



Mental Manipulation

can we think freely in the digital age?

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Dr. Sjors Ligthart



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Chapter 1

Where Tim Has an Unexpected Encounter

It was still hot on that September day. Tim felt sweat beading on his forehead as he hurried down the shopping street, his arms loaded with two big bags. It was a Saturday afternoon, and the street was crowded with people shopping, meeting for coffee, or just lingering in the late summer sun.

Tim didn't have time to linger. He was late. Determined to make his way, he pushed forward as best he could when suddenly – whoops! He tripped over a little dog that had just leapt between his legs with enthusiasm. Down went Tim, stretched out flat on the ground, the con-

tents of his bags spilled all over the pavement, while the dog, who was called Johnson, sniffed at his pockets in search of a ginger biscuit. Tim knew Johnson well. He belonged to his grandmother's neighbour and Tim often played with the friendly little dog on his way to visiting his grandma. And if Johnson was here, his owner couldn't be far...

“Well now, young man, can't you stay on your feet?” asked a gravelly voice. Tim looked up and found himself face-to-face with Mr. McNamara, whose usually grumpy face was, at that moment, lit by a snarky smile. Mr. Roger McNamara was accompanied by his friend, Mrs. Brill, whom Tim knew well since she was a teacher at his school.



“Are you alright?” Mrs. Brill asked, bending down to help him gather his scattered things and put them back in the bags.

“Yes,” mumbled Tim, eager to get on his way.

“What are you up to with all these sheets of paper and paint tubes?” asked Mr. McNamara, casting a suspicious glance at the bags’ contents.

“I hope it’s not more mischief!”

“Not at all,” Tim answered quickly. “It’s to help my friend Joan prepare her campaign.”

Look up highlighted words in the glossary at the end!



“Her campaign for what?” asked Mr. McNamara, intrigued.

“For school...” murmured Tim, impatient to leave.

“For the class representative elections, I suppose?” asked Mrs. Brill.

“What nonsense is this?” exclaimed Mr. McNamara, not giving Tim time to reply. “Yet another idea to distract pupils instead of letting them focus on their work,” he added disdainfully.

“Come now, Roger, it’s important!” scolded Mrs. Brill. “The representative is chosen by the other pupils. They help classmates if they have problems at school and can also propose ideas to improve school life.”

“In my day,” replied Mr. McNamara, “pupils were content to learn and obey, instead of wasting their time debating...”

Mrs. Brill rolled her eyes. “In your day, democracy wasn’t doing much better,” she sighed.



“I really have to go...” said Tim, sensing the old man could rant on about the subject for hours. “Alma and Joan are waiting for me,” he added. He hurried off, leaving Mr. McNamara and Mrs. Brill to continue their animated debate. Tail wagging, Johnson watched him go, delighted by this unexpected encounter.



“You took your time!” exclaimed Alma when her brother finally arrived. Noticing his scraped knees, she added, slightly worried, “Are you okay?”

“Don’t worry,” Tim replied evasively.

“This is great, all the stuff you brought!” exclaimed Joan, who had already begun inspecting the bags Tim carried.



“Will you help me with this poster?”

Quickly forgetting his mishap, Tim joined in cheerfully. The three children worked busily and happily all afternoon, humming along to the music playing from Joan’s phone.

“Your playlist is amazing!” Alma remarked after a while. “The songs are chosen so well, they flow so nicely into each other!”

“That’s easy, with Melotomatic,” Joan answered.

“Melo-what?” asked Tim.

Looking up at her friends, Joan burst out laughing at their puzzled faces.

“Melotomatic! You don’t know it? It’s a great app that uses **AI** to pick the right music at the right time. It adapts to the weather, the day of the week, your schedule, even where you are and who’s connected around you, thanks to **geolocation!**”



“And it works?” asked Alma cautiously.

“Really well!” Joan said with enthusiasm. “For example, right now Melotomatic knows I’m in my room, it’s sunny, and it’s the weekend...”

“I love it!” Alma said eagerly, pulling out her phone to download the app too.

Tim stayed silent. He wasn’t so sure he liked the idea. Did he really need an app to decide for him what music he should listen to?



chapter 2

Where Joan Begins Her Campaign

The following Tuesday was the day for submitting your name for the class election. Alma accompanied Joan to the teachers' lounge, where Joan, a little nervous, wrote her name in her best handwriting on the list of candidates prepared by Mrs. Brill.

"It's official!" exclaimed Alma with a smile, giving her friend a big pat on the back.

As they were about to return to the playground, the two friends came face-to-face with Manuel, a boy from their class. He almost bumped into them, absorbed in the music coming from the earbuds stuck in his ears.

"Sorry!" he mumbled, pulling one out with an apologetic look.

"What are you listening to?" asked Joan.

"A Norwegian band I didn't know," answered Manuel. "They're called Targilth. Melotomatic made me discover them this morning. Here, listen!" he added, handing Joan an earbud.



Joan placed it in her ear and began to nod her head to the rhythm of the song.

"By the way, Manuel," said Alma suddenly, in a suspicious tone. "What are you doing in the teachers' lounge? If you came to sign up as a candidate for the election, don't bother. Obviously, Joan is the one who'll be chosen for our class," she added disdainfully.

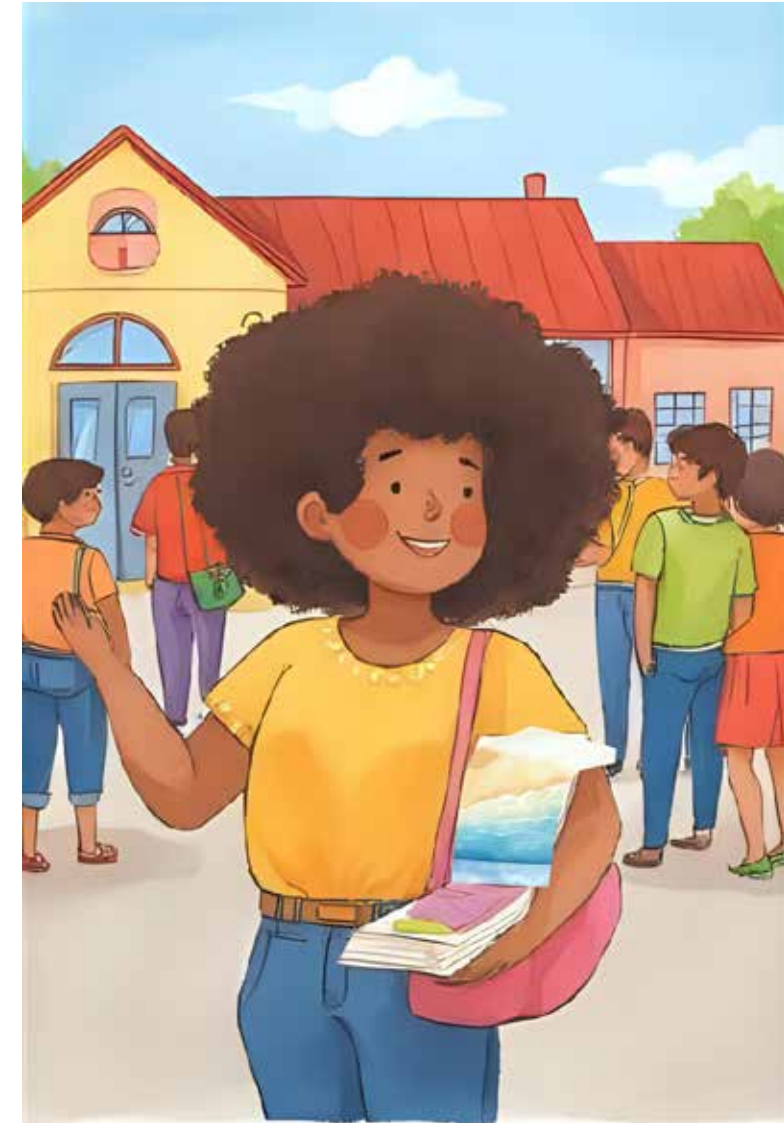
"Stop it, Alma!" whispered Joan, handing Manuel back his earbud and tugging her friend by the sleeve. "Come on, let's go."

“It’ll take more than that to discourage me!” Manuel called after them as they were already walking away. “May the best candidate win... and I haven’t had my last word yet,” he added with a sly smile.

The next day, Mrs. Brill posted the list of official candidates for class representative in the school hallway. In Alma’s class, only two students were running: Joan and Manuel. The campaign would last one week. One week to convince classmates to choose one candidate or the other. There was no time to waste.

Alma and Tim hurried to help Joan put up the posters they had prepared the previous weekend. Large, bright and colourful, they looked really impressive. “Vote for Joan: let’s go to the beach!” read one. “Joan takes you to the sea!” announced another.

“With all this, you’re sure to win!” Alma said enthusiastically as she helped Joan hand out flyers printed with a beach landscape. Noticing her friend frowning, she added: “What’s wrong?”



“It’s Manuel,” explained Joan. “He’s proposing to use the school fund to organize a disco night.”

“So what?” asked Alma. “Your idea to use the fund for a class trip to the beach is a million times better!” she added, shrugging.

“Maybe... except Manuel’s mother just gave everyone in the school a free one-year subscription to Melotomatic Premium. She’s a computer engineer and part of the team that developed the app. Now everyone will want to vote for Manuel,” Joan lamented.

“That’s cheating!” Alma exclaimed indignantly.

“I think so too,” sighed her friend. “Actually, I spoke to the principal about it, but he said it was very tricky to refuse such a generous gift from a parent, and that it didn’t have a direct link with the election. He said he wanted to encourage access to culture, and that Melotomatic helped children discover new things.”

“Let’s not panic,” Alma said calmly. “As long as the election hasn’t happened, nothing is lost!”

chapter 3

Where Granny Ariette Gives a Warning

Joan was right to be worried. It didn’t take long for Melotomatic to become very popular among the pupils. All the kids old enough to have a smartphone, earbuds glued to their ears, enjoyed the music the app suggested to them all day long.

An exam in the morning? Melotomatic, with access to the online schedule, played upbeat music to give confidence. A birthday? Melotomatic, knowing its users’ birth dates, picked the best tunes to celebrate all day. A fight with a friend? Melotomatic, analysing text messages, played comforting songs to quickly make those troubles fade away.

The next afternoon, Alma and Tim went to visit their grandmother after school, as usual. Seeing her grandson's frowning face, Granny Arlette was surprised.

"Well then, Tim? What's wrong today?" she asked with a kind smile as she brought out two big glasses of apple juice.

"Since Alma installed that stupid music app on her phone," Tim explained, "she doesn't even talk to me on the way from school to your house."

"It's not my fault if you don't have anything interesting to say!" Alma defended herself. "And anyway, Melotomatic makes me discover amazing songs," she added.



When the children told her about Melotomatic, Granny Arlette was immediately intrigued.

"An app that suggests all sorts of new songs, you say? That's fantastic!" exclaimed their grandmother. Beneath her old-fashioned appearance, she was actually a big fan of new technologies.

"But how does your Melo-maniac-thingy decide what music to play?" she asked suspiciously.

"Thanks to the information it has about you," Alma explained. "For example, where you are, your messages, your schedule..."

"Goodness! That's a lot!" whistled Granny Arlette, shaking her head thoughtfully.

"Don't worry, you don't even notice, it's all built in," Alma tried to reassure her.

"That's even worse," her grandmother replied with a grimace. "It's like having a spy in your pocket watching you all day long!"

"You're exaggerating, Granny..." retorted Alma, starting to feel uncomfortable at her grandmother's reaction.

Tim, delighted to finally have an ally against Melotomatic, seized the chance to add:

“And what’s more, once a song is chosen by the app, you can’t even change it, you have to listen until Melotomatic decides to move to the next one.”

“Another step backwards for autonomy...” muttered Granny Arlette. Noticing her grandchildren’s puzzled looks, she explained: “Autonomy is the ability to decide what you do or don’t do; what music you listen to, or don’t listen to.”

“I can always choose to turn it off,” Alma defended herself. “I’m the one who decides, in the end.”

✱ “Up to a point,” insisted her grandmother carefully. “New technologies are very addictive. You think you freely decide when to use them, but in reality, they push you to come back again and again... until you feel you can’t do without them anymore.”

“I’m not addicted”, replied Alma stubbornly. “I’ll prove it to you both”, she added noting the doubt on their faces. “I won’t use Melotomatic for an entire week!” With these words, she took out her phone and theatrically turned off the app.



chapter 4

Where Alma Loses her Patience

There was only one day left before the class election, and things weren't looking good for Joan. Despite her friends' efforts to convince other students to vote for her, Joan felt that something was seriously wrong. In just a week, Manuel had become extraordinarily popular. He was now constantly surrounded by a group of eager kids who followed him around the playground and seemed to find everything he said fascinating and hilarious.

"Just look at them!" fumed Alma, casting an annoyed glance at the little group. "They look like goldfish staring at some exotic seaweed, with their

mouths hanging open and their eyes wide!"

"What's most annoying is that Manuel hasn't made a single serious proposal for the election," grumbled Tim. "He doesn't even seem to care what he'd do if he were elected!"

"Excuse me," his sister interrupted, "but what's really annoying is hearing that bunch of clowns laugh like fools at every silly joke Manuel makes."

Realizing that Joan was staying silent, Alma and Tim turned toward their friend.

"It's not so bad, you know," Tim tried to reassure her, seeing her gloomy expression. "After all, if you're not elected, you'll have more time to play with us!"

"To be honest," replied Joan in a discouraged



tone, “I’m not in the mood for playing. I think I’ll go home. Anyway, no one talks to me anymore except you two,” she added with a sad smile.

Alma and Tim watched her walk away. They had also noticed that the other children had been avoiding Joan for the past few days. Whenever she came near, they put on annoyed or angry faces and quickly found excuses to move away.

“This whole election business is starting to get on my nerves,” Alma muttered through clenched teeth. Lips tight, she marched over to the group around Manuel, who were laughing loudly at something he had just said. “Hey! You bunch of turkeys! Would you mind going to cackle somewhere else?”

“Well, hello Alma!” Manuel replied with fake nonchalance. “Tell me, is it just me, or is Joan a sore loser?”

“Loser?” Alma choked. “The election is tomorrow!”

“Yes, but if you ask me, she just can’t stand that someone else is more

popular than she is,” Manuel said mockingly.

“You little...” Alma began, clenching her fists.

Sensing his sister was about to get herself into trouble, Tim grabbed her by the sleeve. “Come on, let’s go home.”

When they arrived, the children were greeted by their mother, who had just returned from a work trip. They threw their arms around her, delighted to see her again. After kissing them, she told them she had to go out right away to run an errand. The bookstore had just called to say that the book she had ordered had finally arrived. It was a gift for their father, and she wanted to pick it up as soon as possible. Tim immediately offered to go in her place. After all the election campaign drama, he really needed to clear his head.



chapter 5

Where Tim Eats a Huge Ice Cream Without Even Being Hungry

The air was heavy, charged with electricity. The storm would break soon, Tim thought as he walked down the street, his hands stuffed in his pockets. Suddenly, he felt something strange under his fingers. He realized that, in his rush to leave, he had accidentally put on Alma's raincoat. And in its pocket were her phone and headphones.

After a few seconds of hesitation, Tim put the headphones on his ears and opened Melotomatic. A gentle melody, like raindrops rippling on a



pond, instantly plunged him into a calm, meditative state. Warm gusts of air wrapped around him like a moving blanket, the smell of the first drops on the still-hot asphalt rose to his head, a dark light filtered through the clouds, and the melody sang to him of summer's end. For a moment, Tim felt completely and perfectly at peace.

Without realizing it, he had reached the first shops. The music shifted into something more up-

beat, more lively. Now that he thought about it, he was really hungry. And right there, in front of him, was the ice cream shop. Irresistible. Tim chose a huge chocolate ice cream with extra whipped cream, and went on his way.

Suddenly, the music changed again. It became harsh, pressing. Tim felt his heart tighten. He noticed that it was raining. He didn't feel like eating his ice cream anymore. In fact, he didn't even like whipped cream... why had he ordered that? He was interrupted in his gloomy thoughts by a friendly voice.



“Tim? What’s the matter?” Joan was looking at him with slight concern.

“Nothing... I don’t know...” Tim stammered, glad to see his friend but still overwhelmed by that strange uneasiness. He took Alma’s headphones off and shoved them into his pocket.

“Are you sure?” Joan insisted. “You really look strange!”

“It’s just...” Tim broke off, struck by a sudden idea. “Joan, wait for me here, I want to check something.” Without waiting for an answer, he ran off, leaving Joan astonished.

A minute later, she saw him coming back. He had put Alma’s headphones on again and was walking slowly. When he got within a few meters of his friend, Tim had the confirmation he’d guessed right.

“The music!” he exclaimed as he reached Joan in a few strides. “The music changes when you’re near!” he continued, catching his breath. He handed Joan the headphones. A melancholy melody poured out. A tune so sad that Joan’s throat tightened and tears welled up in her eyes.

“I don’t understand...” she whispered.

“Melotomatic plays different music when someone gets close to you,” Tim explained. “I think it’s using your phone geolocation: when another phone with Melotomatic on it comes close to your phone, it start playing sad or stressful music automatically! Maybe that’s why the other kids in your class have been acting so strangely these past few days...”



Joan was stunned. Now that she thought about it, it explained a lot. Like the fact that only the older kids had started avoiding her; the ones who had access to the music app. Her eyes met Tim’s. The same question had just crossed their minds: did Manuel have something to do with this? After all, his mother was part of the Melotomatic development team. Maybe he had managed to access the code and change it...

“Do you want some chocolate ice cream?” Tim suddenly asked. “I’ve got way too much. I don’t know what got into me,” he added, eyes wide in

surprise at himself.

“No thanks, I just had a huge ice cream myself!” laughed Joan. “I wasn’t really hungry, but when I passed the ice cream shop, it was impossible to resist, it looked too tempting.”

“Well, well...” Tim muttered. “Were you by any chance listening to Melotomatic?”



chapter 6

Where Joan Takes Her Revenge

The day of the election had arrived. As he walked through the school gate that morning, Manuel came across Alma and gave her a timid smile, to which she answered with an icy stare. Still, she stepped closer to him, her jaw tight.



“Don’t make that face,” said Manuel. “We’re not going to get angry over a silly election.”

Alma hesitated before replying. “Maybe you’re right,” she admitted with a sigh. “After all, it’s not your fault if Joan is less popular than before.”

Relieved by her reaction, Manuel continued: “She can always run again next year, and...”

He didn’t get the chance to finish his sentence, because Tim suddenly came running out of nowhere and bumped into him. The shock made Manuel drop his schoolbag, spilling some of its contents onto the ground. Alma quickly bent down to help him pick things up, while Tim apologized. Too busy gathering his things, Manuel didn’t notice the conspiratory glance exchanged between brother and sister.

And Manuel was in for more surprises. He soon realized something was wrong. The little group of children that had been following him around all week had scattered within the first minutes of the day. Since then, many of his classmates had been casting him worried, even hostile looks. Meanwhile, Joan seemed to be back on her feet. She was handing out flyers, speaking loudly and with enthusiasm, and looked to be in excellent spirits. As the day went on, Manuel felt more and more alone.

The time for the election came. Mrs. Brill waited until the pupils were seated and quiet before speaking. She explained that each candidate would give a speech, then everyone would vote for the person they thought would make the best class representative. “I ask you to take this very seriously,” she added. “Even at the school level, democracy – voting – is something very important.” Joan was to speak first. She took a deep breath, smiled as she caught Alma’s eye (who gave her a wink), and began.

“My dear friends, I admit these last few days haven’t been easy. I discovered that without your friendship each day, school isn’t such a nice place. It’s an experience I wouldn’t wish on anyone; to feel isolated, rejected by your friends.” She cast a long look at Manuel, who lowered his eyes.



“And then,” Joan went on, “I also understood something else. Sometimes, invisible things can change the way we feel... and even make us think differently. I realized it’s not so hard to manipulate people’s emotions.”



Joan paused again. Seeing Manuel’s face, she locked her gaze on his. This time, the boy held her stare. He had understood. Understood that she had discovered his scheme. That she had guessed he had used Melotomatic to try to influence the election. That he had used geolocation so that every time a child came near her, Melotomatic would play music so sad, so stressful, that they would eventually avoid her. And whenever someone came near him, Melotomatic played bright, bouncy tunes that made kids happy and full of energy. Manuel felt a cold sweat trickle down his back. In a few seconds, everyone would know. Joan was going to expose him. His classmates would never forgive him.



Joan felt her heart beating faster, but she continued in a steady voice: “Is that normal? Is that fair? Does anyone have the right to play with our emotions so that we think differently, or change our minds? After all,

what we feel, what we think, it belongs to us. No one should be able to touch that without telling us.”

“Bravo!” exclaimed a voice in the class.

“Shhh!” whispered Alma, who at that moment felt very proud of her friend.

“Let her continue,” said Mrs. Brill, giving Joan an encouraging nod.



Joan went on: “And yet, invisible influences are everywhere. Apps. Videos. Ads. But also teachers, parents, even our friends. People we listen to, who tell us what they think, and sometimes, without realizing it... it becomes what we think too. But then, what makes the difference? Why would one influence be normal, and another not? I don’t know.



During this campaign, I’ve talked a lot about my ideas, my wishes, my projects. I was wrong. If you elect me, I promise to give you the choice and not to decide in your place what you want or need. Whether it’s going to the seaside or organizing a disco party. If you agree, then vote for me.” She ended with a smile.

A silence followed her speech, then applause; soft at first, then growing louder and louder. Joan returned to her seat, her cheeks a little red.



chapter 7

Where the Cat is Out of the Bag

That afternoon, Manuel went to find Alma and Joan as they were leaving school.

“Congratulations on your victory, Madam Representative...” he said with a timid smile. “...and thank you for not telling on me. I’m really sorry,” he added, looking embarrassed.

“You were punished enough as it was,” replied Joan, giving Alma a wink.

“What do you mean?” asked Manuel, frowning.

“I imagine your day wasn’t very pleasant?”

“True enough...” admitted Manuel. “The others avoided me as if I had the plague...” He stopped short, realizing that now the pupils were treating

him just as they had treated Joan in the past few days.

“But...” he stammered. “How did you manage to turn Melotomatic against me? You don’t have access to the code...”

“I knew it!” exclaimed Tim, making Manuel jump. He hadn’t seen him come closer. “I was sure you had changed the program from the inside so it would work against Joan!”

Manuel confessed everything. The idea had come to him after overhearing a conversation between his mother and the owner of the ice cream shop. To make money, the developers of Melotomatic offered shops to pay to change the music played for passersby as they walked by their store. In other words, Melotomatic played different music when a phone was close to a specific



place. For example, songs with lyrics about food started when people walked by the ice cream shop, making them feel hungry. This was called **nudging**: a gentle way of guiding people to make certain choices – such as what food to buy – without them really noticing, like a tiny whisper in their ears helping them decide what to do. Tim remembered his meeting with Joan the day before. They had both bought a huge ice cream, even though it was raining and they weren’t even hungry!

Alma sighed. Granny Arlette was bound to hear about all this, and she was certainly going to make a big fuss. An app that **manipulated** people into spending their money... she definitely wouldn’t like that!

Manuel went on with his explanation. His mother had taught him coding since he was little. With practice, he had become pretty good. Reprogramming Melotomatic so that Joan’s phone **geolocation** was linked to gloomy music hadn’t been very hard. And, for himself, he had linked his own location to enchanting tunes so that the other kids would feel happy when they would be near him and like him more.

“I have to admit, it was a brilliant idea,” conceded Alma. “Too bad you used it in such a selfish way. You used other kids’ minds as products to get what you wanted: to be elected. It looks like, for a minute, you forgot they were real people with their own feelings and choices”.

“I’m really sorry”, said Manuel blushing. “I guess I did not respect you and the other children in our class.”

After a short silence, he added: “Still, there’s something I don’t get. How did you manage to turn Melotomatic against me?”

Alma pulled out her phone and called Joan. A ringtone came from inside Manuel’s bag, making him stare at it, baffled. The other three burst out laughing. With a mischievous grin, Tim added: “We tricked you... the old-fashioned way!”



the end

to go further...

Did you enjoy Alma and Tim's adventure? Here are some questions to help you think about what happened. Each level gets a bit more challenging, so give them a try!

Understand



1. How did Melotomatic **influence** the children's feelings, and what effect did this have on Joan and Manuel?
2. Tim and Granny Arlette worried about Melotomatic for different reasons. What were they? Do you think they were right to worry?
3. How did the ice cream shop owner use Melotomatic? Can you think of real-life examples where shops or companies use **technology**, like ads or apps, in a similar way?



4. Mrs Brill said democracy is very important and asked the children to take it seriously. How is her advice different from the way Melotomatic tried to guide their choices?

Dig Deeper


1. Do you think the children realized they were being influenced by the app? Is it harder to notice when technology is shaping your feelings compared to when a person talks to you?
2. Granny Arlette spoke about "**autonomy**". Why is being able to make your own choices important, and do you think humans have a right to be protected against **mental manipulation**?
3. Do you think it is fair for an app or a company to use private information (like your location or schedule) to try to influence your choices? Why or why not?



4. At the end, Manuel apologizes for using the other children's minds as 'products'. In using Melotomatic to influence them, do you think he threatened their human dignity?



Explore Big Ideas

1. Everyone is influenced by others such as parents, teachers, and friends. What makes technological influence different from human influence?
2. Technology can feel addictive,  making it hard to stop. Now that we spend so much time with technology, are we still free in our own thoughts, or do you think our choices are being shaped without us noticing?
3. In the story, music was used to change feelings. Can you imagine other ways technology might try to guide or control people's emotions in the future? What should we do about it?
4. If technology can quietly change our emotions, how can people

protect their own minds and decisions? Do you think this responsibility should fall on individuals, or should the government play a role in protecting people?



Legal Glossary

Addiction / Addictive

When a person keeps doing something again and again, even if it's not good for them, and feels it is very hard to stop. When something is addictive it means it can easily cause this feeling.

AI (Artificial Intelligence)

A type of computer program designed to “think,” “learn,” or make decisions in ways that seem similar to how people do.

Autonomy

The capacity to make your own choices and decisions about your life, without others deciding for you.

Campaign

A planned set of activities or messages meant to convince or encourage people to think or do something, often as part of an election or a big project.

Dignity

The worth, respect, and kindness every person should receive simply because they are human. It's the idea that everyone should be treated with care and fairness.

Geolocation

A way of finding the exact place where a phone, computer, or other device is, usually by using satellites or networks.

Influence

The power to affect how someone thinks, feels, or acts, sometimes without them even noticing.

Manipulate

To guide and influence someone or something, often in a hidden way, to get the result you want. When people are manipulated, they may not notice it right away, because it is happening quietly, not openly.

Mental

Having to do with the mind: the thoughts, feelings, memories, and ideas happening inside a person.

Nudge, nudging

A small push or hint that tries to influence what someone chooses, without forcing them.

Technology

Tools, machines, or systems invented by humans that change the way tasks are done, often by using knowledge and science.



The researcher behind the story

Dr. Sjors Ligthart

Sjors is an associate professor working on criminal law and human rights at Tilburg University and Utrecht University. A big part of his work is about how new technologies can affect our minds: our thoughts, feelings,

and fantasies. This story connects to his research by helping us think about what it means to keep our inner world safe from new technologies, and why that protection is important.



The Author of the story

Dr. Alice Dejean de la Bâtie

Alice is an assistant professor of Criminal Law at Tilburg University. With the advice and explanations from Sjors, Alice wrote this story as part of a project aimed at making academic research more accessible to children. She believes that her colleagues' work is essential and fascinating for understanding our society and building a fairer world. For her, it's important to share this knowledge with children because they are the leaders of tomorrow. Alice is convinced that children can grasp complex ideas, as long as they are explained in simple and clear language. Do you think she is right?





What is the Law?

This story is part of the series *Alma and Tim Learn about the Law*, inspired by the work of researchers at Tilburg University. Designed especially for young readers, it opens a window onto the fascinating world of law, justice, and human rights.

But what are law and justice exactly? Law is made up of rules that help us live together peacefully. These rules tell us what we're allowed to do and what we should avoid so that everyone feels safe and respected. Justice, in turn, makes sure that these rules are followed fairly. It helps resolve conflicts and protects those who need it, ensuring everyone is treated with respect. Through the adventures of Alma and Tim, you'll discover how these ideas of law and justice play an important role in our daily lives.

Can technology secretly influence your thoughts? When Alma and Tim help their friend Joan with the class representative election, everything seems simple...until a popular music app takes over the school. Students suddenly start acting strangely, friendships shift and Joan becomes unexpectedly unpopular. As Tim realises how the app is changing his feelings, things begin to make sense, and

Alma steps in. But will she arrive in time to save the election?

This story is part of the series 'Alma and Tim Learn about the Law', inspired by academic research about justice, criminal law, and human rights. It includes a legal glossary and questions to help young readers explore the social issues, legal principles, and big ideas behind the story.

