

WINDOWS

Developed in classrooms by Miriam Cohen Christofidis and Peter Worley from an original idea by Miriam.

Starter 1 and 2 could be viewed as alternatives, in which case, choose which one you'd prefer to start your session with. Or, you could use one starter one week and the other the following week, as they are closely related but deal with slightly different issues, voting and decision making.

STARTER 1: VOTING!

Ask: 'Who would like the windows open and who would like them closed? Let's do a vote! Hands up if you'd like them open... Hands up if you'd like them closed.'

Do: Record the result on the board.

Task question:

- ✓ With this result what should we do?

Nested Questions

- ✓ Is voting fair?
- ✓ Is voting the best way to make a decision? Are there any better ways?
- ✓ Is the fairest way the best way to make decisions?
- ✓ Are the majority always right?

Questions to take you further

- ✓ What if it were 12 vs 13?
- ✓ What if it were 30 and 0?
- ✓ What if we found some research that said the air quality in this area is so poor that if the windows are left open then it will shorten pupils lives by up to 5 years?
- ✓ What if one child is very cold?
- ✓ What if one child has bronchitis?
- ✓ What if someone is always on the losing side of the vote (minorities, etc)?

STARTER 2: DECISIONS!

Do: Put some decisions on a piece of paper, such as:

- ✓ Windows open or closed
- ✓ Which DVD to watch
- ✓ Class trip to zoo or cinema
- ✓ Who should be on the school council
- ✓ Any other similar decision the class could engage in...

Task Question:

- ✓ What is the fairest way to make the decision?

Extension activity for starter 1: Voice of a Philosopher

Say: When countries and groups decide on what to do by voting this is called democracy. A famous philosopher called Plato argued that democracy was not the best way of making decisions for a country. He said that a country is like a ship and only the captain really knows how to command the ship because he best understands the vessel, the seas and how to navigate one on the other. Likewise, only people who are very clever and good at making decisions should have the

power to decide what is good for the country. Just like it would be dangerous to put the crew in charge of the ship, it would lead to problems if ordinary people could decide what happens in the country.

Task question:

- ✔ What do you think about Plato's critique of democracy?

Nested Questions

- ✔ Are clever people better at making decisions?
- ✔ Is a country like a ship?
- ✔ What dangers could follow from democracy?

Extension activity for starter 1:

1. Have the children work in pairs or small groups;
2. Give each pair or group some paper to work/write on;
3. Set them each the task of coming up with alternative ways of making group decisions where there is disagreement to voting;
4. Allow them to work on this for some time;
5. Have the groups share their suggestions;
6. (Optional) Group them into broader categories (E.g. Random methods, Contests, Expert opinion etc. so that if someone says 'a lottery' and someone else says 'pull it out of a hat', these can both be listed the category Random methods)
7. Invite them all to evaluate the suggestions ('Are there any possible problems with any of these suggestions?')
8. Invite them all to think of any ways of dealing with the objections offered