



Itinerary #10 Screen Friends



Competences



- 2.1 Interacting through digital technologies
- 2.2 Sharing through digital technologies
- 2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies
- 2.5 Netiquette



- 3.1 Developing digital content
- 3.2 Integrating and re-elaborating digital content



- 5.3 Creatively using digital technologies

Tags

- Friendship
- Adolescence
- Social network Choices
- Hate speech

Time frame

6-8 hours

Audience

Age 11 - 17

Overview

This itinerary begins inspired by a very delicate and poetic video game, a small masterpiece that comes from the world of independent video games: *Florence*. This video game (downloadable as a normal App on mobile devices) looks more like an interactive story, with some small puzzles to solve. Regardless of the use of the App in the itinerary, it is still interesting to show students an example of an “arty” video game to show them alternatives, positive examples. Taking inspiration from a minigame inside *Florence*, the itinerary proposes to make students work on some handmade “posts”, quite similar to those of social networks. The sharing of these posts and the comments that will be requested from the students will provide cause for reflection on the use of words, on the importance of weighing words.

Subsequently, students will be involved in an activity where they will have to deal with some dialogues, which take place in different situations. Starting from some existing balloons, the students (alone, in pairs or in groups) will have to continue the dialogues, choosing the words to say and, at the same time, choosing where to bring the dialogue and the story. They will thus be able to devise scenarios and situations in which two characters dialogue, choosing words to say, and also proposing crossroads and choices.

The crossroads and the choices are at the center of the third activity: through an online platform to create stories with crossroads, students will be able to compose a shared story where their characters will find themselves in front of important choices.

Context

The first activity, after playing *Florence*, involves the composition of some posts and a subsequent comment phase. Students are asked to respond to posts with realistic comments, also reporting phrases read or heard on the web. This possibility could offer the bank for incorrect attitudes, especially if we know that episodes related to hate speech have already occurred in the class, or if we know that there are students inclined to provoke. But be careful: the request is to provide also unpleasant (invented, plausible or reported equal) comments; what is asked of the students, however, is to do it seriously, and not to comment in an unpleasant way just to make sensation in the classroom. The teacher who knows his students well will know how to balance these aspects well.

Cautions: One proposal would be to ask students to sign their comments: without the protection of anonymity, perhaps unpleasant comments written only to impress are avoided.

Objective

The activity aims:

- Make students think about the impact that a negative comment can have
- The importance of sharing different points of view and sensitivity
- Knowing how to conduct a constructive dialogue without disrespecting the other
- Build a collective story on the themes of adolescence and hate speech, sharing choices and paths

Required Media

Florence and *Ehi, Tonino!* are two apps available on Google Play and App Store: the first is paid, the second is free. They work on smartphones and tablets. *The iNCIPIT* is instead a platform reachable on

the web at theincipit.com.

Ehi, Tonino! and *The iNCIPIT* are in Italian, while *Florence* is available in many languages.



Florence

Florence is an interactive story about the sentimental ups and downs of a young woman's first true love. Florence Yeoh feels a little trapped: her life is a routine made up of work, sleep and too much time spent on social media. Then one day she meets a cello player, Krish, who will change her way of looking at the world. It has simple and intuitive mechanics, very accurate soundtrack and graphics. Puzzles are used to reinforce pieces of *Florence's* life as players progress through her story. Lead designer Ken Wong wanted to create games that eschewed violence and was inspired by his work on Monument Valley to have a more narrative-focused experience that included puzzles.

The game received favorable reviews that praised the game's art-style, music, and narrative structure. During the game we follow the story between ups and downs through a series of mini-games. The mini-games reflects various aspects of daily life: the difficulty in communicating, in recognizing and recognizing oneself, in accepting the other in every aspect.

One mini-game is about the awkwardness of a first date through a puzzle, and this part is what inspired one of the activities of this itinerary. The game is divided into 20 chapters, divided into 6 acts. A single play-through takes approximately 30 minutes. The app, available on Google Play and App Store, is paid.



Ehi, Tonino!

The App *Ehi, Tonino!*, available for free on the App Store and Google Play, is developed by the Centro Zaffiria and is one of the main outputs of the *#NoDrugsToBeCool* project. It is a narrative App where the player follows the events of a school year, interacting with some characters, through an instant messaging view. The App is available only in Italian.

Inspired by gamebooks, the App mentions its structure and transports it to digital: texts and animations guide the boys and girls into the stories of a small group of teenagers who come to terms (sometimes well, sometimes badly) with the complexity of managing the small and big things in life, of making sense of themselves and what they do. The ending remains open so that anyone who downloads the App can write the conclusion they prefer.

The App has the appearance of an instant messaging chat, inspired by the most used ones currently. The characters are contacts of the player, who

impersonates a boy or girl and who starts a new school year in a new school. As the story progresses, the player will make new friends and receive messages to which he can respond by making choices. Each choice will have various consequences, the characters will react differently and the story will take alternative paths. The player will become the "center" of a group of friends and classmates who, for a school year, will rely on his advice to solve and overcome some situations, sometimes light, sometimes complex. With the App *Ehi, Tonino!* each player can live a different story, discover new dialogues and change the relationships between the characters. As you continue, all the videos created by students during the course of the project will be "unlocked" and will be available in a gallery inside the App. A "diary" section will also allow you to freely write your thoughts, writing down useful information about the characters, your reflections, the ideas that emerged during the game. The App is therefore customizable and has an open ending, which invites to be explored and replayed to experiment with the different possibilities offered

THE iNCIPIT



1 Entra nella storia



2 Cambia la trama



3 Di' la tua

THE iNCIPIT

The iNCIPIT is an interactive online storytelling platform, a site where you can write or participate in crossroads story development. Unlike other platforms of collective writing – where users can contribute by writing each one of the parts of the story – in *The iNCIPIT* the writer is always the same, but users can decide how keep the story going.

The iNCIPIT is a site where you can register for free, to start and interact as a writer or reader. After a short presentation, we have the opportunity to immediately start writing our story or participate in surveys of other stories. In the first case, we have 5000 characters to write the beginning of our story, a sort of "first chapter". After having accompanied it with various information (title, genre, short synopsis) we can publish it, but not before having also offered three possible answers. Each of the nine available chapters (there are ten in total, but the last one does not foresee any choices) must

in fact end with three different possible developments in the story. It is sufficient to indicate, for example, the three different places where the protagonist can go, or three different ways of responding to a character; it is the writer's power to decide how significant the choices are for the plot and how much to write or not to write in advance about possible developments. Readers will be able to vote on the preferred choice and, as in a survey, the one that receives the most votes will be chosen. At this point the writer can continue with the next chapter, starting from the choice expressed by the majority of readers. The readers, in addition to voting, can leave comments and opinions on written texts. We have also the opportunity to be readers: we can search for the stories that are active at the time, read, and participate in the polls by expressing our vote, as well as interact with the writer.

Working Methods

This working methods allow you to design experiences in which students and adults can reflect on online hate speech starting from life, from experiences, but also by imagining the necessary antibodies to face it in the future. Working in groups, collective discussion, artistic and digital practice become concrete tools to raise awareness and give students tools to react. In this itinerary, floor is left to them, who can express themselves through the creation of content that is very familiar to them such as social network posts. The possibility to work through storytelling also allows students to express themselves and explore situations, solutions and strategies to deal with various situations and contexts where it is possible to face hate speech. This itinerary leaves them many creative and storytelling possibilities, both invented and personal.

SEGMENT 1

Overview

In this segment, students create handmade posts, share them and comment on them

Time: 2 hours

Media

- The App *Florence*

Methods

In this part, students will be invited to observe an App / video game together and then take inspiration and carry out the first practical activity. During the observation of the game it is good to stimulate questions and comments to know the interpretation they give to the media we offer. During the post and commenting phase, the teacher should be a facilitator who stimulates and accompany the students to express themselves and confront each other.

Equipment

A smartphone/tablet with the *Florence* app; a projector; the cropped images (attached); white sheets of paper; scissor and glue; pens, markers and pencils.

We can start the activity by showing *Florence*. If possible, we connect the tablet or smartphone to the projector, so that all students can follow the progress of the game. We can ask in turn if they want to play it for everyone. Observing students can take notes while their classmates play. It is always very interesting to ask students what they think of a media that

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we are proposing to them, and it helps us to understand if the message that that media - in our opinion - conveys is the same that is received by them. It also allows them to develop a critical look at what the world of video games, apps, films and books offers, helping them to discern the poor material (with the sole purpose of selling) to the quality one. We can give them post-its and ask them to write every thought, and hang them on the wall, in a place that is clearly visible and accessible to everyone.

Florence has a very simple structure, and the whole game can be completed in just over half an hour. What is interesting, however, is to dwell on individual scenes, on individual mini-games, to reason with the students. *Florence*, as described in the Required media section, tells the story of a girl, immersed in the daily routine, who lives an intense love story. In the first part of the game, this boring routine is well expressed on an aesthetic level (the choice of colors, for example) and with the repetitiveness of the actions to be performed: brushing your teeth, having a look at social networks, working. For example, when *Florence* uses the smartphone, we don't see the whole image; let's try to ask the students why, according to them. What did the designers want to tell us in this case? Why did they choose these colors? How do you think these actions should be done?

During the third chapter, at some point, *Florence's* smartphone is discharged, which "forces" her to pay attention to the world around her. Only then does the encounter with Krish take place; how is it told by designers? What changes

now, compared to the representation of *Florence's* life until recently? We can play until the fifth chapter, where there will be a short minigame concerning the composition of some balloons, an action that will serve as an inspiration for subsequent activities.

The first activity inspired by *Florence* refers to the scenes in which the protagonist uses the smartphone. As seen in the game, the designers decided to show us only a part of the images, concentrating our action only on the repetitiveness of two simple gestures: putting a heart or changing image. Starting from the reflections made together with the students regarding the choices of the designers, we propose them to reason precisely on the importance of the images and the reactions to them. We know it is very important to decide what to post and how, especially for their age. The game highlights the little importance given to the image, we want to make students reflect on this.

Attached to this itinerary are six images from *Florence* representing "cut" posts, which lack the upper part of the image. We divide the class into groups of up to six people and give the six images to each group. We ask students to paste the images on a sheet and complete them: starting from the clue, from the lines, they can continue and compose the image, thus deciding the appearance of the characters, their expressions, the context. Who are these people? What are they doing? Why did they photograph themselves? What did they want to communicate? In support of the photo,

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we ask students to write a few lines and hashtags, just like a post on Instagram. What could the author write? Is it a good time for him/her? Is it a bad memory? Below (or alongside) the image they can write what they want, just like in a post. We suggest them to imagine posts that are as realistic as possible, similar to those they see on a daily basis.

We now ask students to show their posts: we hang them on a free, easily accessible wall, as a page of a social network that contains all their posts. We can read them together and possibly ask for clarifications or comments about it. We give students post-its and ask now to comment the posts. For each post, they will have to write at least one comment on a post-it note and stick it below. Again we ask them both to comment like they would comment in reality, but to also report comments similar to those they see on the social networks they frequent on a daily basis (therefore also including unpleasant comments, if they happen to see them). They can also, if they wish, report true comments.

After the comments phase, we can start reading them together. Let's read some examples, asking - if necessary - the author to deepen the comment, or asking students if they have impressions they want to share. After some free observations, we ask the authors of the posts to collect the post-its under their post and bring them to their table. We now ask them to divide the comments into two "categories": 1. non-offensive comments; 2. offensive comments.

We allow them time to make the selection and then open a comparison.

We ask if anyone wants to start by telling how they divided the comments, and if they want to read some significant ones. Let's make the comparison constructive, asking classmates if they agree or not.

First of all we can ask to identify clearly offensive comments, those with hate, racist, violent contents that immediately catch the eye, and label them as such. So let's make sure to convey to students the idea that some comments are objectively hateful, regardless of subjective interpretations and observations.

Among the comments read probably the most interesting and debated will be those that could be offensive, but it is not evident. These are the comments that apparently do not contain an obvious aggression or mockery, but which, perhaps, read in a certain way, or by a person with a certain sensitivity, could be offensive. They are the kind of comments, of interventions, on which more attention should be paid, to avoid using certain terms and better measuring words. Probably they will be offensive to some, not to others: it is important to reason with the students on this aspect to compare the various points of view and to reflect on the fact that we must never take the person who reads our comments for granted. If we want, every time a student reads us a comment, we can ask to stick it on the wall, and then create two groups of comments.

After listening to the individual interventions, it is important to establish some fixed points. It is essential to make students understand that certain things should not be said: even hateful comments which, depending on the

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context, may not cause damage, are however an expression of a pattern of thought used to act, say, change relationships. Even in cases where we know that the person targeted by the insults is resistant to them (a friend we know is not offended) the risk is to legitimize someone's violence and pre-eminence over someone else. Certain interventions must be avoided and, indeed, reported if necessary.

SEGMENT 2

Overview

Students build dialogues by responding to characters and choosing the path to take

Time: 2 hours

Methods

In this part the students have a discreet freedom of expression: they can make unexpected dialogues take hold, deviating from the initial situation and - above all - risking deviating from the intent of the activity. The teacher must therefore clarify well what are the topics to be addressed and keep the stories on the right tracks. Regardless of the mode chosen (see below) it is important to share a final return moment to develop alternatives and proposals.

Equipment

Starting images; white sheets of paper; scissors and glue; pens or markers.

At this point we can propose to the students to play with crossroads and choices, just like in the proposed apps, but in an analogical way. Attached to the itinerary are images created from the apps *Ehi*, *Tonino!* and *Florence*, combined together, which constitute starting situations. The characters are in a context that can suggest a certain type of dialogue or speech. Above the characters there are also balloons, which indicate the beginning of a hypothetical dialogue. We print these images, in the largest possible format. These activity is inspired

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by one of the minigame in *Florence*, the one in which the player has to compose a dialogue by dragging balloons. What that minigame represents is the difficulty, sometimes, of finding the right words. It happens, often and especially on social networks, that little weight is given to the chosen words. And the risk is to offend the other, to pass the limit, to exaggerate. This activity somehow wants to slow down this process, through manual practice, to allow you to reflect on the words we say and the choices we make, and how much this affects others.

For this activity we can work in different ways: in pairs, in groups, free, with scripts.

Pairs mode

We create pairs, and assign each couple a printed starting situation. The two members of the couple interpret the two characters and, in turn, respond to the other, adding balloons over their heads, just like the starting ones. The starting balloons serve as an incentive and stimulus to continue the dialogue, but the students can decide the topic to be addressed, or this can emerge as the activity continues – they could therefore simply follow the other and build together the scene. We can leave them free to experiment or indicate a topic or theme to discuss and see how they develop it.

Groups mode

The group work involves the comparison between the students, in order to build a dialogue, through the balloons, that is coherent and that leads to talk about a topic – chosen by them or that we can indicate. Instead of carrying

on the dialogue in two, as in the “pairs mode”, in this case the group acts as a team of creatives, as if they were to write the scenes of a film, a comic, a series. In this case, therefore, it is more a work of creation, shared in a group, to structure a hypothetical dialogue between two people.

Free mode

The various situations (with perhaps additional situations created by us) are hung on the walls of the classroom, with enough space to be able to freely move from one sheet to another. Students, with pens or markers, can continue the dialogues, adding balloons above the characters, freely. They can add a balloon to a dialogue, then move on to work on another and so on. In this way everyone can work on all situations and the class, together, carries on all the dialogues.

Variant with scripts

During the experimentation carried out in Italy with educators and teachers, large prints of the situations were hung on the walls. Participants were invited to take part in the activity via “free” mode, but with a variation. Instead of being able to freely write the dialogues in the balloons with the pen, they had to choose from a predetermined series of sentences. These sentences were practically the transcription of the dialogues of the App Hey, Tonino!, the script. In this way the participants had to cut out parts of sentences and paste them into the balloons to create a coherent dialogue. In this way the participants were “forced” to find and choose the right words to say, an exercise that can be very interesting. To

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replicate it – if we do not have the scripts of a film, or already written dialogues – we can use magazines, a newspaper, photocopies from a book that interests us or something else.

In all modes, we can also integrate a system of choices: a student could respond with a double balloon, bifurcating the path. Those who intervene after him will have to choose between the two options and respond to that, thus making a choice and changing the course of the dialogue. We can also leave open the possibility of being able to respond to both options, and therefore see how the dialogue would proceed by following the two different paths, a sort of game of “what if ...”. In this way students could experiment with different ways of reacting and responding, and also imagine the consequences.

SEGMENT 3

Overview

In this activity the students compose a collective story divided into ten chapters

Time: It depends (see below)

Media

- The online platform *THE iNCIPIT*

Methods

This activity does not end in a single session, but is more of a proposal that can last over time. Students will create a collective story, with crossroads; the choice of which crossroads to follow will be made by users of an online platform, which takes some time. This is why the segment is suitable as a long-term activity to be treated together with the whole class.

Equipment

A computer and a projector.

The third activity deepens the issue of choices through the use of an online platform called *THE iNCIPIT*. In this activity, students will be responsible for making important and meaningful choices, which could change the course of a story. This workshop can provide students with food for thought on their personal experience, on adolescence, on the difficulty of making personal choices. The structure is different from other activities: it is expanded over time and continues on several occasions. It therefore presents itself as an activity that can become a fixed, weekly appointment perhaps, to which dedicate the necessary time (for example an hour) to resume the thread,

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discuss it with the students, and create the new content.

The iNCIPIT allows you to create stories with the collaboration of users. The writer writes one chapter at a time, proposes three possible short developments, users vote and, just like in a survey, the most voted proposal will be developed by the writer. See the Required Media section for more information on this tool. First of all we must register (for free) to the platform; we can make a "class" registration using a school email or the personal one. At this point we can divide the class into groups or in pairs – the narration in *The iNCIPIT* has ten chapters, we could create ten groups, or five that will act twice as writers. We just have to think up the first chapter of our story: we can write it and propose it to the students, or create this first part with them. To facilitate the narration, it is always important to provide material and avoid leaving students in front of the "blank sheet", a situation where their intervention cannot anchor to something concrete: having a detail of a character, anecdotes, an incipit are all useful elements to start the story and at the same time support their creation. We can start from characters that students already know, we can conceive them together, we can connect to themes and topics that we are dealing with in the classroom. At this point the first group can write the first chapter; we can ask the group to prepare it in advance, or while the other students are busy on something else. Students must take care to finish the chapter with three possibilities, three possible choices; they could be three ways of responding to a character, three different ways to choose, three attitudes to adopt or other. It is important that they are significantly different choices, as far as

possible, to really offer users the possibility to choose. We can help the group to devise the three paths to propose to the community. Once the three possibilities have also been created, we can publish the first chapter: we just have to wait for the votes of the users. The survey will automatically close when the next chapter is published; the suggestion is to publish one chapter per week, in order to give users time to read the story and vote.

After collecting all the votes, it's the turn of the second group. Based on the most voted choice, students will have to write the second chapter of the story, following the preference expressed by the majority of users. This continues until we reach the end of the story.

At the end of the activity, we will have a story created collectively, where each group, from time to time, took care of a part of the story and carried it forward. As already said, the starting point is fundamental: we can propose to students to start from a case of hate speech they have heard, or to invent one specifically. It could be the story of a bullied, or a bully. For example, the first chapter could end with a situation like this: a boy has been the victim of serious verbal attacks on a chat, how should he react? 1 - Ignore the hater completely and act as if nothing has happened. 2 - Talk about it with parents and / or teachers. 3 - Respond, in an even more aggressive way. This way of working allows the students to identify themselves in the shoes of all potential characters, allows them to imagine the various points of view, and take into consideration the possible actions and behaviors of everyone involved. At the end of the story, a comparison on the whole experience is recommended.

In a nutshell

Students interact daily with posts, on social networks. Often the weight and attention they give to the images and words posted, however, is not enough. And this happens above all in the comments, sometimes full of evident hatred, sometimes of more subtle and difficult offenses to be identified as such. The practice of sharing stories, posts, dialogues can be a way of thinking together about what to post and how, in what way, and how to comment. Students must always have in mind that often they do not fully know the person who will read their words, and who therefore could misunderstand them, could take offense and be hurt.

It is also important to clarify how hate comments should be identified and also reported. Students must understand that together they can defend themselves, help each other – for example by denouncing the comment together, remaining close to the victim. Addressing the issue in a group could be the key to overcoming difficult moments caused by online hatred together.

This itinerary provides some ideas for reasoning on these aspects and it sensitizes students to play an active role in supporting the victim by stimulating their ability to feel empathy. The aim is to reinforce the positive role of each person within their communities (more than one...).

Additional options / Variations

A possible variant for the activity of segment 2 is to build the starting situations for the dialogues with the students. In this toolkit there are already built situations, with characters extracted from two apps. We can, with the students, select other media (films, books, TV series, video games, apps) and ask them to choose their favorite characters. We look for images of these characters and print them, cut them out and on a sheet we compose the starting scenes. In this way, in addition to using characters that students like, we can build starting situations and contexts closer to our needs.

Sources / Links

- *The iNCIPIT* web site: theincipit.com



