



EduTrend Contents

P4C · THOUGHT EXPERIMENTS · PRIMARY

The Ship That Changed

If every part of a ship is replaced, is it still the same ship?

Ages 8–11

Level: Developing

45 minutes

Whole class circle · up
to 30

Activity 02

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

ACTIVITY 02 · AT A GLANCE

The Ship That Changed

Pupils build a boat from coloured blocks and name it. Then, one by one, they swap each block for a new one of a different colour until every piece has changed. At each step they vote: is it still the same boat? This retells an ancient puzzle recorded by the Greek writer Plutarch, about the ship of the hero Theseus. The enquiry explores what makes something stay the same over time.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session pupils can:

- model a thought experiment;
- track changes step by step;
- reason about identity;
- compare with real life.

KEY WORDS

same · change · replace · identity ·
part · whole

CURRICULUM LINKS

Science: growth and change.
History: ancient Greece. DT:
building models.

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)

- Building blocks in two colours
- 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 02 · 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	Build and rebuild the block boat.	<i>“What did you notice?”</i>
8–18 min Questions	Pupils create questions in pairs and vote on one.	<i>“Which question is most interesting to talk about?”</i>
18–40 min Enquiry	Enquire into the chosen question, building on each other’s ideas.	<i>“If every part changes, is it still the same thing?”</i>
40–45 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)

Say when, if ever, the boat stopped being the same and why.

ACTIVITY 02 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

The ship of Theseus puzzle was recorded by the Greek writer Plutarch nearly two thousand years ago.

Our bodies replace many cells over time, which makes the puzzle personal.

Common ideas to listen for

- “Same name means same thing.” The puzzle asks more.
- “There is an obvious answer.” Philosophers still disagree.
- “Only objects change.” People change too.

Adapting the activity

Support

Use fewer blocks.

Stretch

Ask: what if someone rebuilt the old pieces into a second boat?

WORKSHEET 1

Boat changes

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Record votes.

Boat changes

Blocks changed	Same boat? Yes	No

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 makes something the same over time? Before the enquiry I thought...
Now I think... because...**

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

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

Pupil	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 Ship That Changed is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Thought Experiments programme (primary, level: developing). 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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