



Summary:

Students discuss an ethical dilemma that is readily comprehensible – who to save in a lifeboat. The various ethical perspectives can be derived in students’ own words. Alternatively, each group can assume one perspective and analyze their choices through that lens.

Teacher Instructions:

Provide students with the scenario, and specify how long they have to discuss it. Have each group identify someone to explain how the decision was reached, and provide justification. From the debriefing, derive elements of the ethical theories. Also discuss some of the confusion, conflicts, benefits and limitations of each ethical theory.

Variation

Assign each group an ethical perspective, and ask them to base their decisions on that perspective. Refer to the ‘Ethics as a Discipline’ section of the Primer for more information about each perspective.

Moral Rules Groups may choose a rule such as “every life counts” in which case a certain set of people get chosen according to these rules, for example, by lottery.

Virtues Based Groups may hold “achievement” or “justice” as their priority, in which case a certain set of people gets chosen according to who demonstrates the greatest possession of these virtues. In the interest of time, have the group choose one virtue as their priority.

Outcomes Based Groups may weigh how much benefit saving each person has on the person, other people, or society, in which case the most “beneficially effective” people get chosen.

Principles Based Groups may try to weigh and balance all four central principles, in which case a certain set of people gets chosen according to the group consensus on this process. This group tends to have the most difficulty in deciding on the survivors (especially due to the time limitations).

Care Based Groups may decide to serve the typically underserved or honor the most equitable relationships, in which case a certain group get chosen according to these criteria.

Student Instructions

<p>Discuss the following scenario, and reach a decision as a group. Someone should be prepared to explain how you reached your decision. Best of luck!</p> <p>The ship is sinking and the seas are rough. All but one lifeboat has been destroyed. The lifeboat holds a maximum of six people. There are ten people that want to board the lifeboat.</p> <p>The four individuals who do not board the boat will certainly die:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woman who thinks she is six weeks pregnant • Lifeguard • Two young adults who recently married • Senior citizen who has fifteen grandchildren • Elementary school teacher • Thirteen-year-old twins • Veteran nurse • Captain of the ship
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Contributed by Rosetta Lee, Seattle Girls’ School

Lee, R. (n.d.) *The lifeboat*. <https://www.nwabr.org/sites/default/files/Lifeboat.pdf>

Adjectives

This exercise is designed to help participants understand the stereotypes that are commonly held about various groups.

Participants are first instructed to write down the first words that came to mind when they think of different groups based on age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, etc., and then to post them under the respective labels around the room.

(source not known)