



CURIOSITY

Project or print out and show the class 'Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump' by Joseph Wright (easily google-able, and attached as a downloadable document below).

Looking

- ✓ How many people are there in this picture?
- ✓ What are they looking at?
- ✓ Is anyone excited?
- ✓ Is anyone scared?
- ✓ Is anyone happy or sad?
- ✓ Are you surprised by anyone's reaction to what is happening?

Doing

Ask the students if they were a person in this painting, which one they would be. Arrange them in to a tableau that mimics the painting. This can help to build a greater emotional relationship to Wright's painting. Now the characters are embodied the students can take on their voices and the philosophy can begin. For example:

Facilitator: Which person are you?

Archie: I'm the one looking at the bird but I'm sad.

Facilitator: you're looking but sad.

Archie: yes because it's sad that it has to die but I want to see it die anyway.

Facilitator: can you say why you want to see it die?

Archie: because I've never seen it before and I want to find out what happens.

Facilitator: what do you think you could find out by watching the bird die? (A possible emergent question).

Archie: if it's soul comes out of its body when it dies.

Story

The man in the middle is a traveling scientist who goes into people's homes and performs scientific experiments for their entertainment and curiosity. This experiment involves depriving a bird of oxygen until it dies. It was thought that such experiments could help to develop an understanding of and a cure for asthma.

Thinking

Task Question: Should we do experiments on animals?

Questions to take you further:

- ✓ Can we do anything with animals if it makes humans healthier?
- ✓ Can we use animals for our entertainment?
- ✓ Do humans own animals?
- ✓ Now that you know that this is a scientific demonstration does that alter which person you would be in the picture?
- ✓ Are animals like us?
- ✓ Are there things that you should never look at?
- ✓ Are there things that you are curious about but should never do?
- ✓ Would you try and stop this experiment?
- ✓ Would you walk out of the room?

Reading

John Berger, Why Look at Animals.

Roger Scruton, Animal Rights and Wrongs