



DECISION-MAKING AND MORALITY

Learning about the golden rule of life of Immanuel Kant

Learning Objectives	The primary learning objective of this lesson plan is to acquire basic knowledge of philosophy and more particularly to engage with the philosophy of Emmanuel Kant. Children will gain tools for identifying ethical dilemmas in philosophical texts and learn how to behave in similar situations in real-life.
Subjects	Philosophy, Ethics, Psychology
Recommended Age (10-12 or 12-14)	12-14 years old
Number of students involved	Maximum 25 students, divided into groups (3-4 students per group).
Duration	90 minutes
Skills Developed	Critical thinking, the meaning of duty, moral reasoning
Material Needed	Pencils, markers, whiteboard
Inclusion Best Practices	It is important to note that this lesson plan will discuss some sensitive topics, such as reflecting on the value of life and the importance of thinking about everyday decisions and future goals. It is therefore essential that children feel comfortable and safe to share their opinions as well as concerns within the classroom's environment. For younger ages, you could use drawings to help children draw and express how they imagine their thoughts and what processes they undertake before making a decision.



Instructions for implementing the lesson plan

This lesson plan aims to introduce students to Emmanuel Kant's philosophical work on the Golden Rule of Life. Children will learn about the meaning of philosophical thought and what is generally considered as an ethical way of behaving. It is important to explain to your students that ethics is a very big topic in philosophy and there is no right or wrong answer in philosophical questions.

The goal of this lesson plan is to help students strengthen their social skills and understand the importance of ethical reasoning in decision-making. This lesson plan uses Emmanuel Kant's approach regarding the behaviour of people towards each. Kant stated that a person should always act, in the same way in which they want to be treated themselves.

Step 1: Introduction to the philosophical topic (25 minutes)

In the first activity, you should discuss with your students about Philosophy more generally, and give them some time to share their ideas about what they think the science of philosophy is. To help them you could use these questions:

- Do you know or have you heard of any philosopher?
- How do you imagine a philosopher?
- Do you believe that philosophy is connected to how people think and behave?

You should make some notes of the children's answers on the whiteboard and ask your students to make a drawing of a philosopher.

After this short introduction, you should direct the group discussion towards the philosopher Emmanuel Kant. You could mention that this particular philosopher lived in the 18th century and his work focused on how people behave. The Golden Rule for the philosopher is that people should behave in the same way they would like others to behave.

To help your students understand this claim, you could play the following game in the classroom:



You should start a dialogue with one of your students by choosing to comment positively about them. For example, 'Today you look very beautiful and the clothes you are wearing suit you very well'. After the student's reaction to your comment, you should ask other children how they would respond to the same comment and what feelings these positive comments make them feel. Do they feel happy; more confident; do they enjoy positive comments; do they smile?

This activity should help students understand that often a positive behavior or a positive comment will lead to a positive response from the other person as well.

Step 2: Students make their own Golden Rules (20 minutes)

Having discussed with your students what the philosopher Emmanuel Kant considered the Golden Rule of life and having illustrated to the children through the above activity the importance of acting wisely and with empathy, you should invite them to write their own ten Golden Rules.

More specifically, you should divide them into groups (3 to 4 students per group) and give them approximately 15-20 minutes to create their own ten rules. You could ask your students to think about an imaginary country and create the ten rules that would become the governing laws in that country. Your students should also be aware that in their imaginary country, their rules and laws will apply to all the people, including themselves.

Once the students create their laws, they will write them on the whiteboard under their group's name and there will be a 10 minutes' discussion to decide the ten final rules/laws as a class.

One of the students should volunteer to write the 10 final rules on a piece of paper and leave them on a table in the middle of the class.

Step 3: Discussion on breaking the golden rules (45 minutes)

In the last part of the lesson plan, you should initiate a group discussion about the scenario of breaking the rules in their imaginative country. The



students should discuss about the importance of respect, empathy and how our thoughts and aspirations often determine our actions.

Give your students a few minutes to write down or draw an imaginary scene where one of the rules decided in the previous activity, in the gold list has been broken.

The discussion should then focus on the response of the students towards the broken rule:

- How should the other residents in the imaginary country react?
- What steps should take place to re-establish trust amongst all residents?
- What are the reasons for breaking the rule in the first place?



References:

Wikipedia. Emmanuel Kant. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immanuel_Kant

UNICEF. The Convention on the Rights of the Child: The children's version.

<https://www.unicef.org/media/60981/file/convention-rights-child-text-child-friendly-version.pdf>.

Britannica. Immanuel Kant.

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