

Lesson 2 — The Manipulation Gauntlet

Critical thinking · teens–adult, co-ops & clubs · 30 minutes · one screen, the free game, this page

At a Glance

- Game: The Manipulation Gauntlet (free, no login, plays in the browser) — read.globalsovereignuniversity.org/manipulation-gauntlet.html. Also on the Homeschool hub: globalsovereignuniversity.org/homeschool.
- Ages & time: Critical thinking · teens–adult, co-ops & clubs · 30 minutes · one screen, the free game, this page
- Prep (2 min): read the Teaching Creed once, open the game, keep this page beside you. That's the whole setup.

Why this lesson

Every learner in the room will be targeted by professional persuasion today — engineered headlines, miracle products, forwarded outrage. This lesson doesn't lecture about manipulation; it runs the room straight into ambushes and celebrates every catch. The Gauntlet supplies the tricks; you keep the spirit right: getting fooled in here is the win, because the trick that catches you in here can never catch you out there.

What the learner will be able to do

- Name the four levers — urgency, social proof, anecdote, flattery — and own the one that works on them.
- Ask 'what does this WANT from me?' before reacting to any headline.
- Run a lateral-reading check before sharing anything.
- Explain why the Gauntlet takes no political side — and why that's the point.

The 30-Minute Climb

How to read this: the gold box in each step is your lesson, word for word — run it exactly. The notes beneath are optional support. "The room/the group" = your family; "host" = you.

1 · The Hook (3 min)

Show any real viral headline from this week (you pick one, any topic). Ask only: "What does this headline WANT from you?" Do not answer it yet.

Say it like this: pick the headline yourself, any topic, and resist answering your own question. Silence after 'what does it WANT from you?' is the lesson loading.

Watch for / if it stalls: if the room answers with the headline's TOPIC, redraw the question: not what it says — what it wants. Clicks, fear, sharing, money.

2 · Play Together (12 min)

Run the Viral Headline and the Miracle Bottle ambushes. Votes before clicks; when the room gets MANIPULATED, celebrate it loudly — "the trick that catches you in here can never catch you out there." Play together: the group votes before anyone clicks, and every explanation is read aloud — the explanation is the lesson.

Two rituals make it work: (1) everyone votes before anyone clicks, so no one just follows the screen; (2) the explanation is read aloud — the reason, not the right answer, is where the learning is.

Watch for / if it stalls: when someone gets manipulated, celebrate it LOUDLY by name — 'the urgency lever got Marcus!' Shame kills this lesson; sport saves it.

3 • The Talk (8 min)

1. Which persuasion lever works best on YOU — urgency, social proof, anecdote, flattery? (Everyone owns one out loud; the host goes first.) 2. Why does the Gauntlet refuse to take political sides — and what would be lost if it did? 3. What would change your mind about something you believe strongly? (Silence is an acceptable, instructive answer.)

You're not fishing for a right answer — you're listening for depth:

- Q1 — the host confesses first, and means it. A room where the teacher owns a lever is a room where everyone will.
- Q2 — if the Gauntlet picked sides, half the room would armor up and learn nothing. Neutrality isn't cowardice here; it's the only door everyone walks through.
- Q3 — 'what would change your mind?' is the single most protective question a human can carry. If someone answers 'nothing,' gently name what that means.

4 • Solo Climb (5 min)

The Forwarded Message ambush, alone.

Why solo: the Forwarded Message ambush is solo because forwarding happens solo — thumb on screen, nobody watching. The reflex must survive without an audience.

5 • The Takeaway (2 min)

"Name the trick and it loses its grip." • Homework: Before sharing anything online this week, run one lateral-reading search first; report back what survived.

The badge moment: finishing all five steps earns the Bronze ring of this lesson's badge, The Sentinel. Mark it on the Passport now; the homework is how Silver and Gold are earned during the week.

The Teaching Creed

You are not the expert; the game is. Your job is to vote last, read aloud well, and ask "why?" one more time than feels natural. Celebrate wrong answers loudly — in here, wrong is where the lesson lives.

GENO — the GSU tutor you can actually TALK to, free, 24/7, understands 70+ languages (32 fully optimized) — can explain any answer a second way.

Adapt It & Measure It

Differentiation

- Younger / preteen: use playground-grade examples — 'everyone has one,' 'last chance' — the levers are identical, only the stakes shrink.

- One child: parent plays the manipulator on purpose: pitch them something using one lever and see if they can name it mid-pitch.
- Large co-op: teams take turns building a one-sentence pitch using an assigned lever; the other team must name the lever to score.
- Reluctant teen: start from their feed, not yours. 'Show me the last thing you almost shared' — then run the ambush on that.

Evidence of learning (no exam)

Look for three things — Tried (ran one real lateral-reading search before sharing), Noticed (can name their own most-vulnerable lever without prompting), Changed (caught one manipulation attempt in the wild and named the lever out loud). Those three words are the whole rubric, and they map onto the badge tiers below.

Gamify It — The Campus Climb

Every GSU lesson is one badge on a 17-badge Climber's Passport, each earned at four depths — the GSU standard Bronze → Silver → Gold → Platinum. All 17 completes the campus.

LESSON 2 BADGE — The Sentinel · Bronze — The Climb: finished the 30-minute lesson, all five steps. · Silver — The Try: ran the lateral-reading homework on one real item and reported what survived. · Gold — The Proof: caught a manipulation attempt in the wild, named its lever, and brought it back to the group. · Platinum — The Teacher: ran this lesson as host for someone else. The harvest of a teacher is teachers.

"Every person on Earth is born with an American spirit: an untamed yearning for a better tomorrow." — Dr. Gene A. Constant

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