

Maria was a single young woman who was unemployed and unhappy. She met a man named Bob online and they immediately connected. It wasn't long before he proposed. Maria could see her future opening up before her, bright and promising. The only problem was that they lived on different sides of the border. Bob tried and tried but could not find a way to bring Maria over through legitimate channels.

Maria thought long and hard about her options. She asked around to see if any of her friends had suggestions. Finally she got in contact with a coyote named Juan, who smuggled people across the border in his van. Maria tried everything to convince Juan to take her to Bob. He finally agreed, but since she didn't have any money to pay him, he told her the price for her journey would be to spend a night with him.

Maria was horrified. She refused and cried herself to sleep that night. The next day she went to see an old family friend named David. Maria told him how much she loved Bob and pleaded with him to help. David assured Maria that he felt very sorry for her, but he just couldn't get involved. He said he did in fact have a truck that he could have taken her over the border in, but he was afraid of getting in trouble and didn't feel it was fair for Maria to ask him to take that risk since he was old and would die if he had to go to jail.

Feeling like she didn't have any other choice, Maria spent the night with Juan and after a very scary journey finally made it safely across the border. Her physical reunion with Bob was everything she could have hoped for. They made plans to marry immediately. Maria was feeling guilty, though. She didn't think it was fair to keep her ordeal from Bob a secret. She told him the truth about her night with Juan, hoping that he would understand how she loved him so much she would do anything to be with him.

Bob felt so betrayed that he called off the wedding and told Maria he never wanted to see her again. Heartbroken, Maria wandered the streets, homeless and alone. At a shelter, she met an older man named Ben who listened to her story and provided a practical solution to her problem. He said that he would never love her romantically – he was, in fact, gay – but he was willing to marry her in order to give her a home and legal status in her new country. Maria accepted with mixed feelings of gratitude, homesickness, anger, and hope.

What other details do you wish you knew about this story?

Task 1: Write down, in rank order, the characters (Maria, Bob, Juan, David, and Ben) of whose behavior you MOST APPROVE to LEAST APPROVE. Be ready to explain your rankings

MOST APPROVE	
LEAST APPROVE	

Task 2: Get into small groups. Write down, in rank order, the character of whose behavior your group **MOST APPROVES** to **LEAST APPROVES**. You must find a single group consensus. Be ready to explain your rankings to the whole group.

MOST APPROVE	
LEAST APPROVE	

Task 3: In your small groups discuss:

1. How do you decide what is morally right and wrong?
2. What aspects of your culture informed your opinion about the behaviors of each person?

Task 4: With the whole group, come to a consensus. Write down, in rank order, the character of whose behavior your group **MOST APPROVES** to **LEAST APPROVES**.

MOST APPROVE	
LEAST APPROVE	

Task 5: Whole group debriefing questions (or individual written reflection questions):

1. What did you learn about your own and other cultures from this exercise?
2. How do other cultures determine whether a behavior is morally preferable over another behavior?
3. What religious traditions, philosophies, and cultural value systems inform moral decision making in your own as opposed to other countries?
4. What do your evaluations of people's morality have to do with the empathy you feel for their circumstances?