



EduTrend Contents

P4C · TIME AND CHANGE · MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Same River Twice

Heraclitus and the puzzle of change

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

The Same River Twice

Students read a saying linked to the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus: you cannot step into the same river twice, because new waters are always flowing. They list things that change while keeping their name: a river, a school, a football team, a person. They create questions and enquire into how something can change and still be the same thing.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- explain the puzzle of change;
- apply it to examples;
- distinguish kinds of sameness;
- reach a justified view.

KEY WORDS

change · same · river · Heraclitus · identity · flow

CURRICULUM LINKS

Geography: rivers. Science: the water cycle. History: change and continuity.

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)

- River saying card
- Change 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

Everyone may pass. Discuss ideas, not people, and use the story or invented examples rather than personal situations.

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 Stimulus	Share Heraclitus' river saying and change cards.	<i>"What did you notice?"</i>
8–20 min Questions	Students create questions in pairs and vote on one.	<i>"Which question is most interesting to talk about?"</i>
20–44 min Enquiry	Enquire into the chosen question, building on each other's ideas.	<i>"Can you step into the same river twice?"</i>
44–50 min Last words	Each person says one last thought or passes.	<i>"Has your thinking changed?"</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Explain how a river can change and stay the same.

ACTIVITY 03 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

Heraclitus lived around 500 BCE and is known for stressing constant change.

Philosophers distinguish being exactly the same in every detail from being the same thing over time.

Common ideas to listen for

- “If anything changes, it is a new thing.” We usually say it is the same.
- “Rivers never really change.” The water does.
- “Only living things change.” Everything changes.

Adapting the activity

Support

Use the river example only.

Stretch

Ask: is your school the same school as 50 years ago?

WORKSHEET 1

Our questions

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Write questions the stimulus makes you wonder about.

Our questions

Question	Who asked	Votes

WORKSHEET 2

Changing things

Analyse.

Changing things

Thing	What changes	What stays the same

WORKSHEET 3

Last words

Before and after.

How can something change and stay the same? Before the enquiry I thought... Now I think... because...

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

The Same River Twice is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Time and Change 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.

© 2026 EduTrend Contents. This activity may be printed and copied for use with students in your own school, club or home. It may not be resold or published elsewhere. Photos: Melody Zimmerman / Unsplash.