

Is It Fair?

Aims:

- All students can say if they think something is fair or unfair
- Most students can state a viewpoint and give one or more reasons why
- Most students can listen to the viewpoints of others, agree or disagree respectfully and say why, and/or build on what another person has said
- Some students can state more general ethical points, backed up with apt examples and showing an understanding of a range of viewpoints.

Objectives:

Be able to express an opinion about an issue in the story and give reasons for it.

Be able to explain their own response to a general ethical question arising from the story.

Be able to demonstrate skills of discussion.

Key Words:

Kill fair justified

Method:

Ground rules:

Establish some ground rules for discussion, such as share your thoughts, take turns, listen until someone has finished speaking, give reasons for your opinion.

Explore the story:

The students need to know the story before this activity.

The students work in pairs. Each pair has three statements:

- Pharaoh tells his soldiers to kill all Hebrew baby boys
- Moses kills the Egyptian slave master
- God sends the Angel of Death to kill all the eldest children of the Egyptians

Have two labels: 'fair' and 'unfair'. Each student puts each statement in the pile where they think it should go.

The class looks at the statements which are in the 'fair' pile and in the 'unfair' pile and discuss which statements they put in which pile and why.

Explore philosophical questions arising from the story:

At this point you could do one of the following, depending on the students you are working with:

Either: the teacher turns the students' responses to the story into a more general ethical question – likely to be along the lines of 'Is it ever right to kill?'

Or: In pairs, the students themselves think of more general ethical questions raised by the story. The teacher or students write out the questions and lay them out where everyone can see them. Ask for any connections between them. The students then choose one of the questions to discuss (secret ballot is best).

Discuss the question. The Philosophy for Children format is helpful:

First thoughts: Work in pairs. Take turns to explain to the other what you think about the issue. What is your answer to / viewpoint on the question?

Build the question: the whole group sits in a circle. Each person says what they think about the question. The next person listens to the previous speaker(s) and says:

- something they agree with and why
- something they disagree with and why
- what they find interesting in what the previous speaker(s) have said.

It may be helpful for the teacher to make a list/mind map of points raised in the discussion.

Last thoughts: Work in pairs. Take turns to talk about your views on the question now. The following list of questions may be helpful:

What new ideas have you heard this morning? What ideas did you agree with? Why?

What ideas did you disagree with? Why? Did anyone disagree with you?

What reasons or evidence did you give to back up your opinion? Has your opinion changed?

Review: Invite the students to recall examples from this session of when they or others did well in using the ground rules for discussion.

Resources:

The 'Is It Fair?' statements, cut up into individual sentences (see below).

Pharoah tells his soldiers to kill all Hebrew baby boys.

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Moses kills the Egyptian slave master.

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God send the Angel of Death to kill all the eldest children of the Egyptians.

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