

Winning Words Spring Lesson Six: Freedom¹

Objective: Foster discussion about freedom; introduce Utilitarianism; prepare for debates about freedom and happiness

I. Warmer: Word Ball--Happiness

- A. SS stand in a circle
- B. They toss a ball to one another, each student “passing” a free-association word to the other after instructors begin with “happiness”

II. Quotations

- A. Students each select one of the quotes about freedom
- B. They take a few minutes to read these to themselves, then write down
 - a. One reason they agree with it
 - b. One reason they disagree
- C. SS take turns giving short impromptu comments about their topics 10 min

III. Discussion questions: Interviews

- A. Put ss into pairs
- B. SS take turns asking each other the questions:
 - Partner A:
 - a. What does it mean to be free?
 - b. Do you consider yourself a free human being?
 - c. How do people lose their freedom?
 - d. When have you felt the most free, in your life?
 - Partner B:
 - a. What does the expression “free as a bird” mean to you?
 - b. What is slavery? Why would someone want to own another person?
 - c. Is your mind free? Do you like to think for yourself?
 - d. Does freedom make you happy?
- C. SS record each others’ responses
- D. As a group: nominate ss to report their partners’ answers 20 min

IV. Utilitarianism

- A. Ask students if they agree with the idea that a rule is just if it generates “The greatest good for the greatest number of people.”
- B. Elicit responses about what this means
- C. In small groups: Ask ss to decide whether the following scenarios create the greatest good for the greatest number of people, and why they think this is true:
 - a. Having one less day of school per month.
 - i. Who benefits? Who is harmed?
 - b. Making it illegal for anyone to own a gun in the United States
 - i. Who benefits? Who is harmed?
 - c. Legalizing slavery in the United States
 - i. Who benefits? Who is harmed?

35 min

V. Talk Show

- A. Students draw roles: host, one of three guests, and audience
- B. The guests each advocates one of the three scenarios listed above
- C. The host will ask a question of each “guest.” Guests should not talk over each other.
- D. After the host finishes “interviewing” the first guest, he or she may take audience questions.
- E. Each guest gets 5-7 minutes. 55 min

¹ Lesson plan adapted from Marietta McCarty, *Little Big Minds* (New York: Tarcher), 2006.

VI. Reflection: Is "The greatest good for the greatest number" a fair way to live life?
What other situations can you think of that would prove or disprove this statement?
(Ex: universal health care, socialism)