

Lesson 3: Values and Perspectives

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What values are important to me?
- Why do people disagree about social and political issues, and why do different people think some issues are more important than others?
- How does perspective-taking help us better understand others?

OVERVIEW

Different people can prioritize different values, which informs the issues they consider important and who they vote for.

In this lesson, students will reflect on the personal and social values that are most important to them. They will then play a perspective-taking game that allows them to experience how prioritizing different values can produce different views on important issues in the Toronto mayoral election. In the *Consolidation* activity, students will discuss the differences they noticed when considering issues from a new perspective.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- evaluate the values that they find most important in their own lives and in society;
- understand how prioritizing different values can influence one's perspective;
- adopt the perspective of someone who prioritizes different values;
- reflect on how prioritizing different values can lead people to have different views on important issues.

STARTER

In this starter activity, students will identify personal values that they find important and discuss what those values mean to them.

1. Divide students into pairs or small groups. Provide each student with a list of personal values (Activity 3.1).
2. Give students a few minutes to identify five values that they think are important. Have students share their answers with other members of the group, explaining what their chosen values mean to them.
3. After discussing their values, have students narrow their original selection down to three values. They can choose to replace any of their original choices with those selected by other students as a result of their discussion.
4. Reconvene as a class, and discuss:

- Which three values did you choose and why?
- Did the discussion influence your final choices? If so, how?
- Would you have chosen different values 5 years ago? Do you think you would choose different values 10 years from now?

Teacher Note

Consider asking students to submit their three values into a word cloud generator (e.g., [MonkeyLearn](#)) to see which values were common within the group.

ACTIVITY

In this activity, students will play *Value Cards*, a perspective-taking game in which students explore how prioritizing different social values produces different views. This activity can be used with small groups of up to 5 students.

1. Divide students into groups. Provide each group with a set of Value Cards (Activity 3.2).
2. Have one student shuffle and deal three pink cards to each player, face down.
3. Present students with a prompt that expresses a position about an important issue in the upcoming mayoral election. You can have every group address the same prompt, or choose a different prompt for each group. Sample prompts:
 - The best way to make the TTC safer is to hire more police officers.
 - Dundas Street, as well as other streets and monuments named after controversial historical figures, should be renamed.
 - Building more bike lanes is an important step towards achieving Toronto’s climate goals.
 - Property taxes need to be raised in order to provide funding for affordable housing.
 - The police budget should be capped so that funding can go to community services instead.
 - The city should not allow unhoused people to sleep in tents in our parks.

Teacher Note

Students can consult the [Candidate Promise Tracker](#) from the Toronto Star to learn more about the major issues in the mayoral election.

4. Each player will then turn their cards face up. These will represent the values that the player will consider most important when considering their response to the prompt. Players then note their values on a piece of paper.
5. Each player consults their value cards to determine how they will respond to the chosen prompt. Would someone who prioritized those values agree, disagree, or be somewhere in the middle? Do they feel conflicted? If so, why? Taking turns, have each player read out their values and descriptions, and then explain their response.

Teacher Note

Some values may be more relevant when evaluating the prompt than others. If a value doesn’t seem to have much of a bearing on the issue being discussed then focus on the other values instead. If none of your values seem relevant you can draw a new one, but only as a last resort.

Example Round:

Prompt: The best way to make the TTC safer is to hire more police officers.

Player 1: The values I've been dealt are *community, humanity, and law and order*. I think someone who thought these values were most important would agree with the position: we need to make sure our community is safe and protect the welfare of all people, and make sure people follow the law.

Player 2: The values I've been dealt are *freedom, kindness, and collective responsibility*. I think someone who thought these values were most important would *disagree*. That's because extra security can make people feel less free because they're being watched, and many have not been treated kindly by police.

Player 3: The values I've been dealt are *social justice, security, and social harmony*. I think this person would be a bit conflicted. They might worry that extra security officers would mean more targeting of minorities. But then they also care about security and social harmony, which might push them in another direction. Maybe they would want to see better security, but not in the form of hiring more police officers.

6. Keeping the same prompt, each player discards their value cards, shuffles the deck, and is dealt three new cards (if there are only 2 players they can draw from the remaining unused cards from the first round). Repeat the process, with players noting their cards and addressing the prompt with the new values in mind.

Optional activity: Keeping the same three values, see if you can think of a way in which someone who held those values would take the opposite stance. For example, Player 1 (from above) might say that too many police officers can make it harder for community members to build relationships with one another, that there are better ways to enhance people's welfare and encourage people to follow the law.

7. All players discuss how their responses differed given the different sets of values they received. If you think that the new values support the same position, discuss how the reasons for that view may have changed.
8. Finally, turn all the value cards from players and the deck face up on the table. Each player then reflects on *their own* response to the given prompt, and identifies three of the values on the cards that they think are most important in determining *their own* views, ranking them from most to least important.
9. Repeat these steps for a new prompt as many times as you like.

CONSOLIDATION

After playing *Value Cards*, have students reflect on the experience of taking on and hearing from different perspectives by answering one or both of the following questions:

- How do values play a role in elections for both candidates and voters?
- What is one concept that you learned today and how will you apply it in your life?