# Discussion questions and statements Moral censorship

**General Discussion Questions:**

1. What is moral censorship? Who decides what is morally acceptable in a society?
2. Should books, films, or other forms of media ever be censored for moral reasons? Why or why not?
3. How has the concept of censorship changed over time? Are modern societies more or less restrictive than in the past?
4. Is censorship ever necessary, or does it always limit freedom of expression?
5. Should literature that contains controversial or offensive themes be banned? Why or why not?
6. Can censorship ever protect people, or does it do more harm than good?
7. Is there a difference between government-imposed censorship and self-censorship by authors or media companies?
8. How do cultural and religious beliefs influence moral censorship?
9. Is it possible to separate an author’s personal views from their work when discussing censorship?
10. Do you think social media platforms should have the right to censor content they deem morally inappropriate?

**Book-Specific Discussion Questions:**

***The Scarlet Letter* (Nathaniel Hawthorne)**

1. Hester Prynne is publicly shamed for her adultery. How does this reflect society’s way of enforcing moral codes?
2. Do you think the Puritan society in *The Scarlet Letter* represents an extreme form of moral censorship? Why or why not?
3. How does Hawthorne criticize the idea of public punishment as a form of moral control?
4. If Hester’s story were set in today’s world, how do you think society would react to her situation?
5. Is Hester’s punishment an example of censorship? If so, how?

***To Kill a Mockingbird* (Harper Lee)**

1. *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been banned or challenged in schools due to its language and themes. Do you think it should ever be censored?
2. The town of Maycomb enforces a strict moral code based on race and class. How does this shape the events of the novel?
3. Atticus Finch defends Tom Robinson despite facing criticism. How does this challenge the town’s moral beliefs?
4. Should literature that addresses racism and injustice be censored to protect readers from uncomfortable truths?
5. How does the novel explore the dangers of suppressing ideas or opinions that go against the majority?

***American Psycho* (Bret Easton Ellis)**

1. *American Psycho* was heavily censored and even banned in some countries. Do you think this was justified?
2. Does the graphic violence in *American Psycho* serve a purpose, or is it excessive? Should books with extreme content come with warnings?
3. Patrick Bateman’s actions are horrific, but the novel also critiques consumer culture and superficial morality. Should controversial books be judged only by their most shocking content?
4. How does *American Psycho* challenge conventional morality, and why might some readers find it offensive?
5. If you were in charge of deciding whether *American Psycho* should be included in a school curriculum, what would you decide and why?

**Debate and Statement-Based Prompts:**

1. **“Censorship is necessary to protect society from harmful ideas.”** – Debate for or against.
2. **“No book should ever be banned, no matter how offensive or disturbing its content.”** – Discuss.
3. **“What is considered morally unacceptable today may not be in the future.”** – Argue for or against.
4. **“Moral censorship is just another form of social control.”** – Do you agree?
5. **“Books that include racism, violence, or explicit content should be restricted in schools.”** – Debate the pros and cons.
6. **“Public shaming, like in *The Scarlet Letter*, is an outdated form of censorship, but modern ‘cancel culture’ is its new equivalent.”** – Discuss.
7. **“Censorship often reflects the prejudices of those in power.”** – Debate.
8. **“If a book offends people, it should be removed from libraries and schools.”** – Agree or disagree?
9. **“It is more dangerous to suppress controversial ideas than to allow them to be discussed.”** – Debate.
10. **“Books like *American Psycho* should not be censored, but they should come with clear content warnings.”** – Do you agree?