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Writing my opinion essay on trigger warnings versus censorship was one of the most interesting experiences in this class because it forced me to reflect not only on my personal beliefs but also on how to communicate them effectively to an audience. Knowing that my audience was both my professor and my classmates shaped the way I wrote. I tried to make my essay thoughtful but also relatable by using *The Big Sleep* as my central example. Since we all read this text together, it gave me a shared reference point with my readers. This was a rhetorical choice that helped me connect my ideas about censorship to something familiar.

One important insight I gained during this process is that language itself has power. Words like “censorship” or “freedom” are not neutral; they immediately carry strong emotional weight. I realized that how I framed my argument mattered as much as the argument itself. For example, by focusing on “freedom of choice” as my main value, I was able to appeal to readers who might not be interested in censorship debates but still care about autonomy. This showed me how language can empower readers instead of making them feel pressured.

Some of the concepts that influenced my essay were audience, rhetorical situation, and evidence. Thinking about the audience reminded me to write in a way that everyone in the class could follow. Considering the rhetorical situation helped me recognize that I was

not just writing for a grade but also participating in a larger conversation about how society deals with sensitive material. Evidence became the most important strategy because my essay needed more than just opinions. Using *The Big Sleep* and my own experiences as evidence gave credibility to my argument.

This assignment also helped me achieve several Course Learning Outcomes. For example, I worked on “exploring and analyzing, in writing and reading, a variety of genres and rhetorical situations.” I did this by combining a literary text, my own perspective, and a broader social issue. I also practiced the outcome: “developing strategies for reading, drafting, collaborating, revising, and editing.” Peer feedback encouraged me to make my thesis stronger and clearer by putting my main point into one sentence, which improved the focus of my essay.

Overall, this essay taught me that connecting literature, real world debates, and personal experience creates a stronger argument. My biggest challenge was keeping my body paragraphs tied closely to my thesis, but I feel that I improved by using transitions and clearer topic sentences. For future assignments, I want to keep working on integrating more outside sources so that my arguments are not just based on one text but supported by a wider range of evidence.

Warn to educate: why content warnings trump censorship?

How can we balance the protection of emotional well-being with the defense of academic freedom and learning? This is the question that runs through the debate

between trigger warnings and censorship. In today's social milieu, where disagreements often arise over what types of materials should be displayed in lectures, which books should be removed from libraries, or which posts should be moderated on social media and which are unsuitable for the public, this dilemma is more relevant than ever. Works like Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*, with its scenes of violence, drugs, and corruption, demonstrate the complexity of deciding whether to warn or remove material outright. In my opinion, trigger warnings are better than censorship because they preserve democratic freedom, promote cultural progress, and don't restrict anyone from exposing themselves to this type of content. They give them the power to decide whether they can bear it.

Trigger warnings respect democratic values and strengthen autonomy in society, as they don't eliminate access to information, but rather allow the reader to decide. In *The Big Sleep*, Chandler portrays a world of crime and blackmail that reflects dark aspects of society. Censorship would mean losing the opportunity to discuss corruption and violence as social problems. In modernity, where exposure to difficult material is unavoidable, warnings prepare us for what lies ahead. By contrast, censorship silences discussion. Supporters of censorship often claim that avoiding harmful material protects the vulnerable, but in reality, confronting it with preparation is far more empowering. In a milieu that values free expression, trigger warnings prepares readers to be unaffected by sensitive content rather than simply silencing them. Although some defend censorship, the reality is that sensitive content helps us understand certain human behaviors, and removing it only limits the possibility of education.

Trigger warnings also promote social progress, as they invite us to confront difficult issues rather than erase them. In our modern world, we live surrounded by news about racism, violence, and addiction that circulates rapidly in the media. Hiding these circumstances simply evades local reality and clearly fosters ignorance. The question then arises: who should decide what is regulated? Neither government nor religion should have that absolute power, because both can impose particular interests. It is society, through educators, academic communities, citizens, and psychology specialists, that should guide the responsible use of trigger warnings and have the power to decide what content is truly inappropriate.

Content warnings also strengthen empathy. They offer the opportunity to approach sensitive material with preparation, which leads to more conscious learning. Reading the violent scenes in *The Big Sleep* constitutes a vicarious experience: the reader imagines the fear and tension of the crime without experiencing it firsthand. This not only broadens our understanding of others' pain but also allows us to analyze the social problems Chandler exposes. Without trigger warnings, some readers might reject reading altogether; with them, a respectful space for learning is created.

In my experience, trigger warnings don't distract me from a topic, but rather invite me to pay closer attention. When I know a text includes harsh scenes, I prepare myself emotionally and read it more carefully. When I read *The Big Sleep*, I anticipated finding murder and corruption, which allowed me to analyze the author's social critique without

feeling overwhelmed. This demonstrates that trigger warnings draw readers toward sensitive material, rather than alienating them, and they strengthen a democratic society's ability to discuss its issues.

It's true that those who defend censorship argue that it's the only way to fully protect the most vulnerable. They argue that certain content is so harmful that it shouldn't be circulated. However, this position underestimates people's ability to decide for themselves. Warnings serve a protective function without imposing universal limits. In a democracy, it's not about silencing voices, but rather about providing tools that allow each citizen to decide how to approach material. Today, censorship is a problem because it curtails freedom of expression. Basically, it doesn't let people speak their minds.

When analyzing the effects of both approaches, it is clear that content warnings are superior to censorship. They defend democratic values by protecting freedom of choice, promote cultural progress by opening debates on difficult issues, and avoid the dangers of a system that hides reality. The Great Dream exemplifies this point: if censorship were to occur, we would lose a work that reflects the violence and corruption of society. With warnings, on the other hand, we can read it with preparation and critical analysis.

Censorship may seem like a protective measure, but in reality it limits freedom, impoverishes culture, and threatens democracy. Trigger warnings, on the other hand, foster autonomy and cultural evolution in society. In modern times, where information circulates constantly and uncontrollably, we need warnings that accompany and guide, not censorship that silences. The challenge for educators, students, and policymakers is to

adopt these warnings as educational tools, not barriers, to building a free and conscious society. If we choose censorship, we silence voices; if we choose warnings, we strengthen society's ability to face reality with both freedom and compassion.