

DIDACTIC UNIT 3

Indifference

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Gymnázium Angely Merici, Trnava, Slovakia
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1. INTRODUCTION

Title

Indifference.

Age

Secondary School students (15-17 years).

Duration

90 minutes.

Sources

- **PowerPoint presentations**
 - Indifference 1939-1945 (see www.lessonsforfuture.com)
 - Indifference 1948-1989 (see www.lessonsforfuture.com)
 - Artists vs. totalitarianism (see www.lessonsforfuture.com)

- **Film documentaries**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slQI9EeM41c>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGBjeQLwfE8>

- **Activity 6**

Retrieved 10.7.2016 from

- <https://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%A0ikanovanie>
- <http://naomyslife.blog.cz/1408/clanok-n-20-sikana>
- <http://www.noviny.sk/c/slovensko/rasista-ktory-napadol-britskeho-lekara-vyviazol-s-podmienkou>

Aims

- To understand the term indifference.
- To understand the reasons and motivations for the indifferent attitude of ordinary people.

- To take a moral stance on the responsibility of social and intellectual elite.
- To consider, under what circumstances is indifference understandable and under what circumstances is it a moral failure.
- To take a moral stance on various current situations in everyday life.

Other aspects

- Classroom arrangements: ordinary classroom, preferably indoors.
- Groups: ideally minimum 20, maximum 30, possible with any number of students.
- Equipment: Handouts of texts and photos or computer, projector and electronic versions of photos and texts, ideally with internet connection.

2. BIOGRAPHY RATIONALE

There were many, who didn't oppose the regime openly, but on the other hand didn't have a part in the crimes of the regime either.

They were not as conspicuous as collaborators or opponents. It is often difficult to form a clear attitude towards these people. However, we can understand the reasons which led to their indifference.

Already the emperors in ancient Rome applied the “bread and circuses” policy. Dictatorships in the 20th century just replaced the “bread” by various social benefits. They did so in order to divert attention from the violations of human rights and suppress the willingness of citizens to make a stand against totalitarianism.

They were partially successful in this policy. To this day, there are people who are nostalgic for the life of the totalitarian regime of the wartime Slovak State 1939 -1945 or life in communist Czechoslovakia 1948-1989. Yet they forget the dark sides of totalitarianism: the suffering of victims, injustice and decline of moral values.

In the first part, we want to clarify the attitude of ordinary people, on whom the totalitarian regime applied the policy of "bread and circuses".

In the second part, we want to highlight the moral responsibility of the social elite. Elite - artists, scientists, personalities of religious and social life - could continue their careers only when they collaborated with the regime or at least had an indifferent attitude. So some stayed silent, did not reveal an open disagreement. The elite can greatly influence the public opinion and inspire the public in defiance of totalitarianism. It is therefore important to have personalities who can overcome the indifferent attitude and stand on the side of good.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Indifference - Slovak state.pptx, Indifference – communist regime.pptx

4. BIOGRAPHY

Arts vs. Totalitarianism.pptx

5. ACTIVITIES

5.1. ACTIVITY 1

- **Watch 2 short documentaries accompanied by period music:**
 1. Wartime Slovak State (2'20''): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slQI9EeM41c>
 2. Communist regime (from 3'00'' or the whole film 5'19''): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGBjeQLwfE8>

- **Answer the following questions:**
 1. How do the films make you feel? What impressions do they leave?
 2. How do they picture life in Slovakia at that time?
 3. Give 3 adjectives that describe the atmosphere of these films.

5.2. ACTIVITY 2

- **Work in 2 groups:**

Group 1: Watch the presentation *Indifference 1939-45*. Make a list of how the regime of the wartime Slovak State made sure to get support of the masses and at what price.

Group 2: Watch the presentation *Indifference 1948-89*. Make a list of how the regime of communist Czechoslovakia made sure to get support of the masses and at what price.

- **Fill in:**

Bread and circuses policy 1939-1945	At what cost?

Bread and circuses policy 1945-1989	At what cost?

- **Compare the results. In what way were these regimes similar?**

5.3. ACTIVITY 3

- **Discuss: Read the reasons why people took an indifferent attitude and answer questions.**

1. Which of them are you willing to accept?
2. Which reasons can be described as a moral failure?
3. You can also take a vote.

- Career, good job, higher education:
 - If I had spoken out against the Communists, they would have fired me from work.
 - I could not have finished school.
 - The work was important to me. Thanks to my position I have been able to do a lot good for society.
- Respect for the family, the future of one's children:
 - I had to think about the family.
 - What would have become of my family, if I had been arrested?
 - I wanted my children to have good schools.
 - I didn't want them to be lacking in anything.
- Not interested in politics, in public affairs:
 - I did my job and I did not care about other things.
 - Politics has never interested me.
- Improvement of one's social situation:
 - Our family had a good life then.
 - We got a good apartment, we had a job.
 - Poor people were better off than before.
- The futility of resistance:
 - I've known people who spoke out against the regime. They didn't achieve anything, only had problems.
 - What can an ordinary person like me do anyway?

- Relying on others:
 - Why should it be me, who should fight the regime?
 - Let it be done by someone who has more possibilities than me.
- Lack of courage:
 - I'm not a hero.
 - I'm not a combative type.
 - I would not last a day in prison.
 - I was scared.
- Lack of bad experiences with the regime:
 - The regime did not hurt me nor my family.
 - None of my family was persecuted.
- Possible negative consequences of my resistance:
 - I didn't harm anyone in my office.
 - If I had been fired from work, my place could have been taken by someone far worse than me.

▪ **Fill in the table. Mark them with:**

- A: acceptable, understandable
- B: partially acceptable
- C: unacceptable, a moral failure

Career, good job, higher education	
Respect for the family, the future of one's children	
Not interested in politics, in public affairs	
Improvement of one's social situation	
The futility of resistance	
Relying on others	
Lack of courage	
Lack of bad experiences with the regime	
Possible negative consequences of one's resistance	
Other	

- **Read and evaluate: How did people experience the totalitarian regime?**
 - *Hypocrisy*: people behave differently in private and in public.
 - *Hiding some private matters*: such as religious beliefs.
 - *Focus on personal life*: hobbies, job, family life.
 - *Resignation*: My father came up with several improvement suggestions (to improve the production in the company in which he worked). But nothing ever happened (because of bureaucracy and indifference of the management). Then he resigned (why should he care, when no one listens to his ideas and no one is willing to give him the credit or reward him anyway).
 - *Taking advantage of the regime* (influential friends, a beneficial manner).

5.4. ACTIVITY 4

- **Think about what is written in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 12, Verse 48:**

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+12%3A48>

- **Try to answer:**
 1. Why is the social elite (artists, scientists, personalities of social and religious life) expected to assume a clear attitude towards totalitarianism?
 2. How do you understand the term "failure of elites"?

5.5. ACTIVITY 5

- **Watch the PowerPoint presentation *Artists vs. totalitarianism*.**
- **Try to answer:**
 1. In which regime did the poet Emil Boleslav Lukáč hold high public office (Member of Parliament, civil servant)?
 2. How do you understand his words: "It is the task of the poet to be the mouthpiece."
- **Divide up the artists from the presentation into 3 groups according to their attitude in wartime:**

Collaboration	Indifference	Resistance

- **Try to answer**
 1. It is possible to clearly determine what kind of attitude each of them had?
 2. Did their attitude change over time?

5.6. ACTIVITY 6

- **Is it right to remain indifferent in situations you could actually experience?**

1. **Situation 1:** You see a strong classmate is bullying a weaker one. How would you react?



<https://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%A0ikanovanie>



2. **Situation 2:** A 24-year-old citizen of Bratislava attacked a dark skinned tram passenger and his girlfriend. The tram driver stopped and opened the door in order to help the attacked people escape. The aggressor followed the foreigners to the taxi and constantly verbally and physically challenged them. Another attack was only prevented by a strongly-build passer-by. Subsequently, the police arrived and arrested the attacker. None of the passengers in the tram had intervened against the attacker.



<http://www.noviny.sk/c/slovensko/rasista-ktory-napadol-britskeho-lekara-vyviazol-s-podmienkou>

- **Imagine that you witness a similar situation. You witness how someone offends another person because of their race or skin colour, sexual orientation or faith. What would you do?**

5.7. ACTIVITY 7

- **Give your opinion on this statement:**

Indifferent attitude is understandable in certain situations: When a person has a personal, psychological or family reason. However, when someone is hurt because of our inaction and indifference, it is unacceptable.

- **Answer these questions:**

1. What is necessary to insure so that people wouldn't be "bought" by bread and circuses?
2. What can young people do to make the right moral choice?

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