



EduTrend Contents

P4C · LANGUAGE AND MEANING · PRIMARY

Can Words Hurt?

Words, actions and responsibility

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

Can Words Hurt?

Pupils hear the old rhyme “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” They consider invented examples: a kind comment, a joke that goes too far, a nickname and a promise. They sort words by what they do: help, hurt, promise, warn, thank. They create questions and enquire into whether words can hurt and why.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session pupils can:

- analyse what words do;
- reason about harm and kindness;
- give examples and counter-examples;
- build on others’ ideas.

KEY WORDS

words · hurt · kind · promise · joke · action

CURRICULUM LINKS

PSHE: anti-bullying and kindness.
English: speech and its effects.
Citizenship: respect.

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)

- Rhyme card
- Word example 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

Use invented examples only. Do not repeat hurtful words said to real pupils.

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	Share the rhyme and word example cards.	<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>"Can words hurt?"</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)

Explain whether the rhyme is true, with two reasons.

ACTIVITY 02 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

Philosophers such as J. L. Austin pointed out that we do things with words, such as promising, warning and thanking.

If words are actions, we can be responsible for what they do.

Common ideas to listen for

- “Words can never hurt.” Many people disagree.
- “It was only a joke, so it’s fine.” Effects matter.
- “Only big words matter.” Small words can have big effects.

Adapting the activity

Support

Sort four examples.

Stretch

Ask: can words heal as well as hurt?

WORKSHEET 1

Our questions

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Write questions the stimulus makes you wonder about.

Our questions

Question	Who asked	Votes

WORKSHEET 2

What words do

Sort.

What words do

Example	What it does	Helpful or hurtful

WORKSHEET 3

Last words

Before and after.

Are words a kind of action? 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

Can Words Hurt? is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Language and Meaning 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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