

Grade 8 NTI Day #2 ELA

Teacher: Mrs. Lee

Text:

How Do We Tell Right From Wrong?

By Anne-Marie Reidy

Assignment Instruction:

- Task 1 – Read and Annotate the Informational Text
 - Underline key ideas and details
 - Make notes in the margin every few lines – write a summary or ask a question
- Task 2 – Complete the text dependent questions (1-9). Be sure to respond to short answer prompts with complete sentences.
- Task 3 – Complete the 3 Discussion questions. Be sure to respond in three to four complete sentences

Important:

This assignment will also be available in Google Classroom. Please feel free to contact Mrs. Lee with any questions via email: andrea.lee@pineville.kyschools.us

Name: _____

Class: _____

How Do We Tell Right From Wrong?

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

By Anne-Marie Reidy
2019

Dr. Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987) was an American psychologist best known for his research into moral development. Through his work, Kohlberg created a new field in psychology in which researchers try to understand how humans make moral choices. As you read, make note of the details that support the author's central idea: how do people tell right from wrong?

Decisions, Decisions

- [1] *Joe and his best friend Kim stop at a convenience store on their walk home from school. Joe sees Kim take a candy bar and slip it into her bag. Then Kim walks quickly out the door without paying. The store owner, who knows Joe from the neighborhood, asks him, "Joe, did that girl steal something from me?" Joe has been taught that it's wrong to steal or lie — but he also thinks it's right to protect his friends. What should Joe do?*



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We make thousands of decisions a day, large and small. Some decisions are harder than others, especially when a person has to choose between right and wrong. A person in that situation may consider many things: rules and laws, possible punishments for breaking the laws, what other people will think of them, and even what they will think of themselves. This kind of thinking — often called ethical¹ thinking — is difficult, and different people can come to different conclusions about what behavior is right. The American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg wanted to study how people reach these conclusions. He wanted to know: how do we tell right from wrong?

Kohlberg's Research

To answer this question, Kohlberg performed research by interviewing a group of boys about their moral decision-making. He first interviewed them when they were between ages 10 and 16, and then interviewed each boy again several times over the next 12 to 20 years. Kohlberg developed several scenarios — or made-up situations — about a character who has a difficult moral decision to make. Kohlberg and his team of interviewers presented the scenarios to each boy one at a time and asked if the boy thought the character had done the right thing. This is one of the scenarios Kohlberg used in his interviews:

1. **Ethical** (*adjective*) involving questions of right and wrong actions

Heinz Steals the Drug

A woman was dying of a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist had recently discovered. The druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$1,000. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. Should the husband have done that? (Kohlberg, 1963, p. 19)

Kohlberg was less interested in whether the interview subject² said "yes" or "no" to this question than in the reasoning behind the answer. The interviewer would ask new questions to better understand the subject's thinking. For example, the interviewer would ask if Heinz had a right to steal the drug and what sentence the judge should give him once he was caught. Then, the interviewer would give more scenarios to get a sense of how the subject generally decided between right and wrong. Kohlberg noticed that most of the interview subjects developed new ways of thinking about ethics over the years. As men, they made decisions very differently than they had as boys.

- [5] Using this research, Kohlberg came up with a theory to describe the different ways that human beings make moral choices. His theory also describes how he believed our decision-making changes from childhood to adulthood. Kohlberg called this his *theory of moral development*.

The Stages of Moral Development

In his theory, Kohlberg identified three levels of moral reasoning, which is the thinking process behind whether an idea is right or wrong. The three levels are:

1. Preconventional
2. Conventional
3. Postconventional

Level 1: Preconventional

Kohlberg found that very young children make moral decisions that depend on how their actions will be punished or rewarded. They tend to follow the rules that their parents and teachers make because they are thinking about getting something good or not getting in trouble. This level is the simplest way of thinking about right and wrong. It is made up of two stages:

Stage 1: Obedience and Punishment

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2. a person who responds to questions during an interview

Stage 1 focuses on the child's desire to avoid punishments by obeying the rules. For example, they see an action as morally wrong because the person who did it is punished; the harsher the punishment, the worse they think the action is. In the situation at the beginning of this article, Joe would display Stage 1 thinking if he decided to tell the store owner about Kim's theft because he was afraid of getting punished later if he didn't.

Stage 2: Self-Interest

In Stage 2, a child asks, "What's in it for me?" The child defines right behavior as whatever is in their best interest. Any concern they show for others is not based on true loyalty or respect, but on a "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours" mentality. For example, if a parent asks a child to do a chore, the child asks "What's in it for me?" and the parents motivate the child by giving them an allowance. Joe knows that Kim will share the candy bar with him, so, if he is a Stage 2 thinker, he might decide that he will benefit himself by not telling the store owner about the theft.

Level 2: Conventional

- [10] When something is *conventional*, that means that most members of a community consider it acceptable or polite. People at the conventional level are motivated by society's rules and expectations. They continue to accept the rules of authority figures but now believe that this will support positive relationships and order in society. Children — and even adults — at this level tend to follow rules without question, and they rarely ask whether a rule is fair.

Stage 3: Good Boy, Nice Girl

In Stage 3, people want the approval of others and act in ways that will make others like them. They focus on good behavior and people being "nice" to others. Like most of us, Joe has been taught that "nice kids" tell the truth, so if he's at Stage 3 of moral development, he will tell the store owner about Kim's theft in order to win the store owner's approval.

Stage 4: Law and Order

In Stage 4, people tend to accept rules and conventions because they are important in society. They see rules as being the same for everyone, and they think it is important and valuable to do what one is "supposed" to do. If one person breaks a law, perhaps everyone would — so there is a duty to follow laws and rules. Most people remain at stage 4 for life, basing their morality on standards set by others. Since stealing is against the law, Stage 4 thinking would say that Joe must tell the store owner the truth about Kim's theft.

Level 3: Postconventional

At the postconventional level, a person bases their sense of morality on their own beliefs and values. They believe that some laws are unfair and should be changed or eliminated. They also believe that individuals may break rules that go against their own values.

Stage 5: Social Contract

Someone at Stage 5 believes that people should respect the rights and opinions of others. They see laws as agreements between members of a community instead of unchangeable rules. If a law does not make things better for the community in general, the community should change it to create the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The community does this by working together to make decisions; sometimes this work is done through elected representatives. The U.S. government and other democratic governments are based on Stage 5 reasoning. In Joe's case, Stage 5 thinking shows that stealing from the convenience store could cause the store to close or leave the neighborhood, thereby hurting the community as a whole. For this reason, Joe would choose to turn Kim in, since this would hurt one person but benefit many others.

Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principles

[15]

Someone at Stage 6 will base their moral decision-making on universal³ ethical principles such as equality or respect. They believe that only laws based on justice are valid, so people must disobey unjust laws. If a person at Stage 6 goes against their own beliefs, they feel guilty. The Stage 6 thinker acts because they believe it is morally right to do so, in spite of punishment, their own self-interest, or the law. Although Kohlberg insisted that Stage 6 exists, he found few people who made decisions at that level all the time. In Joe's case, a Stage 6 decision would depend on his personal beliefs. If Joe believes that telling the truth is the highest moral obligation, he will do so, even though it hurts his friend. However, if he believes that loyalty to one's friends is a more important moral obligation than telling the truth, he will lie and cover up what Kim did.

What Is the Right Thing to Do?

As you can see, people with different ways of thinking about ethics can come to different conclusions about what is right. Kohlberg found that people's ways of making decisions tend to change over their lifetime, and that a person will rarely go backwards through the levels of moral development. Once a person begins to think in a Stage 5 way about what benefits the community as a whole, they will almost never go back to a Stage 2 level of looking out for themselves first. You may notice these changes in yourself over the next several years, as you learn more about the world and develop new ways of thinking. When you consider your own actions, ask yourself: how do I tell right from wrong?

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3. **Universal (adjective)** general; existing in all places and at all times

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which statement best states a central idea of the article?
 - A. Lawrence Kohlberg interviewed a group of young men about moral decision-making.
 - B. Lawrence Kohlberg realized that people make decisions the same way their entire lives.
 - C. Lawrence Kohlberg concluded that people's moral decision-making develops as they age.
 - D. Lawrence Kohlberg found that young children make decisions based on avoiding punishment.

2. Which statement best describes the difference between preconventional reasoning and postconventional reasoning?
 - A. Preconventional reasoning is based on community norms, but postconventional reasoning is based on religious beliefs.
 - B. Preconventional reasoning is based on avoiding punishment, but postconventional reasoning is based on earning rewards.
 - C. Preconventional reasoning is based on benefiting oneself, but postconventional reasoning is based on one's personal morals and values.
 - D. Preconventional reasoning is based on following one's moral principles, but postconventional reasoning is based on doing what is best for oneself.

3. According to Kohlberg, how does Stage 4 moral reasoning represent a greater concern for society than Stage 3 reasoning?
 - A. Stage 4 moral reasoning is concerned about society's laws instead of a desire for approval.
 - B. Stage 4 moral reasoning is concerned about society's approval instead of what is morally right.
 - C. Stage 4 moral reasoning is concerned about other people's approval instead of personal rewards.
 - D. Stage 4 moral reasoning is concerned about other people's success instead of avoiding punishment.

4. Which quotation below best supports the idea that the common good becomes more important to people as they age?
 - A. "Kohlberg came up with a theory to describe the different ways that human beings make moral choices." (Paragraph 5)
 - B. "They tend to follow the rules that their parents and teachers make because they are thinking about getting something good or not getting in trouble." (Paragraph 7)
 - C. "They see rules as being the same for everyone, and they think it is important and valuable to do what one is 'supposed' to do." (Paragraph 12)
 - D. "Once a person begins to think in a Stage 5 way about what benefits the community as a whole, they will almost never go back to a Stage 2 level of looking out for themselves first." (Paragraph 16)

5. Read the scenario below. Explain what Camilla might do if she was at Level 2 (conventional) of her moral development. Use evidence from the text and your own life to support your answer.

Scenario: *At the local farmer's market, Camilla witnesses a person stealing food from different food stands. Camilla then notices that the person gives the stolen food to someone who appears to be in need. Camilla could report the theft, but that might cause the person receiving the food to go hungry. What should Camilla do?*

Make sure your paragraph is complete by:

- starting with an argument that clearly answers the prompt
- including two pieces of evidence that support your argument
- explaining how your evidence supports your argument
