

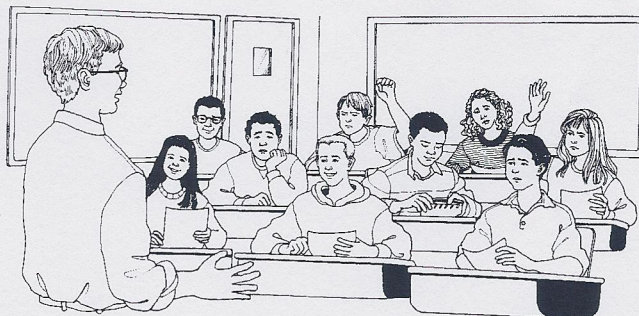
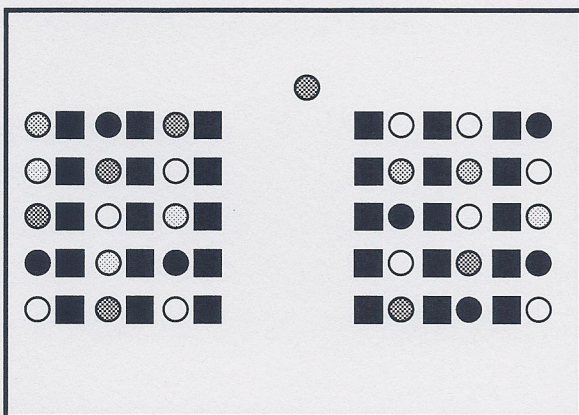


Purchasing Homework Indulgences

Experiential Exercise

Overview

In this **Experiential Exercise** students are allowed to purchase “homework indulgences”—redeemable for academic points—to introduce them to the historical practice of buying indulgences from the Catholic church. After students take a short quiz on a reading about the medieval practice of selling indulgences, the teacher informs them of a new school fundraising policy in which students can buy points in lieu of earning them through academic performance. The teacher then collects money or an I.O.U. from the students who choose to buy points—points that can be applied to the just-completed quiz or to future assignments. After students react to the new policy, the teacher debriefs the experience, making comparisons between buying academic points and paying for forgiveness and salvation.



Procedures at a Glance

On the day before the activity, pass out **Student Handout 3.1A** to each student to read as homework. At the beginning of class, pass out **Student Handout 3.1B** as a pop quiz on the reading. Grade the quizzes immediately so that students know their score. Read the mock memorandum explaining the new “Purchase Points” fundraising policy. Elicit questions and concerns from students, and then sell “Purchase Points” to students who choose to buy them. Afterward, ask students if they see any connection between the reading they did for homework and the new policy. Reveal that the policy was fabricated. Hold a class discussion to make connections between this activity and the practice of selling indulgences.

Procedures in Detail

1. This activity is designed to introduce students to the medieval practice of selling indulgences for forgiveness of sins and salvation. Once students have experienced one aspect of the corruption of the Catholic Church, they will be better able to understand the impetus for the Protestant Reformation and Counter Reformation.
2. On the day before you begin this activity, pass out **Student Handout 3.1A: Corruption in the Medieval Church** to each student. Tell them that their homework assignment is to read the handout carefully in preparation for class the next day. (**Option:** Instead of having students read **Student Handout 3.1A**, you may want to have them read the section of their textbook that explains corruption within the church before the Protestant Reformation.)
3. At the beginning of the class, tell students that you are giving a pop quiz on the reading. Pass out **Student Handout 3.1B: Quiz on Corruption in the Medieval Church**. Allow students adequate time to complete the quiz. When all students have finished, have them grade each other's quizzes. Use **Teacher's Guide 3.1B** to reveal the answers, and have students mark incorrect answers. Allow students to find out how many points they earned on the quiz, and then collect the quizzes.
4. Once students know how they scored on the quiz, tell them you must read to them a memorandum from the principal. Read the following aloud to the class:

Funding for public education in our school district has been drastically reduced recently. As a result, monies that would ordinarily be granted to [your school's name] will not be forthcoming. Given our need to maintain school facilities, purchase instructional supplies, and fund school programs, the school administration has been considering alternative funding solutions.

In an effort to meet funding needs, a new schoolwide fundraising policy has been enacted, effective immediately. Students this week will be able to purchase academic points for 10 cents per point. These points, known as "Purchase Points," can be used to improve your grades on past or future assignments in this class. Certificates for "Purchase Points" can be bought from individual teachers. We believe this policy will both help us solve our funding shortage and enable students to achieve academic success.

(**Note:** You may want to print this "memorandum" on a different piece of paper or on school letterhead and include the appropriate school name. Students may want to verify the memorandum by examining it. Also, you may want to inform your school administrators about the activity in advance so they understand what you are doing.)

5. After you have finished reading the memorandum, ask students if they have any questions or concerns. Expect many students to be concerned, confused, or angry about the policy.

Answer questions and listen to students' feelings. Adopt a neutral stance on the issue—acknowledge their feelings and concerns, but make it clear that you must carry out the policy. Some students may suggest protesting the policy, but firmly tell them that those actions must be taken outside of class. (**Note:** Some students may realize that this policy parallels the indulgence practices of the Church. Discreetly ask them to hold their comments for the debriefing portion of the activity.)

6. Tell students that they may buy “Purchase Points” either by paying cash or by writing an I.O.U. Have those students who wish to buy “Purchase Points”—which they can apply either to the quiz they just took or to future assignments—raise their hands. Collect money or I.O.U.'s from students, and fill in the blanks on **Student Handout 3.1C: Certificate of Purchase Points** for each transaction.

Connecting the Experience with History

1. Once all the “Purchase Points” have been bought, ask students if they see any connections between the reading they did for homework and the new policy. (**Option:** You may want to project Slide 3.2A, the first slide in the following activity, which depicts the selling of indulgences, and begin to teach the concept until students see the connection.) Some students may recognize that the school, like the Church, raised funds by asking students to purchase something (points) that they ordinarily would have to earn. Once students understand this parallel, reveal to them that the policy was fabricated, and return to students the money you collected. Hold a class discussion to make a comparison between this activity and the practice of selling indulgences. Ask these questions:
 - **How did you feel when the memorandum was read?**
 - **What did you like about the policy? What did you dislike?**
 - **Do you think this policy is justifiable? Why or why not?**
 - **How did you feel when I supported the policy?**
 - **How did you decide whether or not to purchase points?**
 - **How did you feel about the students who purchased points? How did you feel about those who didn't?**
 - **In what ways did this activity parallel the Church's sale of indulgences? How was it different?**
2. As the discussion unfolds, make sure these connections are made:
 - The school (the Church) attempted to increase its financial holdings by selling “Purchase Points” (indulgences) to students (Catholics).
 - Students (Catholics) who may not have studied (who sinned) could still achieve high grades (forgiveness for sins or future salvation).
 - Those students (Catholics) who honored the academic process (Church doctrine) may have felt the policy (indulgences) unfair and disillusioning (corrupt or invalid).



Idea for Class Notes: On the right side of their notebooks, have students create a T-chart that compares the activity they experienced with the Catholic Church's practice of selling indulgences in the Middle Ages. A completed chart might look like this:

| Classroom Experience | Historical Reality |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher sold "Purchase Points" to raise money for school supplies and programs some students bought "Purchase Points" to raise their quiz scores those who purchased points could earn high grades without studying some students felt that selling grades was unfair | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church sold indulgences to pay for extravagant lifestyles of some clergy members some Catholics bought indulgences to cancel punishment they believed they would suffer after death some believed that Catholics who purchased indulgences could achieve salvation despite their sinful behavior some Catholics became disillusioned with the Church because of its sale of indulgences |



Idea for Student Response: Ask students to pretend they are educated members of the Catholic Church in the early sixteenth century. On the left side of their notebooks, have them write a letter to Pope Julius II that expresses their concerns about the selling of indulgences and warns the Pope about what they think might happen to the Church if the practice is not stopped.

Corruption in the Medieval Church

By the end of the Middle Ages, corruption (actions that are wrong or dishonest) in the Catholic Church was a serious problem. Clergy members were supposed to be well-educated, but many parish priests were illiterate and hardly knew how to perform ordinary religious services. Many priests and nuns, despite taking vows of chastity (no sexual relations), engaged in sexual relationships. Several popes, including Innocent VIII and Alexander VI, fathered and raised children. Numerous bishops and abbots used their positions to lead lives of luxury and leisure, living more like princes than humble servants of God. Even the cardinals (high-level church officials) of Rome lived in magnificent palaces and sported jewel-encrusted gold robes.

The Church developed several corrupt practices to pay for these extravagant lifestyles. Christian tradition taught that pilgrimages to sites of relics (objects used by important religious figures) and holy places were acceptable ways of repenting (making up) for one's sins. During the late Middle Ages, some clergy took advantage of this tradition and charged people who wanted to see holy relics. For instance, Frederick I, a prince in northern Germany, kept a collection of over 17,000 relics that allegedly included a piece of Moses' burning bush, 33 fragments of Jesus' cross, and some straw from Jesus' manger. The money collected from pilgrimages to these relics paid for the building of a cathedral, a castle, and a university in Frederick's kingdom. Simony, the practice of selling church positions to the highest bidder regardless of the buyer's religious background or training, was another practice that earned money for the Church.

The most profitable and controversial of the corrupt practices used to raise money for the Church was the selling of indulgences. At first, an indulgence consisted of a certificate issued by the pope to a person whose sins had been forgiven. The certificate was designed to cancel some or all of the punishment a person would suffer after death for his or her sins. In time, however, a person seeking indulgences could buy what amounted to a form letter from any number of Church officials. Other corrupt churchmen introduced the idea that indulgences could be purchased for family members who had already died and whose salvation (deliverance from the penalties of sin) might be in doubt. Though it was never officially stated by the Church, many members of the clergy taught that salvation was attainable simply through the purchase of enough indulgences.

Quiz on Corruption in the Medieval Church

Name _____

True/False (T = True, F = False)

- _____ 1. In the late Middle Ages, many parish priests could not read and write.
- _____ 2. Some members of the clergy charged people to see holy relics.
- _____ 3. Indulgences were designed to cancel or reduce the punishment a person would receive after death for his or her sins.
- _____ 4. All certificates of indulgences were signed by the pope.
- _____ 5. The Catholic Church officially stated that a person could obtain salvation through the purchase of enough indulgences.
- _____ 6. Most parish priests used their positions to lead lives of luxury.

Fill in the Blank

- 7. Many clergy members engaged in sexual relations despite taking vows of _____.
- 8. _____ and _____ were two popes who fathered and raised children.
- 9. _____ was a German prince who kept over 17,000 religious relics in his kingdom.
- 10. _____ was the practice of selling church positions to the highest bidder.

Quiz on Corruption in the Medieval Church

Name _____

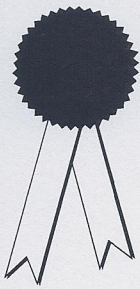
True/False (T = True, F = False)

- T 1. In the late Middle Ages, many parish priests could not read and write.
- T 2. Some members of the clergy charged people to see holy relics.
- T 3. Indulgences were designed to cancel or reduce the punishment a person would receive after death for his or her sins.
- F 4. All certificates of indulgences were signed by the pope.
- F 5. The Catholic Church officially stated that a person could obtain salvation through the purchase of enough indulgences.
- F 6. Most parish priests used their positions to lead lives of luxury.

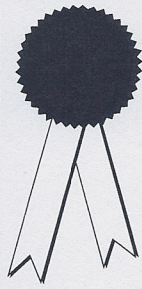
Fill in the Blank

7. Many clergy engaged in sexual relations despite taking vows of chastity .
8. Innocent VIII and Alexander VI were two popes who fathered illegitimate children.
9. Frederick I was a German prince who kept over 17,000 religious relics in his kingdom.
10. Simony was the practice of selling church positions to the highest bidder.

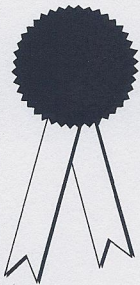
Certificates of Purchase Points

*Certificate of Purchase Points*

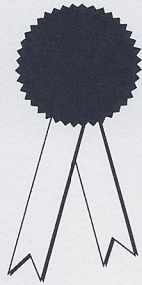
This certifies that _____
has paid \$ _____ in return for
_____ purchase points to be
applied to the holder's grade.

*Certificate of Purchase Points*

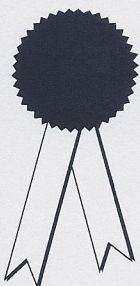
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*Certificate of Purchase Points*

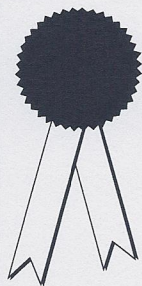
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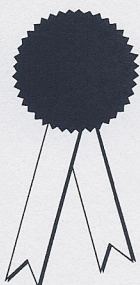
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*Certificate of Purchase Points*

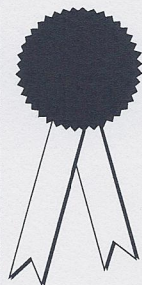
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