have experienced.</p>	25'

<p>Introduce artifacts from your museum's collection</p>	<p>Look at the photograph Officer writing home. Lead a discussion - can censorship be necessary? Participants are asked to come up with instances where censorship can be justified (if any). Free speech is one of the bases of democracy, but what are the boundaries of free speech? To help understand what free speech is, you can have a look at the censorship law in your own country and see what it says about free speech, freedom of press and issues such as hate speech.</p> <p>Select some artefacts from your museum that adds context or new dimension to the concept of censorship and build a discussion around their significance (depending on artefacts from your museum's collection you can introduce them in any other stage during this museum learning scenario).</p>	
<p>Reflecting on own experience</p>	<p>Ask participants to think of ways they have experienced censorship and ask them to write it on a white board or paper. Depending on their answers you can see how different or similar their experience is. Look at the 2020 World Press Freedom Index and Which Countries Censor the Internet Today? You can look at the situation in your own country and discuss why freedom of press and internet is important today.</p>	<p>15'</p>
<p>Discussion</p>	<p>Participants answer the question: Do you think we should fight against censorship? When would it be necessary?</p> <p>Cultural heritage artefacts can tell us of how people have fought against censorship. All Through the Night is a painting that has become a symbol to the fight against oppression and censorship. Samizdat (self-publishing) is a secretly copied book or newsletter that makes banned literature and other forbidden information available. It was a popular form of resistance in the Soviet Bloc. Censored Dresses is a contemporary art project that raises awareness of censorship in the Middle East.</p>	<p>10'</p>
<p>Work in smaller groups to design social media activity</p>	<p>Inspired by examples of fight against censorship, ask participants to come up with some form of social media activity that aims to fight censorship or would raise awareness of it. It could be a book reading, an art project or any other activity they might come up with. Participants share their ideas and are encouraged to carry out one of these activities afterwards. For this activity participants should work in smaller groups. If this learning scenario is happening online, Breakout rooms or similar features can be used.</p>	<p>15'</p>

Participants' feedback

During the activity the participants were engaged and joined in the discussion. Some of them shared their experiences with banned and challenged books and stories from their family history. During group work in the Breakout rooms students managed to come up with great ideas for the social media activities that would raise awareness about censorship.

Educator's remarks

I linked the topic of this activity with current events, in this case it was censoring Covid-19 statistics in some countries around the world. Participants could relate to it and it also helped illustrate how censorship is still used and that the consequences can be devastating. Before implementing this Learning Scenario, I made a presentation with main topics and links to resources and activities I wanted to demonstrate during the online lesson.

You can encourage participants to carry out their designed social media activities. You can ask them to post their response on your museum's social media accounts.

About the Europeana DSI-4 project

[Europeana](#) is Europe's digital platform for cultural heritage, providing free online access to over 53 million digitised items drawn from Europe's museums, archives, libraries and galleries. The Europeana DSI-4 project continues the work of the previous three Europeana Digital Service Infrastructures (DSIs). It is the fourth iteration with a proven record of accomplishment in creating access, interoperability, visibility and use of European cultural heritage in the five target markets outlined: European Citizens, Education, Research, Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage Institutions.

[European Schoolnet](#) (EUN) is the network of 34 European Ministries of Education, based in Brussels. As a not-for-profit organisation, EUN aims to bring innovation in teaching and learning to its key stakeholders: Ministries of Education, schools, teachers, researchers, and industry partners. European Schoolnet's task in the Europeana DSI-4 project is to continue and expand the Europeana Education Community.

Annex