

The Tunnel

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Walker (2008)

Ages 8–11

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HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS for getting pupils to engage with the story in preparation for P4C and for developing their appreciation of certain concepts such as 'fairness' and 'bravery'. Some drama techniques are used such as 'conscience alley' and 'hot seating'. The activities have been tried with pupils in year 3–6 but could be adapted for younger or older pupils.

Activity 1: Generating Questions

Questioning is central to P4C. We need to help children generate more questions and learn how to classify them.

Show children the front cover of 'The Tunnel' and ask them to work in small groups to generate as many questions as they can from the front cover and then classify them using a 'question grid' with four boxes (See: *Phil Cam, 20 Thinking Tools, Acer Press, 2006*).

- 1) The two boxes on the right side are: **Questions with one right answer**
 - a. 'Look and see questions'
 - b. Questions requiring research

- 2) The two boxes on the left side are: **Questions with many possible answers**
 - a. 'Use your imagination' questions
 - b. Questions for thinking – philosophical questions

Activity 2: Making Distinctions

Making distinctions between two similar, but different ideas is an important aspect of reasoning. In this exercise the children consider how things are the same and how they are different. *Working in pairs or small groups*, ask the children to say how the following pairs are the *same* and how they are *different*.

- A tunnel and a cave
- An entrance and an exit

Activity 3: Comparing and Contrasting

Looking for similarities and differences, comparing and contrasting is a fundamental thinking skill. In this activity we draw on drama conventions to develop this kind of thinking.

Show the children Page.1 from 'The Tunnel': *'Once upon a time there lived a sister and a brother who were not at all alike. In every way they were different.'*

Drama Convention: Role on the Wall

- Work in small groups.
- Each group creates a drawing of a boy and a girl in outline to represent the brother and sister in the book.
- Inside each outline, each group writes down the characteristics they imagine for the brother and sister just from their pictures – this can reveal a lot about gender stereotypes
- Pin the drawings on the wall
- In what ways, then, are the children the same? In what ways different?

Activity 4: Drama, Freeze Framing

Show the children the picture in the book when the children are on their way to the waste ground. Ask the children to:

- Create still pictures (freeze frames) of the event using their bodies
- Predict what happens next in the story and create a second freeze-frame to show it
- Voice the words or inner thoughts of the characters for the first freeze frame when you clap your hands
- Change their bodies to the second image when you clap your hands a second time and voice their inner thoughts on a third clap

Activity 5: Exploring Concepts, 'Fairness'

Ask the children to work in small groups and give each group one of the following statements. Then ask them to discuss whether they agree or disagree with their allocated statement:

- The brother is older than the sister. *It is fair that he has to go out to play with his sister.*
- The children didn't want to play with each other, but they are told to be nice to each other. *This is fair.*

Use an agree/disagree line to find out what the groups have been thinking. Read each statement in turn and ask children to stand either side of the line to indicate if they agree or disagree. Ask children to explain their thinking – allow children to change their minds and cross the line

Extension activity

Write the following three statements on separate cards and place them around the room.

An action is fair if *it treats people as they deserve to be treated.*

An action is fair if *it treats everyone equally*

An action is fair if *everyone's interests are taken into account*

Ask the children to move around the room and read all the cards before choosing to sit by the one they most agree with. Everyone sitting with their statement says why they have chosen it. What are the implications of each of the statements for how we treat each other: In class? In the playground? In school? At home?

Follow-up writing

Each child writes up their own thoughts about this after the discussion. Create a discussion frame for the children:

- *Children in our class have been deciding if it is fair for older brothers to have to play with younger sisters.*
- Some people thought
- Others said
- Having considered what everyone said, I think

Activity 6: Giving reasons

Show the children the next part of the book with the girl standing in front of the tunnel. She doesn't want to go in, but her brother does.

Ask the children to work in small groups A) and B) and consider the following:

- Group A: Reasons against going into the tunnel
- Group B: Reasons for going into the tunnel

Follow up: Drama – Decision Alley

- One child plays the sister (ideally s/he hasn't taken part in the group work).
- The groups form two lines – children on one side put the arguments for why she **should** go in the tunnel, the others the reasons why she **shouldn't**.
- The 'sister' walks through the tunnel listening to the view the children call out.
- At the end the 'sister' can go in the 'hot-seat' to give her decision and her reasons why.

Activity 7: Exploring Ethics

Show the children the book up to the page where the girl decides, 'She *had* to follow him into the tunnel'. Ask the children to work in groups to consider:

- Why and whether '*she had to*' follow him into the tunnel?
- Each group to report back to the class. Potential for mini-enquiry here.

Activity 8: Developing Vocabulary and Writing

Ask the children to develop vocabulary to describe what it would be like in the tunnel and how the girl would feel. This is even better if they can experience crawling down an improvised dark tunnel in the classroom. It is also helpful to have the picture of the girl crawling through the tunnel displayed on the whiteboard (without the words in the story) to inspire the children to generate their own vocabulary. The following is an example of vocabulary generated by a year 3 class:

- *What it was like?* Scary, slippery, dark, damp, slimy, cold, smelly, stinky, spooking, rough, dirty, pitch black.
- *How would the girl feel?* Shaky, terrified, afraid, sad, alone, frightened, scared, cold, nervous, unhappy, mad, upset.

Follow up

Children write a paragraph to describe the journey through the tunnel and take turns to read it to the class before turning the page of the book to see how Anthony Browne, the author, describes it. Children each write a paragraph to describe their journey through the tunnel utilising the word-hoard they have collated.

Activity 9: Role Play

Ask the children to work in pairs and prepare a script of the conversation they think the children might have about why they wanted to go in the tunnel (boy) or why they didn't want to go in (girl).

Set up a role-play in the round – children sit on the floor in a circle. Ask for a volunteer pair to move to the middle of the circle and perform a role-play for the class based on their script. After they have been given a chance to get into their role-play any one of the other children can move into the middle and tap either one of the children on the shoulder, swop places with them and continue with the role-play using ideas from their own script. Carry on swapping places until all children who want to have a go have had one.

Activity 10: Exploring Concepts

The girl in the story was afraid to go into the tunnel, but she went in. Ask the children:

- *Was she brave?*
- *Was going in the tunnel a dangerous thing to do or did it just seem dangerous to the girl?*

Notes for teacher

A brave person has to maintain the ability to act despite the fear that they feel. So two things:

a. *There is an emotional component of bravery, i.e. fear.* Bravery can be thought of as a response to fear.

b. This raises the question of whether a person who has faced certain dangers so regularly that they no longer experience any fear can be brave!
Can the children think of an example?

- The girl had the ability to act and think rationally when confronted with a dangerous situation that made her scared.
- *Is that what brave people do?*

BUT

- The girl was 'afraid of everything'
- *Is a person who fears too many things brave?*
- To be brave, you need to have knowledge of what is truly dangerous and thus worthy of fear. Is that right?
- *So, is a person who is scared of worms but faces their fear and touches one acting bravely or not? (Worms are not really dangerous).*

Suggested discussion plan

- Show the picture of the girl standing by the tunnel.
- *Is she happy?*
- What would she look like if she was feeling brave?
- *Is bravery a feeling like being happy?*
- Did she need to be brave in this situation?
- *What was she facing? (danger)*
- Can someone be brave when they only *think* they are in dangerous situations? (i.e. it is not a dangerous situation)
- If you were scared on your first day at school but went anyway, were you being brave even though going to school is not really dangerous?
- *So what makes going to school brave in this case?*
- Now imagine that there is a very scary monster that has come to town. This monster is huge and it will kill anyone who comes close to it. Would it be brave to just walk up to it and tell it to go away, even though you knew it wouldn't listen and would just kill you?
- So just not giving in to your fears does not make you brave. (It can be stupid to go into a situation that you know you won't survive. We call people who do that foolhardy.)

Bravery – Concept Line

Conduct an Agree/Disagree line with the children:

- Bravery is never being afraid.
- If you are brave, you are brave in all situations.
- Fear is only a problem when it stops you from doing what you think is right.
- You can't be brave and cautious at the same time.

Activity 11: Enquiry

- Ask children to work in pairs to generate questions about fear and/or bravery.
- Ask each pair to choose one of their questions to share with another pair
- Put children in groups of four. Ask them to share their questions and choose one they would like to explore for an enquiry.
- Each group presents their question to the class – the teacher writes all the questions on board
- Vote on ONE question for an enquiry and hold the enquiry.

Activity 12: Exploring Metaphors

Read the page where the girl comes upon a figure 'as still as stone'. Ask the children:

- Did the sister think he had turned to stone?
- Is this a crazy idea?
- What is crazy about a person being made out of stone?
- Ask the class for reasons why this might be crazy. Some examples:
 - Stone isn't living
 - Stones can't think
 - Stones can't feel
 - Stones don't

Activity 13: Moral Issues

Read the story up to the page where the boy says to his sister, 'I *knew* you'd come'. Ask the children to work in groups of 4 and report back to the class.

- What did he mean when he said, 'I *knew* you'd come'?
- How did he *know* she's come?
- Did he know because she '*had to*' follow him into the tunnel?

Activity 14: Hot-seating

Read to the end of the book. Show children the final page then put the children into small groups and ask the children to be either the girl or the boy and consider these questions:

- What is the girl thinking now?
- What is the boy thinking now?
- Plan questions to ask them.
- Hot-seating – volunteers take the role of the girl and boy – the class ask them questions.