

Stages of Moral Reasoning

Lawrence Kohlberg, a contemporary Harvard psychologist, has theorized that humans construct their moral decisions based on three levels.

Level 1 (Pre-Conventional)

1. Obedience and punishment orientation
(How can I avoid punishment?)
2. Self-interest orientation
(What's in it for me?) (Paying for a benefit)

Level 2 (Conventional)

3. Interpersonal accord and conformity
(Social norms) (The good boy/good girl attitude)
4. Authority and social-order maintaining orientation
(Law and order morality)

Level 3 (Post-Conventional)

5. Social contract orientation
6. Universal ethical principles
(Principled conscience)

Directions:

In Chapter four of *The Things They Carried*, "On the Rainy River," the protagonist (fictional Tim O'Brien) faces the moral decision of whether or not to avoid the draft. In groups, identify textual evidence for each stage and explain how his thought process reflects the moral decision making process. We will discuss this at the end of class and your charts will be collected.

	Points Earned	Points Possible
Identify and copy quote from text with page number		5
Explain how that thought process fits the stage of moral decision making		5
Accurate pieces of textual evidence provided		5

Lesson Plan 2, Task 1

Group Activity		
Stage of Moral Reasoning	Example in “On the Rainy River”	Explanation
Stage 1: Obedience and punishment orientation; behavior is judged good if it serves to avoid punishment		
Stage 2: Instrumental purpose orientation; behavior is judged good when it serves personal needs or interests		
Stage 3: “Good boy-nice girl” orientation; conforming with rules to impress others		
Stage 4: Authority or law-and-order orientation; obeying rules and laws because they are needed to maintain social order		
Stage 5: Social contract orientation; viewing rules and laws as based on mutual agreement in the service of the common good.		
Stage 6: Universal ethical principle orientation; adopting an internal moral code based on universal values that takes precedence over social rules and laws.		

Additional NOTES: