



Thought experiments

Follow the guidelines below to implement this method in your classroom



Description of the method

Thought experiments involve mentally exploring hypothetical scenarios to gain insights into philosophical, scientific, or ethical questions. These experiments encourage students to think deeply, challenge assumptions, and consider alternative perspectives. Unlike traditional experiments, which rely on empirical evidence, thought experiments rely on imagination and reasoning.

What will you need

Practical organization

Groups: Whole class / group of students / pairs / individual

Duration: 15 minutes to 50 minutes depending on the nature and depth of the experiment

Materials: stimulus or presentation of the experiment/dilemma, real-life examples (topic), impact model T-ACT

Implementation in the Classroom

Select relevant topics

- Choose topics that align with your curriculum and engage students' interests. Topics could range from ethical dilemmas to scientific theories.

Introduce the scenario

- Present a hypothetical scenario that prompts students to think critically. Ensure the scenario is clear and thought-provoking but not overly complex.

Encourage discussion

- Facilitate a classroom discussion where students analyze the scenario from various angles. Encourage them to consider different viewpoints and potential outcomes.

Promote critical thinking

- Encourage students to ask questions, challenge assumptions, and explore the implications of the scenario. Guide them in using logical reasoning to support their arguments. If necessary, you can use the methods on concept and argument analysis.

Reflect and summarize

- Conclude the activity by encouraging students to reflect on what they've learned. Summarize key insights and encourage further exploration of the topic.

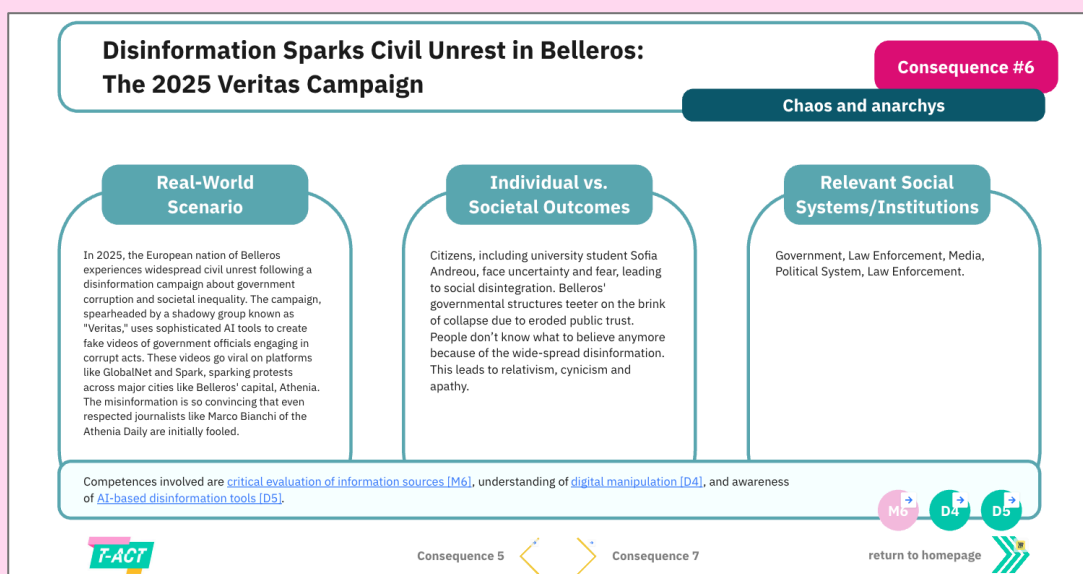
Tips & Tricks

- **Start with familiar concepts:** Begin with thought experiments based on familiar concepts before progressing to more complex scenarios.
- **Encourage creativity:** Encourage students to think creatively and explore unconventional solutions to the scenario.
- **Provide guidance:** Offer guidance and support as students navigate the thought experiment, ensuring they stay on track and maintain a respectful discourse.
- **Connect to Real-World issues:** Relate thought experiments to real-world issues to enhance relevance and encourage students to consider the broader implications of their conclusions. The impact-model can also be a source of inspiration here.



Examples

- 1. The Trolley Problem:** In this classic ethical dilemma, students imagine themselves at the controls of a runaway trolley headed towards five people tied to the tracks. They must decide whether to divert the trolley onto a different track where it will only hit one person. This scenario prompts discussions about utilitarianism, moral dilemmas, and the value of human life.
- 2. The Ship of Theseus:** Students consider a ship that has had all its parts replaced over time. Is it still the same ship? This thought experiment encourages students to explore questions of identity, change, and the nature of objects.
- 3. The Veil of Ignorance:** Inspired by philosopher John Rawls, students imagine designing a society without knowing their own place in it. This thought experiment encourages discussions about justice, fairness, and the distribution of resources.
- 4. Movies and presentations of thought experiments:**
 - a. https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=filosofix+english
 - b. <https://bigthink.com/personal-growth/seven-thought-experiments-thatll-make-you-question-everything/>
- 5. Thought experiments in Science:**
<https://sites.ualberta.ca/~francisp/Phil488/Lecture1ThoughtExperiments.pdf>
- 6. IMPACT-model T-ACT**





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