



## EduTrend Contents

P4C · SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY · MIDDLE SCHOOL

# Do We Owe Anything to Strangers?

Peter Singer's drowning child and our duties to others

Ages 11–13

Level: Intermediate

50 minutes

Circle and small groups  
· up to 30

Activity 03

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 student worksheets · assessment checklist

## ACTIVITY 03 · AT A GLANCE

# Do We Owe Anything to Strangers?

Students hear a version of Peter Singer's example: you pass a shallow pond where a child is drowning. Saving the child will ruin your new shoes. Almost everyone says you must help. Singer asks whether distance makes a difference to people far away who need help. Students create questions and enquire into what we owe to strangers.

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- explain Singer's argument;
- analyse distance and duty;
- weigh objections;
- respect different views.

### KEY WORDS

duty · stranger · help · distance · charity · Singer

### CURRICULUM LINKS

Citizenship: global communities.  
RE: charity and duty. Geography: global inequality.

**1****STIMULUS**

Share something to think about

**2****THINK**

Quiet thinking time

**3****QUESTION**

Create and choose a question

**4****ENQUIRE**

Reason together

**5****BUILD**

Agree, disagree, add

**6****REFLECT**

Last words

## Materials (per class)

- Drowning child scenario card
- Objection cards
- Question and thinking-move cards
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

## Before the session

- Read the stimulus and note possible concepts.
- Prepare question and thinking-move cards.
- Set out a circle so everyone can see each other.
- Print the worksheets.

### SAFETY

Keep the discussion about ideas. Do not ask students about their family's giving or money.

## ACTIVITY 03 · SESSION PLAN

# Step by step

Stay neutral: ask for reasons, examples and counter-examples rather than giving your own view.

| Time                    | What happens                                                      | Say or ask                                                 |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0–8 min<br>Stimulus     | Present the drowning child example.                               | <i>"What did you notice?"</i>                              |
| 8–20 min<br>Questions   | Students create questions in pairs and vote on one.               | <i>"Which question is most interesting to talk about?"</i> |
| 20–44 min<br>Enquiry    | Enquire into the chosen question, building on each other's ideas. | <i>"Do we owe anything to strangers?"</i>                  |
| 44–50 min<br>Last words | Each person says one last thought or passes.                      | <i>"Has your thinking changed?"</i>                        |

**CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)**

Argue whether distance changes our duties.

## ACTIVITY 03 · FACILITATOR NOTES

# The philosophy in brief

Peter Singer set out the drowning child example in his 1972 essay “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”.

Critics ask whether his argument asks too much of individuals and whether institutions should carry more responsibility.

## Common ideas to listen for

- “Singer says we must give away everything.” His view is debated and has several versions.
- “Distance never matters.” Some argue it can.
- “Helping strangers is someone else’s job.” This is the question.

## Adapting the activity

### Support

Discuss the pond case only.

### Stretch

Write the strongest objection to Singer and a reply.

WORKSHEET 1

# Our questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Write questions the stimulus makes you wonder about.

## Our questions

| Question | Who asked | Votes |
|----------|-----------|-------|
|          |           |       |
|          |           |       |
|          |           |       |
|          |           |       |
|          |           |       |

WORKSHEET 2

# Near and far

Compare.

## Near and far

| Case                 | Must we help? | Why |
|----------------------|---------------|-----|
| Child in the pond    |               |     |
| Stranger in our town |               |     |
| Stranger far away    |               |     |

## WORKSHEET 3

# Last words

Before and after.

**Does distance change our duties? Before the enquiry I thought... Now I think... because...**

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## FOR THE TEACHER

# Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight students; copy as needed.

| Student | Asks a philosophical question | Gives reasons and examples | Listens and builds on others |
|---------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
|         |                               |                            |                              |
|         |                               |                            |                              |
|         |                               |                            |                              |
|         |                               |                            |                              |
|         |                               |                            |                              |
|         |                               |                            |                              |
|         |                               |                            |                              |

Suggested codes: W = working towards · E = expected · G = greater depth

## ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Do We Owe Anything to Strangers? is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Society and Community programme (middle school, level: intermediate). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at [edutrend.org](https://edutrend.org).

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