



EduTrend Contents

P4C · FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE · HIGH SCHOOL

Behind the Veil

Design fair rules for a society without knowing who you will be in it

Ages 15–18

Level: Advanced

60 minutes

Circle and pairs · up to 30

Activity 05

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

ACTIVITY 05 · AT A GLANCE

Behind the Veil

Students imagine designing rules for sharing resources in a new school town without knowing who they will be: rich or poor, able-bodied or disabled, fast learner or struggling. This thought experiment comes from the philosopher John Rawls. Teams draft three rules, compare them and enquire into whether choosing “behind the veil” really leads to fairness.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- apply a thought experiment to justice;
- draft and justify principles;
- evaluate a philosophical method;
- consider objections.

KEY WORDS

veil of ignorance · justice · principle
· worst-off · impartial · society

CURRICULUM LINKS

Politics and philosophy: theories of justice. Economics: distribution. Citizenship: public services.

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)

- Role cards (kept face down)
- Rule drafting sheet
- 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 05 · 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
0–10 min Stimulus	Explain the veil of ignorance thought experiment.	<i>"What did you notice?"</i>
10–22 min Questions	Students create questions in pairs and vote on one.	<i>"Which question is most interesting to talk about?"</i>
22–52 min Enquiry	Enquire into the chosen question, building on each other's ideas.	<i>"Would rules chosen behind the veil be fair?"</i>
52–60 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)

Write three rules for the school town and defend one against a strong objection.

ACTIVITY 05 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

In *A Theory of Justice* (1971), John Rawls argued that fair principles are those people would choose without knowing their place in society.

Critics ask whether people behind the veil would really be cautious, and what knowledge they should keep.

Common ideas to listen for

- “The veil means ignoring differences.” It means choosing without bias.
- “Rawls wanted everyone equal.” He allowed some inequalities.
- “Thought experiments prove things.” They test intuitions.

Adapting the activity

Support

Provide example rules to choose from.

Stretch

Compare with a merit-based view of justice.

WORKSHEET 1

Our rules

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Behind the veil.

Our rules

Rule	Who it protects	Objection

WORKSHEET 2

Thinking moves

Use these in the enquiry.

Thinking moves

Thinking move	My example
I agree with... because...	
I disagree with... because...	
An example is...	
A counter-example is...	
Building on what... said...	

WORKSHEET 3

Last words

Before and after.

What does a just society owe its worst-off members? 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

Behind the Veil is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Fairness and Justice programme (high school, level: advanced). 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.

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