



EduTrend Contents

P4C · EMOTIONS AND THE MIND · MIDDLE SCHOOL

Could a Robot Feel?

Minds, machines and what it takes to feel

Ages 12–14

Level: Intermediate

50 minutes

Circle and small groups
· up to 30

Activity 04

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

ACTIVITY 04 · AT A GLANCE

Could a Robot Feel?

Students read an invented scenario: a school robot helper says “I feel sad when nobody talks to me.” Some pupils want to cheer it up, others say it is just a program. Students list what feeling might require, such as a body, awareness or experience, then create questions and enquire into whether a machine could really feel.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- analyse what feeling requires;
- distinguish behaviour and experience;
- reason about machines and minds;
- build a justified view.

KEY WORDS

mind · machine · feel · aware ·
program · experience

CURRICULUM LINKS

Computing: artificial intelligence.
Science: brains and nervous
systems. PSHE: technology and
wellbeing.

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)

- Robot helper scenario card
- Requirement 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 04 · 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	Read the robot helper scenario.	<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>“Could a robot feel?”</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)

Argue whether the robot should be cheered up, with reasons.

ACTIVITY 04 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

Whether machines could have experiences is an open question debated by philosophers and scientists.

The difference between behaving as if you feel and actually feeling is central to the debate.

Common ideas to listen for

- “If it says it feels, it feels.” Words may not show experience.
- “Machines can never do anything like thinking.” Some tasks overlap.
- “This question is already settled.” It is still debated.

Adapting the activity

Support

Sort robot and human cards.

Stretch

Ask: how could we ever test whether a robot feels?

WORKSHEET 1

Our questions

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Write questions the stimulus makes you wonder about.

Our questions

Question	Who asked	Votes

WORKSHEET 2

What does feeling need?

Evaluate.

What does feeling need?

Requirement	Humans	Robot

WORKSHEET 3

Last words

Before and after.

What is the difference between showing a feeling and having one? 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

Could a Robot Feel? is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Emotions and the Mind 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.

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