

Nobody Expects the Facebook Inquisition

A game that questions our social media behaviours by Daniel Tordera

Foreword

Our social media presence has become an essential point in our lives. We upload the pictures of our last vacations, we share how much we have run yesterday, we post witty or deep comments (mostly copy-pasted from other people), etc. We share all our unique moments (because they are always *unique*) and accomplishments on our Facebook walls in order to reach all our friends and acquaintances.

It is not uncommon to see people in cafés, pubs and restaurants paying more attention to their social lives than to their *real lives*, the people that are around them. It seems nowadays one of the most important metrics of our success is based on the number of friends we have on Facebook or the number of followers we have on Twitter.

But why we do all this? Are we seeking attention? Do we want fame (and emulate those stars that share their private lives with millions of followers)? Do we want other people to envy our lives? Do we REALLY base our own success on the number of people that like and comment our pointless last picture of a #meal?

Let's think about it. How many of those people could be considered our real friends? How many will do what a friend is supposed to do when in times of joy and trouble? Friendship seems a concept that has been diluted in all this social media frenzy of our modern lives.

But worry not. The Inquisition is here to fix that.

The Game

Nobody Expects the Facebook Inquisition (NEFI) is an asymmetrical 2- to infinite-player game (ideally 4 to 6 players) where one player will play as **the Accused** and the rest of the players will act as **the Inquisitors**.

The Inquisitors charge the Accused of cultivating in excess one of the seven deadly sins: **Pride**. An anonymous witness has informed the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition that the Accused has too many friends on Facebook and that amongst these friends many may be on his friend list not because of real friendship but because of vanity. In order to purge this devilish incarnation from the poor lost soul the Inquisitors will take the Accused into court. If deemed guilty the Accused will have to delete this supposed friend from Facebook, cleansing his soul on the process.

The game intends to make the players consider the importance of social media in their lives, particularly regarding to the number of contacts and friends they have in Facebook.

Elements

In order to play NEFI you need:

- **A phone** with an alarm or any other time-tracker device.
- **A computer/tablet/phone** with internet access.
- **A Facebook account** for each player.
- **A word processing software** or a pen/pencil and a notebook.
- **Three verdict cards** for each Inquisitor: guilty, innocent, undecided.

Setting Up the Game

One player is chosen as the Accused. This is done by a show of hands vote. In case of a draw it is selected randomly. The rest of the players play as the Inquisitors. One of them acts as the General Inquisitor. He is chosen again by show of hands vote (excluding the Accused) or randomly.

The players sit around the table with the Inquisitors at one side and the Accused in front of them. Each of the Inquisitors has three verdict cards. These cards can be made by writing the three words (guilty, innocent, undecided) on three pieces of paper. Alternatively, they can use their mobile phones to write their verdict there.

Gameplay

The Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, commonly known as the Facebook Inquisition, divides its trials in five acts. Nowadays there are too many sinners out there so the Facebook Inquisition is overwhelmed with work and trials have to be resolved hastily. Time is tracked with **an alarm** for this purpose, using a phone or any other time-tracking device.

Act I: The Sin

The Inquisitors open the Facebook profile page of the Accused. Then, they spend 2 minutes in order to **choose one of the Facebook friends of the Accused**. This *friend* will be **the Sin**. The Inquisitors can talk amongst themselves in order to make their decision. They can choose any person as long as it's on the friend list of the accused. Below there are some suggestions as how to look for them:

- *Friend list*: The simplest way is to go to the friend list of the Accused. If the Accused has his friend list private, he has to share it either by changing its privacy or by logging into his own account.
Note: In order to find a suitable Sin it is recommended to refrain from the first friends that appear, selecting people that are lower in the list.
- *Photos*: The Inquisitors may choose a friend that is tagged or has commented in one of the Accused photos.
- *Timeline*: The Inquisitors may choose a friend that has commented or liked any status of the Accused.

Once the time is over the Inquisitors face the Accused and the General Inquisitor reads out loud the charges:

*“The Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Facebook Inquisition has charged **Accused’s name** with the deadly sin of Pride. We have found that **Sin’s name** may be on your friend list for pure vanity purposes. For this reason, you will have to face this Tribunal. If deemed guilty your sentence will consist of deleting **Sin’s name** from your friend list and you will think twice in the future before adding a person to your Facebook account”.*

Act II: The Interrogation

In the interrogation each of the Inquisitors **asks questions** to the Accused about the chosen Sin in particular. In the *Playing as the Inquisitor* section of these rules suggestions for possible questions can be found but it’s encouraged that the Inquisitors ask their own question.

Each of the Inquisitors has 2 minutes to ask their chosen questions and listen to the Accused answers. They can ask as many questions as they want in this time frame but must wait for the Accused to completely answer a question before asking another one. When the time is consumed they must stop immediately (even if it’s in the middle of an answer from the Accused or a question from the Inquisitor). The General Inquisitor is the last to ask and is granted 30 extra seconds.

The Accused will try to defend himself as good as possible.

Act III: The First Verdict

In Act III, the Inquisitors **deliver their first verdict**.

They have 15 seconds to think their verdict. After this time, they vote putting facedown one of the three verdict cards: guilty, innocent or undecided. Alternatively, they can write their verdict in their phones and place them face down. The Inquisitors cannot talk amongst themselves prior to making this decision.

The decisions are revealed and the General Inquisitor counts the votes and announce their First Verdict (e.g. *“The Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Facebook Inquisition has made his first verdict on the **Accused’s name** case. He is deemed guilty with 2 guilty votes, 1 innocent vote and 1 undecided vote”*).

Act IV: The Defence Sketch

In order to convince the Inquisitors to change their vote the Accused has the opportunity to **sketch a series of reasons** in a bulleted list of up to five items. These reasons can add information to the answers provided in Act II or can add new information that wasn’t asked during The Interrogation (e.g. he could write about a unique moment that bonded the Sin with the Accused showing real friendship). To do this the Accused has one minute. Once the time is consumed, the Accused reads the reasons.

The Inquisitors cannot talk with the Accused or between each other, keeping their opinions for themselves.

Act V: The Final Verdict

In Act V, **the final verdict is made.**

The Inquisitors vote again but this time they cannot use the undecided verdict card. They will vote putting facedown a guilty or innocent verdict card, or by using their phones. The Inquisitors cannot talk amongst themselves prior to making this decision.

The decision is revealed and announced by the General Inquisitor. (e.g. *“The Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Facebook Inquisition has made his final verdict on the **Accused’s name** case. He is unanimously deemed guilty with 4 guilty votes.”*).

Three possible end scenarios appear:

- In case of guilty: The Accused has to delete the Sin from his Facebook friend list.
- In case of innocent: The Accused keeps the Sin on his friend list and he/she will not be considered a Sin anymore. He/she will be considered a true friend from now on.
- In case of a draw: The vote of the Grand Inquisitor counts double and a guilty/innocent verdict is reached.

End Game & Final Remarks

The game ends after the five Acts are run. Players can then switch roles. It is recommended that each player plays the Accused role at least once.

After the game session players can **talk freely about their game experience** and the implications that the game might have in their lives from now on. Have they changed their views on social networks and online friendship?

Playing as an Inquisitor

In order to play a good Inquisitor it is recommended that the player acts with honesty in his verdicts. No one can prevent the player choosing a guilty verdict when it’s clear that the Accused isn’t guilty, but what would be the point of it?

Asking the correct questions in Act II is key to unveil if the Sin is really a sin or a true friendship. Although it is encouraged that the Inquisitor prepares his own questions below some suggestions are provided.

Act II Possible Questions

How did you become friends with each other?

Would you invite him to an important event (birthday, wedding) of your life?

What have you done for the Sin that makes you a good friend to him?

When was the last time you met? When was the last time you talk to each other?

What is the most important conversation you had with each other?

Would you tell him one of your deepest secrets?

Would you rely on him on a difficult moment of your life?

Would you lend him some money?

What are his three best traits? What are his three worsts traits?

How many times you have talked in the last month? What have you talked about?

Playing as the Accused

Playing as the Accused puts the player in a delicate position. As well as the Inquisitor, honesty is a great approach to the game. Despite no one can prevent the Accused to lie in order to keep the friend on the friend list, in the end the Accused will not be lying to the other players but to himself/herself.

It's not uncommon for the Accused to find out that there is no reason to keep the friend after answering the questions from Act II. Verbalizing the answers to the Inquisitors may make the Accused realize that it's pointless to keep this person as a friend, that it was not a real friendship to start with. In this case he can just write down in his *Defence Sketch* that he considers it a real Sin and that he will voluntarily delete the Sin from his friend list. Then he can do so. And finally he can think (off-game) why he had this person on his friend list to begin with and how many people like this he still has on his Facebook contacts.