Exploring ethical concepts in fables and in media texts

This sequence is intended as a framework to be modified and adapted by teachers to suit the needs of a class group.

Resources needed

- Mercury and the Woodman
- The Bundle of Sticks
- Strengthening humanity – Quotes visualiser
- The Lion and the Mouse – Focus questions visualiser
- The Lion and the Mouse – Deconstruction visualiser
- Structure of a narrative – Graphic organiser
- Year 8 narrative writing task
- Talking cards (optional one set per group of students)
- Post-it notes

Suggested activity sequence

Part A: Exploring morals and ethics

Solo and pair thinking

1 Display the quotes on the *Quotes visualiser* and invite students to think about what they mean.

2 Students share their thinking with a partner and decide on a real-life example, or an example from literature that exemplifies the meaning of each quote. Students write their example on a post-it note to display on the classroom wall.

3 Students read the examples of other students.

Discussing ethical concepts

1 Read the fable *The Lion and the Mouse* aloud to students:

2 Conduct a class discussion using *Focus questions visualiser* as a prompt

Part B: Deconstructing fables

Introducing fables

1 If students have not been introduced to fables before, explain to students what a fable is:

A fable is a short piece of fiction that features animals in the role of the main character and usually includes or illustrates a moral. A fable can also have other inanimate objects, mythical creatures, or forces of nature as main characters. The distinguishing feature of a fable is the projection of human characteristics and qualities to animals or deities and the inclusion of a moral lesson. At times, this moral lesson is summed up at the end of the fable in a short maxim.

2 Ask: Why do you think fables use animals and deities as main characters?

3 Explain that many films made for children are modern interpretations of the fable genre. An example is *Toy Story*.

4 Students brainstorm films that are modern fables, such as:

- *Bambi*
- *Ratatouille*
- *Cars*
- *WALL-E*
- *Finding Nemo*
- *Shrek*
- *Madagascar*
- *Kung Fu Panda.*

Modelling deconstruction

1 Re-read *The Lion and the Mouse* using the *Deconstruction visualiser.* As you read the story, give students time to answer the questions on each page and share their answers.

2 Discuss the moral and how it relates to modern day real-life contexts such as:

- sponsoring a child through world vision
- donating to charity
- being kind and respectful to others.

Deconstructing a story in groups

1 Divide the class into 2.

2 Allocate one-half of the class *Mercury and the Woodman* and the other half *The Bundle of Sticks*.

3 Ask students to pair with a student who has been allocated the same story.

4 Pairs use the *Graphic organiser* to identify the structural elements of the story they have been given to read. `

5 For their chosen story, students consider:

- the key message
- how the message advances humanity
- how behaving in this way may affect others.

6 Pairs of students connect with another pair who chose a different fable to explain its structure and discuss the message advanced in each story and the lessons for humanity.

Exploring media texts for kindness

1 Use a *grouping strategy* to organise students into pairs.

2 Explain to students that they will be searching for articles and images in the media that tell stories of kindness and/or working together for the greater good. Each pair of students must find at least one article or news story and one image (such as a photograph).

3 Invite students to think about a recent event where people showed acts of kindness, such as the Australian bushfires in late 2019 and early 2020, or the COVID-19 pandemic.

4 Students find articles, news stories, feature articles and images that show:

- kindness (to humans and animals)
- people working together for the greater good
- generosity – the act of giving.

5 Students annotate their artefacts or attach a written explanation to highlight:

- the key message
- the emotions that are evoked
- the use of emotional language
- the visual elements that evoke emotions
- how the actions described or depicted contribute to humanity.

6 Students post their artefacts and explanations on a classroom news wall. Invite class members to take a gallery walk to view the articles and images that have been posted.

Australian Government
Australian Taxation Office

7 As a class, discuss how:

- kindness and working together contribute to humanity

- media stories can contain messages that support humanity

- language and visual images can evoke emotions.

Part C: Independent writing

Brainstorming in groups

1 Use a *grouping strategy* to organise students into groups of 4.

2 Groups brainstorm examples from their own experiences or those of others in their age group that highlight the importance of being honest.

3 Groups discuss:

- why it is important to work together for a greater cause

- why it is important to help others out who are in need and how this may be achieved (for example, people work together to find cures for disease, paying tax to support the community and those in need)

- examples of young people connecting together, leaving intolerance behind and working as one.

4 Groups share their responses with the class.

> To encourage collaborative and purposeful talk, distribute a set of *Talking cards* to each group.

Writing a narrative

Students complete the *Narrative writing task.* They should be given at least 2 lessons to write their stories and one lesson to publish their stories using information and communication technology (ICT).

taxsuperandyou.gov.au

Australian Government
Australian Taxation Office