

Lesson 5: Power to Think

PURPOSE

To acquire excellent thinking habits.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand the importance of using their power to think in an excellent way.
2. Distinguish between facts and opinion in specific situations.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Game: The Salad Bowl
- Facts and Opinions worksheet
- What Kind of Fact or Opinion is That?

VOCABULARY

- Power to think: the human ability to know and connect ideas

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Review the previous lesson. Recall the subject–object distinction. Review some situations in which persons are treated as objects and how one can deal with such situations. Emphasize that persons should always be treated as subjects, never merely as objects.

Step 2: Recall that the power to think is a specifically human power which distinguishes humans from all other beings. This power to think is important for different areas of our life – in school, making decisions and choosing friends, choosing how to spend one’s free time with our friends, and in finding solutions to problems.

Write the following definition on the board:

Power to think: the human ability to know and connect ideas

To help students understand the power to think and to use their critical problem solving skills, have the class play the [Salad Bowl Game](#).

Divide the students into two teams. Have each student write down a person, place, or thing on a piece of scrap paper and place it in a bowl.

ROUND ONE: USE YOUR WORDS!

Explain that in the first round, one student from Team A will draw from the basket and try to describe the noun written on the paper (they cannot use the words written on the piece of paper or point to items in the room). The teammates should make as many guesses as possible, and see how many of the nouns in the basket they can guess correctly in one minute. After the minute is up, calculate the number of words Team A guessed correctly. Have Team B take their turn and at the end of one minute, tally the number of words they guessed correctly. Have students volunteer to take turns leading their group in guessing the words, until all of the papers in the bowl have been guessed. Place all of the papers back in the bowl.

ROUND TWO: CHARADES!

For round two, a new volunteer from each team will act out the words on the pieces of paper while the rest of their team tries to remember the clues from the previous round and guess the words correctly. See how many each team can guess in one minute.

ROUND THREE: USE ONLY ONE WORD!

For the third round, place all of the words back in the basket and have both groups compete again, this time only using one word or sound to describe the words in the basket. At the end of the three rounds, tally up the points and see which team is the winner.

After the game ends, help the students reflect on how they used their powers, by asking students the following questions:

- How did you use the power to think in guessing the words?
- What was the hardest word to guess? What was your process of thinking in this example?
- Could an animal or a plant play this game and solve any of these questions?
- Could you make a correct guess in each of the examples if you were not using your power to think?
- Why is the power to think important? In which areas of life do we need to use it?

Help the students to conclude that animals and plants would not be able to solve any of the examples because they lack the powers to think and choose. Even one's pet dog, who is strongly attached to its owner, would not be able to determine these descriptions or choose whether what is being said is true or false.

From these examples, we can also see that to make good decisions, e.g. to use our power to think in a good way, we need to first think about what we are doing. Therefore, the powers to think and choose are strongly related and need to be developed together.

Explain that in order to use the power to think in an excellent way, human beings need to educate and develop this power. On the other hand, not developing excellent thinking habits will leave our power to think underdeveloped. Just as muscles need exercise to develop, our power to think needs practice to properly develop.

However, it is increasingly difficult to form correct opinions based on reading media articles, scrolling through social media or watching TV, due to an overload of information that may or may not be helpful. To be able to make excellent decisions in life, we need to learn how to sift through the noise on Tik Tok, snapchat, instagram or any other media, to develop the habit of thinking in an excellent way.

Recall the five habits of excellent thinking and the five habits of non-excellent thinking. Write them (or ask for student volunteers to write them) on the board or a large piece of paper that can be displayed in the classroom:

5 Habits of excellent thinking	5 Habits of non-excellent thinking
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listening to different points of view. 2. Making a judgment based on good reasons. 3. Considering if I might be wrong. 4. Asking advice from people with more knowledge or experience. 5. Thinking about the consequences of your ideas and actions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rushing to conclusions. 2. Ignoring valid criticism because it makes me feel bad. 3. Not listening to some opinions because I do not like a person who is saying it. 4. Letting anger blur your judgment. 5. Arguing that something is true simply because you say so.

Step 3: In the table above, one of the habits of excellent thinking is “making a judgment based on good reasons”. To determine whether our judgements or those of others are based on good reasons, the first thing to determine is whether they are based on *facts* or mere *opinions*.

For instance, to determine whether an *opinion* is correct we need to determine whether it is based on true facts. If it is, then it is an excellent habit to accept that opinion or statement. On the other hand, uncritically accepting opinions that are not based on facts is not an excellent habit.

A fact is a statement that is true and can be verified. Facts can, in principle, be validated by some evidence which we can examine with the power to think, while mere opinions are often based on hearsay, gossip, one's personal preferences, or are an expression of how one feels.

There can be different types of facts, for example:

- Scientific facts: e.g. The Earth is round.
- Statistical facts: e.g. More than 50% of people in the world are female.
- Mathematical facts: e.g. $2+2=4$
- Facts of logic: e.g. If you did not finish the race, then you definitely were not the winner.
- Ethical facts: e.g. All human persons are equal in human dignity.

On the other hand, opinions are usually expressed in one of the following ways:

- As statements of taste: e.g. I really hate vanilla ice-cream, it's terrible!
- As expressions of feelings: e.g. I feel like that person hates me.
- As statements of perspective: e.g. To me, the cloud looks like an umbrella.
- As statements of preference: e.g. In my opinion, Ms. Davidson is objectively a much better teacher than Mr. Hughes.
- As personal opinions: e.g. Science is boring.

To develop the power to think in an excellent way, one of the most important things is to distinguish between facts and opinions. To practice distinguishing between facts and opinions, divide the students into groups and ask them to work on the [Facts and Opinions](#) worksheet. After the groups finish working, ask them to share their answers and lead the class discussion on the basis of the Teacher's answer key.

Step 4: To Practice distinguishing different types of facts and opinions, give students the worksheet, [What Kind of Fact or Opinion is That?](#) Explain that different reports, news articles and campaigns on social media are often flooded with opinions presented as facts. This makes it necessary to clearly distinguish between facts and opinions in the articles we read and the things we hear from others. Help the class to arrive at the correct solution for each sentence using the Answer Key as a guide.

If time permits, the following activity can be used in addition to or as a replacement for the worksheet, [What Kind of Fact or Opinion is That?](#)

Divide the students into groups. Ask the students to pretend that they work for an ice cream company. It's their job to create an advertisement for their newest flavor. In a short writeup, they must pitch their new flavor to the audience, making sure to include: three possible facts and three possible statements of opinion.

When students have finished, have them present their advertisement to the class. The groups should also explain why they classified a sentence as a fact or as an opinion. Explain that advertising and social media campaigns can be flooded with opinions presented as facts. This makes it necessary to be able to clearly distinguish between facts and opinions, using our power to think in an excellent way, in order to make excellent choices.

Step 5: Summarize. Recall that the power to think can be used in both excellent and non-excellent ways. Emphasize that one of the most important distinctions to bear in mind is the distinction between facts and opinions. Highlight some of the types of statements of fact and statements of opinion. Remind students of some of the habits of excellent thinking, including the importance of asking advice from people with more knowledge or experience and thinking through the consequences of your ideas and actions.

FACTS AND OPINIONS

Statement	Is the statement based on fact or opinion?
I don't want to study history, our teacher hates us and I hate him.	
The earth revolves around the sun.	
Smoking is bad for your health.	
Studying is boring.	
Dogs make better pets than cats.	
Going to bed on time helps our brains and bodies to function better.	
I like to hang out with girls because boys are weird.	
People should never be treated merely as objects.	
My mom is literally the best mom in the world.	
Telling insulting gossip about someone is harmful.	
$(2 \times 3) + 2 = 8$	
I sometimes feel like gossiping, so it is ok to do it.	
All persons have dignity.	
The USA has a population of over 300 million.	
I think it's true that certain people do have less dignity than others.	

Facts and Opinions – Answer Key for the Teacher

Statement	Is the statement based on fact or opinion?
I don't want to study history, our teacher hates us and I hate him.	Opinion
The earth revolves around the sun.	Fact
Smoking is bad for your health.	Fact
Studying is boring.	Opinion
Dogs make better pets than cats.	Opinion
Going to bed on time helps our brains and bodies to function better.	Fact
I like to hang out with girls because boys are weird.	Opinion
People should never be treated merely as objects.	Fact
My mom is literally the best mom in the world.	Opinion
Telling insulting gossip about someone is harmful.	Fact
$(2 \times 3) + 2 = 8$	Fact
I sometimes feel like gossiping, so it is ok to do it.	Opinion
All persons have dignity.	Fact
The USA has a population of over 300 million.	Fact
I think it's true that certain people do have less dignity than others.	Opinion

WHAT KIND OF FACT OR OPINION IS THAT?

Instructions: For each sentence, write down the corresponding “type” of fact or opinion. The definitions or “types” of fact or opinion can be used more than once.

» *Expression of feelings*» *Statement of perspective*» *Mathematical fact*» *Statistical fact*» *Personal opinion*» *Ethical fact*» *Statement of taste*» *Statement of preference*» *Fact of logic*» *Scientific fact*

1. The eye is the fastest muscle in your body _____
2. A ‘jiffy’ is an actual unit of time. It means 1/100th of a second _____
3. Only 2% of humans have green eyes _____
4. Murder is wrong _____
5. I think tuna is gross. Nobody likes it _____
6. There are ten fingers on two hands. How many fingers are there on ten hands?
7. I feel like she’s always angry with me _____
8. I think basketball is objectively a better sport than baseball _____
9. Art is pointless. _____
10. Your heart pumps blood _____
11. Books are boring _____

What Kind of Fact or Opinion is That? – Answer Key for the Teacher

1. The eye is the fastest muscle in your body. **Scientific fact**
2. A 'jiffy' is an actual unit of time. It means 1/100th of a second. **Mathematical fact**
3. Only 2% of humans have green eyes. **Statistical fact**
4. Murder is wrong. **Ethical fact**
5. I think tuna is gross. Nobody likes it. **Statement of taste**
6. There are ten fingers on two hands. How many fingers are there on ten hands? **Fact of logic**
7. I feel like she's always angry with me. **Expression of feelings**
8. I think basketball is objectively a better sport than baseball. **Statement of Preference**
9. Art is pointless. **Statement of perspective**
10. Your heart pumps blood. **Scientific fact**
11. Books are boring. **Personal opinion**