



**Project
Website**

<https://pros4democracy.internprize.eu/>

**Activity
Video
Summary**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idIr7L1Auco>

Lesson Category

Socio-Emotional Literacy

Title

Is freedom of speech really free?

Area(s)

Philosophical Questions and Evaluation, Critical Incident Analysis, Freedom of Speech

Objectives

Students will

- 1. Acquire skills in Evaluation;**
- 2. Appreciate how Rationalisation leads to the formation of sound opinions;**
- 3. Learn how Critical Thinking is needed when engaging with others;**
- 4. Garner new understanding of the concept of freedom of speech and question about whether Is it really free or totally free; and**
- 5. Have experienced debate about a complex questions ie. one that does not have simple answers**

Time needed

3-5 periods/ lessons

Materials needed

**internet , white board, Eurovoters
critical-voting literacy methodological tool**

Age level(s)

14-18

Number of participants per group

whole class



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Step-by-step description of activity

1. The teacher introduces the concept of freedom of expression as a concept and how it came to be acknowledged in:
 - a. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by the United Nations (Paris 1948) Freedom of Speech is a fundamental human right as prescribed in Article 19:
“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”¹
 - i. Resources: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEqFp0q60-U>
 - b. the Constitution and here one can cite the official document and also maybe show video resources related to the national laws on freedom of expression and / or freedom of speech.
2. The teacher now moves to the second step of personalisation of the concept of freedom of expression and freedom of speech introducing questions like:
 - a. the difference between freedom of thought (critical thinking ie. your opinion is yours and no one can impose it on you) and freedom of expression (as in protest, writing, criticising, humour, theatre, songs and forms of public expression aimed at expressing oneself and at times aimed at educating others or inviting them to critical thinking) and freedom of speech (with your peers, within your context and within the limits of respect of others) and
 - b. eliciting from the students areas which they find offensive if others were to speak, criticise, make fun of or denigrate such as religion, friends, culture, language or family and invite them to question whether others have the right to do this and whether they have the right to that to others. Depending on the level of eloquence and maturity of the students one can also give concrete examples however with caution due to the potential risk of students misinterpreting this in their narrative outside the classroom.

¹ As cited in
<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/#:~:text=Article%2019,.media%20and%20regardless%20of%20frontiers>

3. The teacher then moves the debate to limitations to freedom of expression and freedom of speech starting from:
- the point of how we take for granted that we have freedom of speech (even with consciousness that we have no right to offend others and vice versa out of respect or fear of retribution be it legal or counter offensive reactions) to
 - countries and cultures in which freedom of expression is curtailed by governments, censorship laws, fundamentalism and where there is civil strife.

Concrete examples are:

- women who cannot drive in some countries,
- women who cannot choose who to marry, dress how they wish,
- leaders of opposition parties imprisoned,
- newspapers editors imprisoned for slander and sedition,
- imposition of limitations on news by the government under some excuse or another usually national security and
- obtaining garnishee orders on the bank accounts of journalists.

For impact the examples above have been classified from situations in remote and more obvious limitations to expression that we take for granted to examples closer to us geographically ie. in countries we feel pertain to our European family to local.

Examples closer to us include Orban in Hungary imposing no mention of Covid-19 news and criticism of how the government is handling the situation on the press and Malta where one can go to court and freeze the accounts of a journalist under libel laws which is a way of putting a newspaper or journalist out of action.

4. The teacher now needs to support the students to take a critical incident into discussion that encompass several aspects. An excellent example is Charlie Hebdo with some care since Charlie Hebdo ventured into the very vulgar.

Picture 1 from Charlie Hebdo in Appendix 1.

Image can be questioned under several headings after the explanation of the historical context when it was published ie. the earthquake in Italy when houses fell like paper because they were built badly:

- do you find this funny? and was it intended to be funny at all even if it is a cartoon?
- do you understand what the artist wants to say or what message one wants to send out with the image?
- would you have said it in this way?
- is it a cruel picture or apt criticism?

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5. The teacher can now explain the story of Charlie Hebdo, their ample criticism and ridicule of religion and how this offended many Muslims in different levels right up to fundamentalists who killed journalists from Charlie Hebdo in a shootout and the world came out with Je suis Charlie!
Picture 2 from Charlie Hebdo in Appendix 1 with what provoked it including examples of their making fun of Muslim icons.
 - This IS the critical incident and analysis with questions:
had they insulted anyone? was it intentional to offend or was it freedom of expression?
 - did they invite trouble?
 - did they stretch it too much?
 - did anyone actually find it funny?
 - did they have the right to do that?
 - did anyone have the right to be offended? ...but enough to kill them?
 - did they put their neighbourhood in danger...what if fundamentalists planted a bomb instead of came round to shoot them?
6. The teacher can now mellow the discussion with stories and images of how the world leaders came out with the Je suis Charlie and how it was all over our social media.
7. The teacher can now provoke again with Picture 2 Appendice 1 and question whether Italians had the right to ridicule Charlie Hebdo back. Sequence is important here that the chronological order of things was like this:
 - I. Charlie Hebdo provoked
 - II. Charlie Hebdo journalists were killed
 - III. The world came out with Je suis Charlie saying they had the right to express themselves how they wished
 - IV. Charlie Hebdo journalists kept on with the same tact
 - V. Charlie Hebdo published the lasagna cartoon and
 - VI. Italian cartoonists got back with their ridicule of Je suis Charlie
8. The teacher can water down the discussion towards conclusion with reflections of what comes out of such an incident with some emphasis on valid arguments that came out from the discussion. It would possibly go towards the complex question methodology ie. there is no simple or simplistic answer so that the students are aware of the importance of questioning, listening to other viewpoints of the same incident and of understanding the importance of taking emotional reactivity into account.

Strategies of teaching and learning

Critical Incident Analysis and Philosophical Questions

Evaluation

Students are encouraged to give feedback on the process followed and on how they now evaluate freedom of expression in a new light following critical incident analysis

Notes to the educator

- It is important not to delve too long on the introduction since momentum is important in this provocative process.
- it is important to end on a high because it is can be an emotionally charged class since winding down can be an anti-climax.
- It is important that the teacher owns the concept and thought provoking process behind the activity and can then change sequence to one that is strictly loyal to the sequence of events as in step 7.

Notes to the educator

- aim to learn to be critical more than judgmental
- to be able to comment on different topics and from different point of views

Suggestions for follow-up activities

There can be a casual follow up with a local similar situation that could be censorship of a theatre play or some art that makes general statements about society, politics or sensitive topics.

Links to other material

<https://www.article19.org/>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/paris-magazine-attack/charlie-hebdo-shooting-12-killed-muhammad-cartoons-magazine-paris-n281266>

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Appendix 1



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3

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