

Trolleys and Tribulations

Ethics

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Grade Level	11th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	180 minutes
Course	Psychology, U.S. Government		

Essential Question

What does it mean to act with integrity?

Summary

This lesson provides an overview of ethical theory and integrity through discussion, reflection, and game-based learning. Through this lesson, students will gain a basic understanding of three common ethical frameworks: deontology, consequentialism, and virtue theory. They will come to understand that integrity means acting in accordance with one's own chosen ethical framework. This lesson includes optional modifications for distance learning. Resources for use in Google Classroom are included.

Snapshot

Engage

Students are presented with the classic trolley problem.

Explore

Students play the K20 DGBL game Paper Trail.

Explain

Students use a Card Sort to classify decisions with ethical frameworks.

Extend

In groups, students discuss case studies.

Evaluate

Students write reflective essays considering how they can apply an ethical framework to their own lives.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: Sociology (9th through 12th grade))

S.7.2: Analyze patterns of behavior found within social problems and their implications for society including juvenile crime, drug addiction, and long-term unemployment.
S.7.3: Examine individual and group response and potential resolutions to social problems as well as the consequences of such solutions.

Attachments

- Ethics Cards Key—Trolleys and Tribulations.pdf
- Ethics Cards—Trolleys and Tribulations - Spanish.docx
- Ethics Cards—Trolleys and Tribulations - Spanish.pdf
- Ethics Cards—Trolleys and Tribulations.docx
- Ethics Cards—Trolleys and Tribulations.pdf
- Ethics Handbook—Trolleys and Tribulations.pdf
- Game Portal Guide v1.2—Trolleys and Tribulations.pdf
- Lesson Slides—Trolleys and Tribulations.pptx
- Three Ethical Frameworks—Trolleys and Tribulations - Spanish.docx
- Three Ethical Frameworks—Trolleys and Tribulations - Spanish.pdf
- Three Ethical Frameworks—Trolleys and Tribulations.docx
- Three Ethical Frameworks—Trolleys and Tribulations.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Ethics Handbook (attached)
- Ethics Cards (attached)
- Three Ethical Frameworks (attached; one per pair)
- Ethics Cards Key (attached)
- Game Portal Guide (attached)
- Student devices with internet access

25 minutes

Engage

Show **slide 3** to the class and read aloud the dilemma presented as The Trolley Problem. Take a quick poll of the class to see if students would pull the lever to save five lives but sacrifice one.

Move on to **slide 4** which adds a complication to the Trolley Problem. Read aloud the new dilemma and then move on to **slide 5**. Show the Trolley Problem video.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=bOpf6KcWYyw

After the video, pose these discussion questions (on **slide 6**):

- *What decision would you make about the runaway trolley?*
- *Would you push the big guy off the bridge to save others?*
- *Why do most people say they would not?*
- *Is there a moral or ethical dilemma in killing someone to save others?*
- *How is the Trolley Problem a no-win situation?*

Explain to students that in this no-win situation when there is no easy choice, we tend to rely on our own moral or ethical reasoning. Today students will look at three different ethical frameworks or perspectives. Pass out the **Three Ethical Frameworks** handout. Ask students to silently read the handout. Allow time for students to read the handout.

Once students have read the frameworks, return their focus to the Trolley Problem. With an elbow partner, discuss what each type of person would do in the Trolley Problem—the Consequentialist, the Deontologist, and the Virtuist. Allow about 5 to 7 minutes for partner discussion and call on a few pairs for their responses. Show **slide 7** that gives an explanation of each type of ethical framework and how someone might react in each ethical framework to the Trolley Problem.

Ask students to volunteer which of the outcomes of the Trolley Problem from slide 7 appeal to them the most. This MIGHT be their ethical framework, although one dilemma alone is not enough to make a firm determination. Students will now play an Ethics game called the Paper Trail that may give them further insight into their own ethical framework.

Teacher's Note: Understanding Ethical Frameworks

The trolley problem is a classical ethical dilemma. It illustrates how people with different ethical frameworks might handle a no-win situation. The attached **Ethics Handbook** can be a teacher guide for this lesson that explains the frameworks more fully. You can share your own personal beliefs but try not to emphasize the merits of one ethical framework over another. In this lesson, we don't claim that any of the frameworks presented are better than the others. The important thing is that students learn to act with integrity by sticking to a single, chosen framework.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning

To make this lesson accessible for online or distance learning, consider creating multiple copies of the attached Three Ethical Frameworks student handout using Google Docs. Assign a pair of students to each copy of the Three Ethical Frameworks student handout and have them collaborate virtually. Students can add notes to the document and collaborate as a group using the "chat" feature in the document. You may also consider making this activity a discussion board post to which your students can respond directly. Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.

45 minutes

Explore

Have students play through Paper Trail (this should take a little over an hour), then discuss how their experiences and choices differ.

Teacher's Note: Accessing the game

For your students to play Paper Trail, you'll need to set up a class in the K20 Center Game Portal ahead of time. Go to games.k20center.ou.edu and create an account. After you log in, you'll be able to create a class and invite students. For more information, refer to the Game Portal Guide in the Attachments section. If you experience any issues, go to games.k20center.ou.edu/support to contact user support.

About Paper Trail

The K20 DGBL game Paper Trail is designed to teach three primary ethical frameworks: Deontology, Consequentialism, and Virtue Theory. The game is written as an interactive case study, allowing players to make ethical decisions within the game and see the outcomes of those decisions. Through the course of the game, players will also see how their decisions map to the three ethical frameworks.

30 minutes

Explain

Teacher's Note: Preparing The Card Sort

Attached is a card sort that reinforces the three ethical frameworks by posing new dilemmas and different outcomes. A teacher key is provided. Create the card sort decks PRIOR to beginning this section of the lesson. Place students in groups of 3 for the card sort. For example, If you have approximately 30 students, you will need to make 10 decks of the card sort.

At this point, your students may have some idea which ethical framework they personally prefer but may need further help identifying how decisions correlate to these frameworks. Divide students into groups of three. Pass out a **Card Sort** deck to each group. In the deck ask the students to pull out first the cards that say Consequentialism, Deontology, Virtue Theory, and Unethical. These cards will be used to organize the dilemmas into one of these four headers. Groups are to discuss each dilemma and make a decision as to which framework it might be. Use the Card Sort strategy to have students organize different decisions under four headers: Consequentialism, Deontology, Virtue, and Unethical. Let students use the Ethics Handbook or the Three Ethical Frameworks student handout as a reference. An answer key is attached. After about 20 to 30 minutes of play, share the answer key with the students.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning

To make the Card Sort activity accessible for distance learners, you may choose to invite students to print and cut out their own Card Sorts. A web-based platform (e.g. Google Classroom) or a digital platform for sorting (e.g., Desmos, Quizlet) can also be used to create a digital Card Sort. Students can place the cards in order and describe their thought processes for each step as part of an online discussion. Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.

45 minutes

Extend

Have your students select one of the three ethical frameworks and partner with another student who has selected the same framework.

Select one to three case studies from the NHSEB Case Archive.

Option 1 - Have each pair come up with a solution to the issue using their ethical framework. Once everyone has finished, have each pair share with another pair who chose a different framework to discuss the differences in their solutions.As a class, discuss the variety of solutions that were reached, how they are similar, and how they are different.

Option 2 - Have each pair come up with a solution to the issue using their ethical framework. Student pairs present their solution and the framework they chose. After all of the presentations are completed, lead a whole-class discussion of the differences and similarities among the frameworks.

Have student pairs turn in their written solution to the dilemma and their reasoning of the ethical framework they used as a participation grade and formative assessment.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning

To modify the above activity for online or distance learning, have students create and share a digital doc with their partner, then share out to the whole class or create a discussion board for student responses. Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.

35 minutes

Evaluate

Have students write a short reflective essay about a difficult decision they had in the past. Have students use their current understanding of ethics and their chosen ethical framework to describe how they made their decision or how they could have improved their choices in that situation.

Students should also explain, to the best of their ability, why they chose their ethical framework, and why they believe this framework is preferable. There are no right or wrong answers in this section as long as the student understands the ethical framework clearly.

Teacher's Note

Tell students they do not have to write about any situation they wouldn't feel comfortable sharing with the class. Reflecting on ethical dilemmas from their own past might be difficult for some students. It is also possible that some students may disclose serious issues or situations in this essay, so be prepared for what you might encounter. If students do NOT wish to share a personal dilemma, they may choose another case study from the NHSEB Case Archives that are linked in the Extend section.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning

For online or distance learning, you can have students upload responses to a submission box or discussion board. Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Card Sort. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/147
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Desmos. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/1081
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Google Classroom. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/628
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Paper Trail. [Game]. Authentic Lessons for 21st Century Learning. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/game/601
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Quizlet. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/666
- National High School Ethics Bowl. (2018). NHSEB Case Archive and Index. Retrieved from National High School Ethics Bowl: https://highschoolethicsbowl.com/caselibrary/