

Advice for Teaching Critical Thinking



Schools Resource



**MAKE
SURE IT
ADDS UP**

Introduction

In a world where messages are projected in so many different ways, it can be difficult to evaluate the information we see.

A viral post on TikTok may seem innocent and fun, but sometimes the things we share are not true, not based on fact and some things could cause hurt or harm to others.

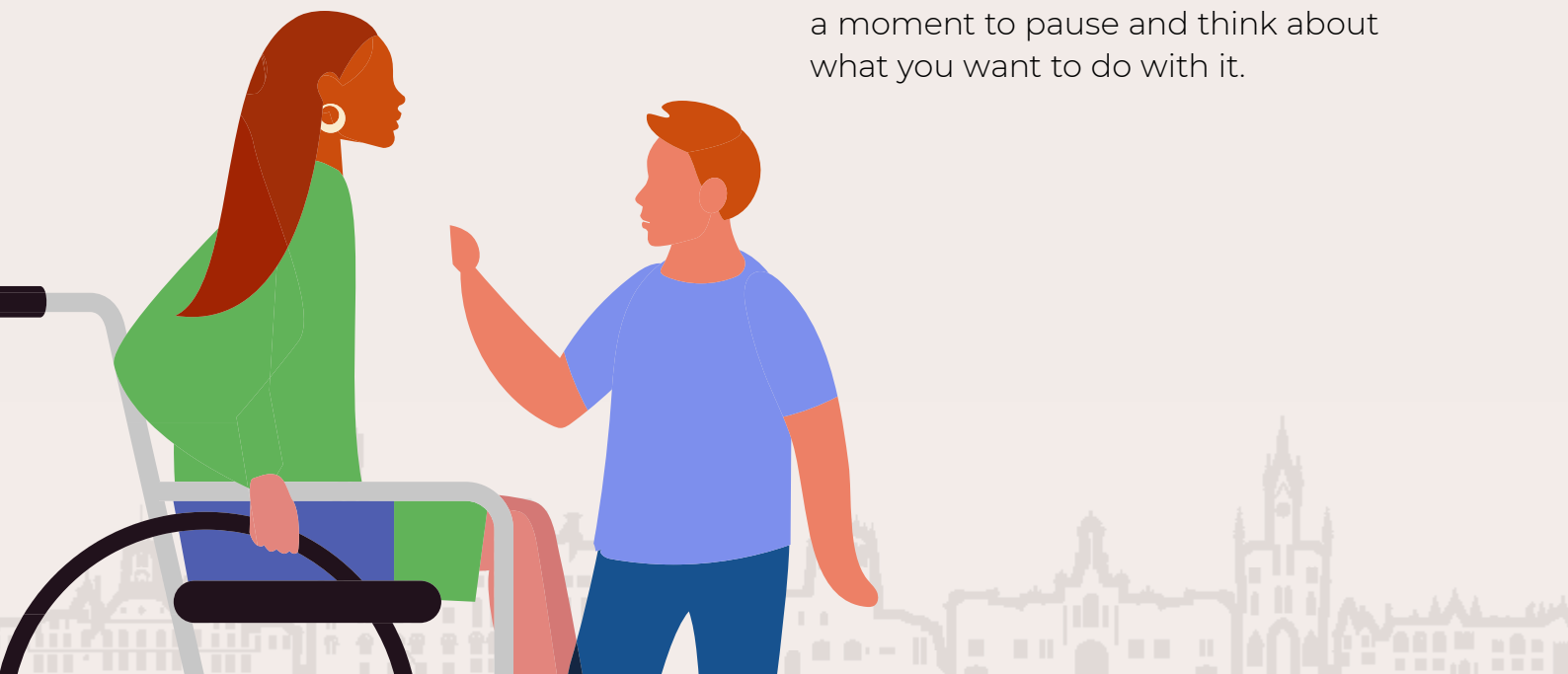
Do we know how to challenge the facts we are presented with? Do we feel confident to speak out if something doesn't feel right, but we aren't sure why?

We assume newspaper articles give us true facts, but what if the article we are reading is actually an advert, paid for by an organisation who really want to influence what you think about things? Who is in charge of all this stuff?! Why is it all so confusing?!

We've all spent a lot more time online during the **Covid-19** pandemic. There are adverts and posts everywhere – YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram – the list is endless. The more we like, follow and comment, the more these things are targeted at us, so sometimes it can feel like we don't get new perspectives, or new ways of looking at things.

Your school will be constantly doing lots of work on Internet Safety, and hopefully you will know how to be online in the safest way possible. Critical thinking workshops aren't designed to be an online safety course. They are designed to help you think about the information delivered to you each day, and how to think about things from a different perspective. It's not always about checking if something is "TRUE" or "FALSE", as often, it's not that straightforward.

It's about thinking what information is being presented to you, thinking about where it came from, how it makes you feel and learning to take a moment to pause and think about what you want to do with it.



Introduction

For example:



Your friend shares a video. The video is of a girl, about your age singing in her bedroom. She's really getting into it, singing her heart out, using her hairbrush as a microphone and dancing. The video has been shared 2,000 times by people who think it's funny. Your friend shares it with the comments "OMG, she's such a bad singer"

What do you do? When you first watch it, you might laugh too. But then you might stop and think. Who is this girl? Did she want her video shared by strangers on the internet? How is it going to make her feel when she reads the comments people are posting? Would I want to share something like this if it were about me? Probably not.



Or:



Think about the Covid-19 pandemic. It's been really hard for everyone. We've all had to think about things we've never thought about before and deal with information in a new way. Some groups and individuals have used this as an opportunity to spread fear and panic online. They have posted information about masks, vaccines and social distancing that seems very different to what the NHS and the government are saying. But they seem really sure, and some people with huge followings on social media have re-posted some of the things they say. Have you seen this? How did it make you feel?



Introduction

If we see information shared that makes us feel worried or confused, we should talk about it in real life.

Speaking to teachers, family and friends can often help us work things out, and stop us feeling worried. But it can be really hard. Stuff online can look real, and people we know in real life might also be sharing opinions where the facts aren't always true.

Learning to understand where information comes from helps us decide how we use that information, and how we feel about things.

These workshops are designed for Year 6 and Year 7 students, as a pathway to transition into secondary school, to develop critical thinking understanding, development and application. The resources are designed to be an open dialogue, delivered by a facilitator in order to create space to share examples and trends, but also support teachers in embedding critical thinking skills and resource access knowledge.

These sessions include content about families fleeing persecution and becoming refugees. The content may not be appropriate in some settings and can be adapted. Please contact the Bradford Schools of Sanctuary team directly to discuss.

The Schools of Sanctuary workshops are focussed on challenging stereotypes and assumptions about refugees and people seeking asylum, through creative approaches and literature resources, and complement the additional resources.



Learning Group KS2

Learning Objectives:

To develop critical thinking skills

Curriculum Objectives:

PSHE: Anti bullying, Emotional wellbeing and mental health, Media and Digital Literacy.

Citizenship: Developing Confidence and responsibility, Active citizens, Healthy safer lifestyle, Relationships



These workshop sessions have been designed to be delivered in the classroom, as part of the curriculum or during dedicated form time.

The sessions can be delivered by teachers using Powerpoint slides and guidance notes and references, however our preference is facilitator delivery to enable teaching and support staff to participate in the sessions with students.



Workshop Sessions

Three lessons with additional remote learning/in school project template:

1

Session 1:

Perspectives/Opinions/Thoughts on changing our minds



Themes: Where we get our information from, what we do with it. How is it different to other people in our home/extended family?

How do we form opinions? How do our opinions shape how we judge or label people? Can we think of examples where individuals and groups in society are labelled and judged – often without even knowing these people? Why does this happen?

Introduction to the poem “Refugees”, by Brian Bilston.

Explore the poem in pairs

Read separately from different directions, and then talk about what opinions your half of the poem might represent. How can such opposite opinions sit in the same place? How does it make you feel?

Outside the classroom

Journal Project Template – for the students to complete as part of remote learning/project work in school or homework

Over a few days, use the journal page template to write/draw/cut and stick/link 3 or 4 examples you come across online or in real life, of themes or issues where opposing views are presented on the same topic. Make a note of where the information came from and what you think about it.



Workshop Sessions

2

Session 2:

Overview and recap of Session 1 and the Journal Project



What did we document, and what do we think about what we captured? Did it make us think about how we assess information? Do we slow down and consider information more when we are thinking about where it comes from and why we are seeing it?

Introduction to the book “The Journey” by Francesca Sanna. (Slides)

What do we think about the story? What do we notice about the illustrations as we read the book? What were your thoughts about the child telling the story? About the people who forced and then blocked their journey? From what perspective is this story being told? What message does the author want to get across? Do we see this type of information regularly?

Links and snapshots of resources where we might learn more about people’s experiences in seeking sanctuary.



Workshop Sessions

3

Session 3:

Overview and recap of session 2



Based on what we've learnt and what we've thought about in these sessions, is there a specific message we could share with others to make them think more about:

- Where we get information from
- Having a different feeling or opinion to what it feels like everyone else is sharing
- How groups and individuals are labelled or judged
- Taking time to stop and think before we share or repeat a message.

In pairs, make a poster.

Think about what you want to say and include a call to action. Think about who you want to see your poster and how they might use it to learn more themselves.



Follow up

The lesson resources are live tools and will be updated and adapted as appropriate in response to specific themes or issues.

We would like to receive all feedback on the discussion and delivery of these sessions in order to build a larger resource of critical thinking tools for schools in Bradford.



Games



Secret whispers!

Prep

Have 2 cups per student connected with 2m string (hole in the bottom of each cup, with string threaded through the bottom and knotted)

How to play

Students sit at their desks.

They get a cup for each hand, the students should all be connected to each other via the cups and string.

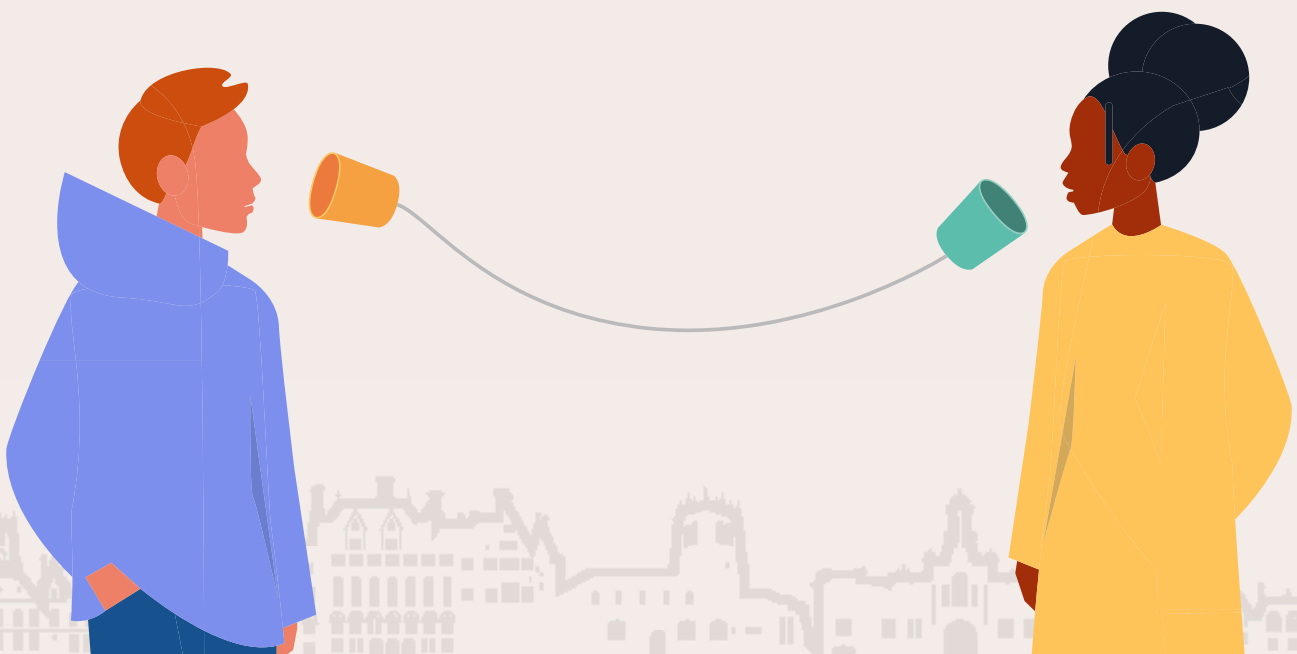
First student thinks of a phrase and whispers it into the cup and this gets passed round each student till it gets back to the originator. If you don't hear it properly you can't ask again.

Has the phrase stayed the same? Has it got lost in translation?

What happens when 2 people start at the same time? Or 3 or 4?

Have one phrase heading one way around the group and a different phrase being passed in the opposite way. Does this confuse the game? These variations reflect the 'noise' of social media.

What can this tell us about passing on information when we're not sure about its source or we can't clarify what we've heard?



Games



2 Truths and a Lie

Play 2 truths and a lie, how do we recognise lies and truths?

How to play

Think up 2 statements about yourself that are true and one lie. Theming them is a good idea or making them quite obscure - pick statements that people around you might not know.

Present them to the group and see if people can guess which is the lie.

Let the group ask a couple of questions to try and get into the story behind the statements.

Who was right? What did they base their guess on? Was it the way it was delivered? Or how realistic the statement was?

Let a few people have a go at presenting statements. Do the statements change through the course of the game? Do people get better at delivering or phrasing statements? Is it harder to work out which statements are true or not the longer the game is played?

Think about how plausible (true sounding) the statements are and if this makes a difference to what people will believe. How can we use this game and the strategies people use, to think about what we believe is true or what we reject as false, from statements we hear every day.



Games



Fact vs. Opinion

This game is about differentiating between fact and opinion:

A fact can be proven either true or false.

An opinion is an expression of feeling or point-of-view and cannot be proven true or false.

Example Statements

1. There are approximately 67 Million people in total in the UK
Office for National Statistics, data from July 2019
2. Serena Williams is the greatest tennis player in the world
3. "Making scrambled eggs is fun..." – Jamie Oliver, from Kitchen Garden Project.
Data gathered Feb 2021 <https://www.jamieoliver.com/recipes/eggs-recipes/scrambled-eggs/>





Fact vs. Opinion

Introduce the game using these statements as examples of fact, opinion and opinion presented as fact.

The first fact is a widely documented piece of information. It's got a reliable source and that source can be easily checked and backed up with other independent sources.

The second statement "Serena Williams is the greatest tennis player in the world" is a subjective opinion- an opinion which changes depending on who says it and the ways they use to measure it.

We don't know who has said this or why- there's no data or evidence. Serena Williams has in the past been the number 1 women tennis player according to the Women's Tennis Association, this is an easy fact to check and is based on a ranking system which measures every professional tennis player. A person who says "Serena Williams is the greatest tennis player in the world" might use different ways to measure 'the greatest' which means Serena would come out the best.

The third statement does have a source to back it up which can be checked. The group of people in the room might all agree with it, it's still a subjective opinion though. How could you change the statement to make it a fact?





Fact vs. Opinion

How to play

Each student comes up with a fact and an opinion. Students read out their statements and the rest of the group decide if they're facts or opinions. If it's a fact, students explain how it can be proven.

If it's an opinion, explain why they feel it can't be proven. How can students disguise their facts as opinions and vice versa?

Use the guiding questions below, and also come up with others.

- How can this statement be proven beyond a doubt?
- Does the statement have a bias?
- Is the statement based on verified information or assumption? How can we tell?
- Does the statement make use of descriptive language to appeal to our emotions?
- Is there anything misleading about this statement?
- Are the facts reliable?
- Are the opinions based on facts?
- If we all agree on something, does that make it a fact?
- How else can we verify something?





Fact vs. Opinion

How to play

Using the statement “Serena Williams is the greatest tennis player in the world” as an example.

Yes this was correct on July 8, 2002 according to the WTA guidelines of what makes the ‘greatest’, and it’s important to note that she’s the ‘greatest women’s tennis singles player’ – we’re being specific. Here we’ve got 2 pieces of important evidence- the date and a set of standards which other players can be compared against, in order to make our statement about Serena true or false. Of course the WTA have made themselves the experts in what makes a great woman tennis player and have made their own set of standards to measure everyone against, in order to make their ranking system.

Being ranked in tennis is really important to women tennis players. For the rest of the world though, it doesn’t feature highly in their list of important things!

Can we think of a time that a ranking system has been put in place for humans, where it DID matter and how it impacted on people. Colonialism, ‘inferior’ races, segregation, ‘one drop’ rule, ideas of class etc. Who put these ranking systems in place and why? Can we think of ways that it impacts on our society now. What can we do to try and ‘level the playing field’?



Games



The Cake Game

This is a way to work out what goes into facts/rumours – Watch the flour buying sketch

Question- what do we need to make a fact cake?

We know what makes a good cake – good quality ingredients – preferably organic! Obviously the ingredients depends on the type of cake. Where do we get these ingredients from? Good quality reputable sources i.e. the shop you trust, with a brand you trust, why do you trust them? You've been there before, they've treated you well and if they've made a mistake they've gone back and fixed it. If it's a brand you trust you know you can go to another shop and get the same product and it will be the same.

This is comparable with good quality information: the ingredient (fact) will come from a trustworthy brand (source) and be basically the same wherever you shop (media outlet). There is a note to be made here about media bias – how the facts are spun by the media language used etc. The basic facts will be the same however, and quality sources can be checked against other media sources to verify them.

So what goes into a good Fact Cake?

Evidence, quality sources, confidence in the facts – how do we get this confidence? Expert backing it up and can be verified independently.

What about a rumour cake?

Your mate saying it's true without any evidence doesn't make it true. Even if you trust the person it's coming from, without proper evidence, it's still not a fact. Lots of people saying it, or it coming from a website also doesn't make it true. Or if someone has a lot of followers online, popularity doesn't mean accurate information. A caps locked WhatsApp message also doesn't make it true.



Games



Sharing knowledge

It's important to share quality facts and knowledge.

How many people have pressed share based on a headline?

We all have!

How to play

Game based on working collaboratively, not speed. Working in teams of 3 to build a simple lego kit – the Reader has the instructions and describes them to the Finder who passes the pieces to the Builder. The team that 'wins' works collaboratively rather than being the people who build it in the quickest time. The point is to slow down and listen to everyone's ideas- everyone brings something different to the process and everyone's contributions are valuable.

Covid secure: the Finder and the Builder both sanitise their hands and are wearing masks. The lego is also sanitised and placed in front of the Finder. The pieces are passed from the Finder to the Builder. If it's the wrong piece, the Builder keeps it in front of them until it's needed.



Discussion Questions



How do we respect people's knowledge?
Even if we don't agree with it?



Is it more important to convince someone that you're right or to be open to other ways of thinking?



When was the last time you changed your mind? What did that feel like? People share the times they changed their mind. Think of a time you were wrong about something and changed your ideas. How did that feel? Was it an easy process? Could it have been made easier for you? Or more difficult? How? Was another person involved? Or did you do your own research?



What is the difference between having your mind changed and changing your ideas? Discuss the differences between these. Which would you rather do? Which feels easier for you? Why?



Critical thinking vs. Myth-busting

People often have emotional attachments to ideas which make it difficult for people to see different points of view i.e. pepperoni pizza is the best because this is what my Nan always gives me for tea when I visit and it's delicious. This might be the worst thing in the world for another person because of elements of their faith or beliefs about eating meat i.e. vegetarian or vegan.

People are more likely to be open to other ways of thinking if they feel safe and supported. If they feel attacked this is more likely to keep them rigid in their way of thinking because they feel that their character or personal beliefs are under threat.

Note: *how to deal with someone who has beliefs and uses hateful language which is damaging i.e. homophobic, Islamophobic etc. This could lead to hate crime and needs to be challenged. It's everybody's job to be an ally to marginalised groups and challenge stereotypes, hateful language and share information, however not at a personal risk to yourself.*



Plasticine

We are not rigid people, we're not made from concrete. When we listen to other people's points of view we get a richer idea about how the world works. Everybody has a piece of plasticine which represents our thoughts and ideas. As we grow and change these ideas can also change shape. **Allowing yourself to be flexible in your way of thinking is important to having mutual respect.** If someone comes along and 'reshapes' your plasticine i.e. shares their ideas which influence your own, this is a good thing!



Try having your plasticine in front of you in the session and each time someone says something which challenges your way of thinking, reshape your plasticine.



Positive Communication

A/B Game

How to play

In pairs (with masks on!) one person is labelled A the other B. Sit opposite each other. Person A talks for 3 minutes about a subject that they really love. Person B sits silently and listens. They can nod, but mustn't speak. After 3 minutes they swap and B gets to talk about their topic. At the end of the 6 minutes A says a few words about B's topic and vice versa. How accurate are they? Does either partner need to correct details? Were we waiting for our turn to speak or actively listening? How does it feel to be listened to for a sustained amount of time? How does it feel to listen and really take people's words in?

Implicit Bias, Stereotypes and Privilege

How to play

Implicit bias story and drawing – who do we draw for our pilot/ hijacker/ cabin crew.

Examine the language in the story (no mention of age, gender, ability, ethnicity etc). How did you come to the conclusions to draw your picture or write your description? Does language make a difference? How? How does our everyday language change the way we are viewed? How does the language of the media change the way we are viewed? Think about your protected characteristics – Age, Ability, Gender, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sexuality. How do you want to be portrayed? As a human being? As yourself? As more than your protected characteristics? Link back to intersectionality.



Positive Communication



Comparison Headlines

How to play

Compare headlines in the media where similar stories are presented in different ways i.e. gendered differences, differences according to age etc. Why are these damaging? Who gets to 'judge' people in this way? Why?



Collaborative artwork

Everybody has different experience and knowledge based on their upbringing, gender, sexuality, class etc. This is called intersectionality. If you go through life only surrounded by people who have similar experiences you don't get to understand the richness of the world. Can we think of reasons why being surrounded only by 'our tribe' might lead to rumours? i.e. not meeting people who challenge stereotyped ideas, suppressing parts of yourselves because they don't 'fit' what we're expected to be, people in power making decisions based on their experiences.

Activity

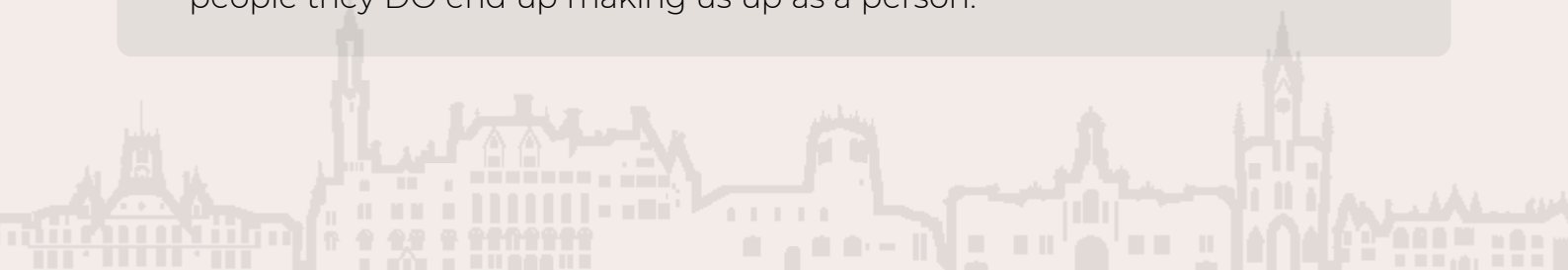
Everybody makes artwork which represents themselves using materials which represent everybody in the group. i.e. Collage with different coloured papers, sand bottles with different coloured sand, jewellery with different coloured fimo etc.

Mindful of being Covid secure: The materials are labelled as 'belonging' to each particular person so it's clear we're making a collaborative piece i.e. each person is assigned a colour which is indicated on a slide.

When social distancing is removed, people can actively trade their materials.

When we take our materials, cut them up and trade with other people, we can all make our own individual artwork from the pieces we've collected.

Our artwork represents us made from all the people we meet and the experiences we've shared. We don't have to take all of those experiences on as our own, or accept those points of view, however by interacting with other people they DO end up making us up as a person.





BRADFORD DISTRICT

