

Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Aims:

- All students can say if they think something is good or bad
- 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 explain what they think Moses should choose and why

Be able to explain their own response to an ethical question arising from this episode in the story.

Be able to demonstrate skills of discussion.

Key Words:

Choice, choose

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.

Warm-up games:

- Would you rather... meet a scary kitten or a happy monster?
Live in a castle or a on a ship?
Travel on a magic carpet or in a spaceship?
- Good/bad thing: give the pupils one thing to discuss, such as for example vampires, adults, toffee, chocolate rain, or a magic wand for all. Students work in pairs and must argue as to whether that thing is a good thing or a bad thing. Each person gets two minutes to speak, without interruption from the other. Pupils get no choice as to which side they argue. Pupils report back on what their partner has said.*

Explore the story:

Look at the picture of Moses encountering the Burning Bush. Read that section of the story.

Either: Pupils work in pairs to examine the choice that Moses has when he encounters the Burning Bush: should he stay with his family in safety, or obey the voice and go back to Egypt? Each person has to argue for one choice or the other, thinking up as many reasons as they can. Each gets two minutes to speak, without interruption from the other. Pupils report back on what their partner has said.

Or: In pairs the students could act out the scene where Moses gets home and has to explain to Zipporah what has happened. Zipporah thinks they should stay at home, Moses thinks they should go back to Egypt. Pupils prepare all the arguments they can think of, for each viewpoint. Then they act out the scene. How does the conversation go? What happens in the end?

Give an opinion:

The students give their own opinion on what Moses should do. One method for this is to lay out a line on the floor. One end is 'Moses should go and help free the slaves' and the other end is 'Moses should stay at home with his family'. Pupils go and stand on a point in the line which reflects their opinion. They give their reasons.

The teacher then summarises the discussion so far, bringing out ideas and, depending on the students, concepts such as loyalty, obedience, empathy, justice, suffering.

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 – 'Is it always important to...', 'Should you always...'

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).

In either case, the questions are likely to be along the lines of:

Should you always obey someone who tells you what to do?

Is it more important to look after your own family or to save a stranger?

The students discuss the question. The following format is helpful:

First words – initial responses to the question (this could be done in pairs)

Discussion – where students agree respectfully giving reasons, disagree respectfully giving reasons, and/or build on what another student has said (this could be done as a whole class).

Last words – what do students think now and why? Has anyone changed their mind?

Review:

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

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