

T-ACT

The Psychology of Evil: Understanding the Lucifer Effect

Follow the guidelines below
to implement this learning
activity in your classroom



Cluster competences

- Media literacy aspect: The learner can cope with several sources of media.
- Digital literacy aspect: The learner develops digital and technological knowledge, skills and attitudes to act in society.
- Information aspect: The learner develops knowledge, skills and attitudes to cope with (dis)information.

Learning objectives

Information aspect:

- S1 – The learner can demonstrate an understanding of how the structure, content and wording of a piece of information can be designed to influence opinions or to trigger actions.
- S6 - The learner can explain how everyone's ability to create and share information impacts the information ecosystem.
- S7 - The learner can demonstrate that they approach with similar scrutiny information that corresponds to their beliefs/opinions and information that does not.
- S8 - The learner is able to critically discuss the possible intent of the author/s of an information item.

Digital aspect:

- D1 - The learner can demonstrate that they understand various techniques used by media platforms to emphasise, amplify and extend the reach of their content.

- D5 - The learner can demonstrate awareness of various AI-based tools for creating disinformation, such as deep-fakes video generators, image generators, text generators.

Media literacy aspect:

- M2 - The learner can explain the meaning of 'media bias'.
- M4 - The learner can differentiate between facts, fact interpretation, and opinions.
- M7 - When deciding on a particular action, the learner can critically evaluate a range of information sources.
- M8 - The learner can demonstrate that they actively seek critical information, including such that challenge their own beliefs and opinions.

National learning objectives

- Understand the psychological and systemic roots of human cruelty.
- Critically reflect on the Stanford Prison Experiment and the concept of situational vs dispositional behavior.
- Develop skills in ethical judgment, argumentation, and media interpretation.
- Learn strategies for resisting group pressure and preventing moral disengagement.

Topics

1. The Lucifer Effect
2. Power, obedience, and authority
3. Situational vs dispositional behavior
4. Systemic causes of evil
5. Strategies to resist negative group dynamics

Method

- Individual reflection
- Group discussion
- Video analysis (TED Talk)
- Text-based interpretation (worksheet)
- Class debate and ethical reasoning

Materials

- Internet access
- Projector or screens
- TED Talk: [Philip Zimbardo on the Psychology of Evil](#)
- Printed worksheets (from “philipo_zimbardo.pdf”)
- Image (optional): [Berkin Arts Demon Painting](#)

Lesson Plan

1. Introduction (10 min)

- Present quote from *Romeo and Juliet* about the duality of good and evil.
- Students reflect on and discuss dual nature of humans (worksheet question 1a).

2. Video: TED Talk (20 min)

- Watch TED Talk by Philip Zimbardo:
https://www.ted.com/talks/philip_zimbardo_on_the_psychology_of_evil?language=cs
- Students take notes individually.

3. Analysis and guided questions (20 min)

In pairs, students answer:

- Who was Lucifer? (1b, 2a)
- Why do people cross the line between good and evil? (2b)
- Define evil in their own words (2c)
- Discuss psychological conditions from the Stanford Prison Experiment (2d)

4. Zimbardo's 11 Anti-Evil Strategies (25 min)

- Students read Zimbardo's suggestions to prevent "situational evil".
- They reflect and mark:
 - Agree / Disagree
 - Why? (Discussion in small groups)

5. Plenary Discussion (15 min)

- What contributes most to evil: personality, situation, or system?
- Connect to modern examples (e.g., online hate speech, bullying, political propaganda).
- Can we resist group pressure?

Assessment

- Completed worksheet responses
- Active participation in discussion
- Reflective writing (homework): *"What does the Lucifer Effect teach us about personal responsibility?"*



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