

BETWEEN MY EARS

The aim of this lesson plan is to encourage the children to make a distinction between physical and non-physical properties of the mind and/or brain. This encourages them to 'discover' abstract nouns in the context of non-abstract entities such as 'the body'.

Plan

1. Read the poem to the class.
2. Give them some silent thinking-time to take it in.
3. Read it again but this time ask them if there are any words or phrases that they don't understand.
4. When you finish the second reading take questions. Expect queries about words such as 'infinite' and 'width'.

Teaching Strategy

Rather than explain the words yourself ask if anyone else in the class can explain the word or phrase. They may be able to do this because they know the word or, better still, they may be able to surmise its meaning (or approximate meaning) from the semantic context. To help them with this, recite the context to them and ask what they think it might mean. Make any clarifications or corrections before moving on.

5. Hand a copy of the poem out to the class in pairs but print the poem large enough for the paper to be placed on the floor so that they can read it without having to hold the paper. This minimizes distractions. Or, project the poem on the interactive whiteboard.
6. You could ask the class what they think the poem is saying or what it means.

Task 1:

Ask the children to say what they think is between their ears, but in order to encourage diversity of ideas towards non-physical properties set the following stipulation: that everyone must contribute but there should be no repetition. This task begins easily but ends much harder. Encourage children to help each other out towards the end. Note their suggestions on the board.

You may expect the list to include physical words like 'brain', 'eyes', 'skull' etc. but you should look out for any non-physical words such as 'mind', 'knowledge', 'thoughts' (all examples from Year 3).

Task 2:

Distinguish between the two kinds of property (physical/non-physical) in some way such as by using different colours or circling one kind of word. Ask the children if they can say what is different between the two sets of words (for example, 'You can actually feel your skull, but ideas are invisible.')

Task 3:

Once they have identified the difference ask them to continue adding to the 'non-physical' list, especially if this is much smaller than the 'physical' list (as you would expect it to be). Further suggestions from Year 3 classes have included 'ideas', 'the music I hear in my head', 'information', 'feelings' etc.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

This extension activity was inspired by the child who said 'the music I hear in my head'.

Get the children to sing a well-known tune such as Happy Birthday, but silently in their heads. Conduct them, and silently mouth the words making sure no one sings out loud.

Once they have finished ask them whether they think they have just heard the song or not.

Ask the same question to your colleagues in the staff room and your friends in the pub!

Nested Questions:

- ✓ What is sound?
- ✓ What is hearing?
- ✓ What is music?
- ✓ Can sound be imaginary?

- ✓ If a profoundly deaf person, such as the percussionist Evelyn Glennie, feels music through its vibration, are they 'hearing' the music?
- ✓ Beethoven was deaf when he composed his famous 'Ode To Joy' (from the 9th Symphony). Did Beethoven ever hear his tune?
- ✓ When you hear music where is the music? In the air? In your mind? In the instruments? Where?

For further extension activity ideas see the list of questions at the end of the poem 'Between My Ears' in Thoughtings.