

23. Using a sliding scale

Use Introducing the activity plus one of the Activities, followed by Drawing things together. Please read the Activities before making your choice.

Teacher's notes

- Use this to draw out differing reactions from characters in a story, or differing reactions of the pupils themselves. If the latter, be sensitive to the feelings of those who find themselves set apart from the majority. You can also use it as an introduction to ultimate questions.
- You will need a fair amount of space for all the activities except Activity 3; they may work better in a hall or even outside (you will need to shout!) unless you have a large classroom.

Introducing the activity

Play a game which involves pupils answering questions by positioning themselves on an imaginary line from one side of the room to the other, e.g., if they would answer the question 'yes, definitely' they go to the right, if they would answer 'not at all' they go to the left, and if they would answer 'yes, a little', or 'probably not' they position themselves in the appropriate position in the middle of the room. Ask questions such as, 'Do you like chocolate?', 'Does your family have lots of pets?', 'Would you like to be famous?' Keep it light-hearted at this stage.

Activity 1: Ultimate questions

The same activity can be used as an introduction to ultimate questions or difficult moral issues to show that people hold a range of opinions. Make sure you stress at the start that there are no right or wrong answers so people with views different from the majority do not feel they are in the wrong. Ask questions such as 'Does God exist?', 'Is abortion wrong?', 'Is life an accident?', 'Should serial killers receive the death penalty?', 'Is it fair that some people are richer than others?' If you wish to hold a short discussion after each question make sure that it is conducted in an atmosphere of respect and that no-one has to justify their position if they don't want to.

Activity 2: Characters in a story

Use a story with several characters who may react differently to events, for example, the healing of the paralysed man (Mark 2:1-12) or another of Jesus' miracles. Give each pupil a card with the name of a character on it (e.g., Jesus' disciples, the religious leaders, the person who was healed, his four friends, the crowd). Either read the story, stopping every so often to ask questions, or, if the story is already familiar, pick some key episodes to ask about. Every time you ask a question the pupils position themselves on the line, holding up the cards with their characters on. You can then easily comment on differing reactions of different groups of people. If one person has positioned him/herself differently from the rest of the group, this can lead to discussion. For example, you might begin with the point where the person was lowered through the roof, and ask, 'Are you surprised?', 'Do you think Jesus is going to heal the man?', 'Are you worried about anything?' (Ask some of the pupils to explain their answer to this one.) At the end of the story you might ask, 'Are you happy?', 'Has this made you more likely to follow Jesus?', 'Will you tell your friends what has happened?'

Activity 3: Writing it down

Using a story where people react in different ways to an event – for example, Jesus' miracles or his Resurrection – imagine that you ask all the characters a question at a given point in the story. For example, when the women find the empty tomb and run to tell the disciples (Luke 24:1-13), you could ask the characters, 'Do you think Jesus is alive?'. Either in groups or individually, pupils can draw a vertical line down their page, with YES at the top and NO at the bottom and for each character/group of characters, they can draw an arrow pointing to the appropriate point of the line and write a few sentences about why the characters would answer like that.

Drawing things together

Discuss what pupils have learnt from this approach and answer any questions raised.