



EduTrend Contents

P4C · DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE · HIGH SCHOOL

Is There One Right Way to Live?

Cultural relativism and shared values

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

Is There One Right Way to Live?

Students read Herodotus’ story from his Histories. King Darius asked some Greeks what it would take for them to eat their dead fathers; they were horrified. He then asked the Callataie, who ate their dead, what it would take for them to burn their fathers; they were equally horrified. Herodotus concluded that custom rules all. Students compare cultural relativism with the view that some values are universal, and enquire into whether there is one right way to live.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- explain cultural relativism;
- evaluate arguments for and against;
- distinguish customs and moral values;
- construct a reasoned position.

KEY WORDS

relativism · universal · custom · culture · Herodotus · value

CURRICULUM LINKS

Philosophy: ethics. Geography and history: cultures around the world. RE: shared values.

1	2	3	4	5	6
STIMULUS	THINK	QUESTION	ENQUIRE	BUILD	REFLECT
Share something to think about	Quiet thinking time	Create and choose a question	Reason together	Agree, disagree, add	Last words

Materials (per class)

- Darius story card
- Position 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

Discuss positions and invented cases. Treat all cultures with respect.

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	Share the Darius story and position cards.	<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>"Is there one right way to live?"</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)

Defend a view on whether there is one right way to live.

ACTIVITY 05 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

Cultural relativism holds that right and wrong depend on culture.

Critics argue that relativism makes it hard to criticise injustice and that some values, such as caring for children, appear widely shared.

Common ideas to listen for

- “Relativism means anything goes.” It says standards are cultural.
- “Respecting cultures means never criticising.” Some argue we can do both.
- “Customs and morals are the same.” They can differ.

Adapting the activity

Support

Compare the two positions.

Stretch

Find a value you think is universal and test it.

WORKSHEET 1

Our questions

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Write questions the stimulus makes you wonder about.

Our questions

Question	Who asked	Votes

WORKSHEET 2

Relative or universal?

Sort.

Relative or universal?

Example	Custom or moral value?	Relative or universal?

WORKSHEET 3

Last words

Before and after.

Are some values shared by everyone? 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

Is There One Right Way to Live? is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Diversity and Difference 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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