



Classroom



Lesson Plan

Curiosity

Questions of Understanding

LESSON ONE: AT A GLANCE

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce a questions framework that can be used when encountering a perspective with which you disagree. This exercise teaches about “Questions of Understanding” and allows students to both practice this style of question and experience the impact of asking this style of question in a conversation.

You’ll find the lesson plan and script below.

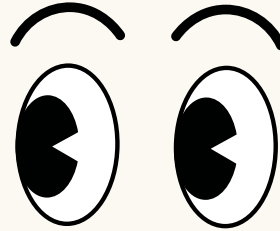
Agenda Overview: 23 minutes

- 5 mins: Introduction, Grounding
- 3 Mins: Framing
- 3 Mins: Modeling + Group Exercise
- 4 Mins: Activity Handout
- 5 Mins: Closing

Please note that anything written in this format is the suggested teaching script. Feel free to adapt to your own voice and needs.



We Are 
Curious



We commit to approaching all materials and perspectives with the sense that there is more to learn and understand — especially when we do not agree.

We can disagree with passion and respect, but we will ask questions to better understand each other.

In this class, you are invited to commit to the 3Cs framework: Curiosity, Compassion, and Courage. Today, we will talk about Curiosity and how to develop curiosity as a skill.



(REVIEW TEXT FROM POSTER)

Curiosity

We commit to approaching all materials and perspectives with the sense that there is more to learn and understand — especially when we do not agree.

We can disagree with passion and respect, but we will ask questions to better understand each other.

We think of curiosity as something that just kind of “happens” to us. We simply follow our impulses to listen passively (“Cool story, bro”) or to disagree (“That’s dumb”) or to be engaged (“Wow! How did you do that?”).

The thing is, we tend to naturally have curiosity about the things in our own little bubbles of interest. We must cultivate curiosity as a skill if we want to approach others with a sense that there is more to learn and understand. An important part of curiosity is learning about asking questions.



Curiosity

Lessons

Lesson One: Questions of Understanding ← **You Are Here**

Lesson Two: Questions of Persuasion

Lesson Three: Impact of Questions

This is the first of three lessons in this unit engaging with the first C: Curiosity.

When we disagree with something someone says, there are many different ways we may choose to express it. In today's activity, we'll begin to explore questions and how simple choices in the kinds of questions we ask can influence the direction a conversation goes.

Being aware of these choices allows us to make them skillfully, especially when we find ourselves in conversations with other people who may have different opinions or perspectives than we do.



Teacher note: you may choose to begin the lesson with a grounding exercise and/or a connecting question. You're the expert in your class, so use your judgment to determine which will be the most effective way to get started.

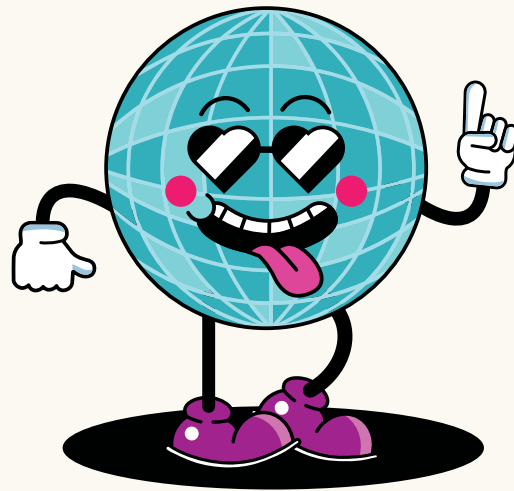
Curiosity: LESSON ONE | QUESTIONS OF UNDERSTANDING | Classroom Presentation

4

Ground

Grounding Activity

Dance Party!



GROUNDING EXERCISE OPTION:

Teachers, choose a song that you think your kids will want to dance to. You can even take a request! We recommend doing this for no more than two minutes.

Before we get started, let's get rid of all our excess energy in our body! Get up from your desk and move around and see what you want to let go of and release. You might feel silly doing this, but sometimes tension can build up in your body — and we need a way to get it out productively and safely. And the best way to do that is to DANCE! So, have fun with it.



Connect

Connect Question

What emoji would you use to describe your mood today?



CONNECTING QUESTION OPTION:

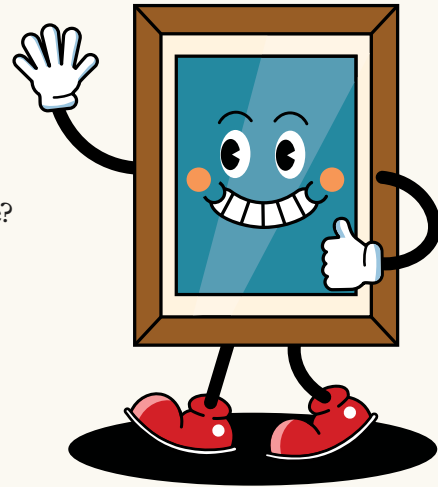
Before we begin today, let's take a moment to connect. I'm going to ask a question and then give you 30 seconds to think of your answer. We'll then go around in a circle, and remember that you can always feel free to pass (or pass for now). The question is: what emoji would you use to describe your mood today?



Framing

How do the questions we ask shift the conversations we have?

What are the impacts of questions to better understand someone in a conversation?



Today, we are going to do the first part of an exercise that has three parts. For now, we will explore:

- How do the questions we ask shift the conversations we have?
- What are the different impacts of questions intended to persuade someone in a conversation?

There are many kinds of questions, and questions have different purposes. Let's focus on one kind of question: questions of understanding.



Questions of understanding are questions that are motivated by a desire to *understand more about someone* and their beliefs.

They might sound like:

<div data-bbox="228 564 570 648" data-label="Text"> <p>Inviting deeper meaning</p> </div> <div data-bbox="228 680 570 947" data-label="Text"> <p>What made you want to...? What personal experiences led you to believe that?</p> </div> <div data-bbox="391 961 537 1033" data-label="Image"> </div>	<div data-bbox="634 564 976 648" data-label="Text"> <p>Inquiring about impact</p> </div> <div data-bbox="634 680 976 947" data-label="Text"> <p>How did this impact the way you think about that? What did you learn? How did this affect...?</p> </div> <div data-bbox="797 961 943 1033" data-label="Image"> </div>	<div data-bbox="1040 564 1382 648" data-label="Text"> <p>Asking for more detail and clarity</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1040 680 1382 947" data-label="Text"> <p>Say more about... What about this feels important to you? When you say... what does that mean to you?</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1203 961 1349 1033" data-label="Image"> </div>
--	---	---

Questions of understanding are questions that are motivated by a desire to understand more about someone and their beliefs. They might look and sound like:

Questions that invite deeper meaning:

- What experiences in your life cause you to dislike dogs so much?

Questions that ask about the impact of something:

- What did you learn when you went to that wilderness summer camp?

Questions that ask for more information or clarity:

- What was it like to move here from another country? How was it different back home? Can you describe it more?





**This question style
is not good or bad.**



THIS QUESTION STYLE IS NOT GOOD OR BAD.

Questions in and of themselves are not good or bad — they are just more or less helpful in achieving a purpose in a conversation.

Questions of understanding are a tool you can use in conversation. Notice what kind of impact they have on you and your partner — and what kind of purpose they might serve.



PRACTICE: Help Me Understand

“I think students should have at least 3 hours of homework every night.”

Let’s practice. Here is a statement, and I want you to ask me questions to better understand my point of view, my perspective, and why I think the way I do.

“Students should have 3 hours of homework every night.”






Note: Feel free to change the statement to something that is true for you, but remember to remove our slide and create a new slide with your statement. Make sure that the statement you use is something that you feel comfortable responding to questions of understanding about and that you can answer such questions about it. You want to be able to model for students how questions of understanding can invite stories about personal experiences, about things that are important to the speaker, and about more complex value systems than may initially be apparent.

- Have students spend about one minute asking questions to better understand your perspective and where your statement comes from.
- Respond to their questions as naturally/honestly as you can after they are asked.
- Encourage them to engage you using questions of understanding.

Activity Handout (4 Mins) | Slide 10 | Question of Persuasion Prompts

Curiosity: LESSON ONE | QUESTIONS OF UNDERSTANDING | Classroom Presentation 10

PRACTICE: Help Me Understand

<p>Inviting deeper meaning</p> <p>What made you want to...? What personal experiences led you to believe that?</p> 	<p>Inquiring about impact</p> <p>How did this impact the way you think about that? What did you learn? How did this affect...?</p> 	<p>Asking for more detail and clarity</p> <p>Say more about... Could you say more about what that was like or how you felt? When you say... what does that mean to you?</p> 
---	---	--

ACTIVITY PT. ONE (1 MIN)

Now, you will have an opportunity to practice with each other. On your handout, look at the four sentences and choose one that you feel most passionately about today, even if it is just slightly more than the others.

Fill in the blanks to make that sentence true for you.



In this exercise, you will be in pairs. One person will say their statement, and the other person will spend one minute asking questions to better understand where the person is coming from, what experiences led them to believe what they do, and why that's important to them.

During this question time, the person who made the statement should answer honestly.

Even if you **AGREE** with what the person says, resist the urge to talk about yourself and your opinions; instead, ask the other person questions to better understand how they came to believe what they believe.



Classroom Activity


Questions of Understanding

30^s
Classroom

Questions of understanding are questions that are motivated by a desire to understand more about someone and their beliefs. They might look and sound like:


Inviting deeper meaning

What made you want to...?
Where did you learn that was important to you?
What personal experiences led you to believe that?




Inquiring about impact

How did this impact the next time you...?
What did you learn?
How did this affect...?



Asking for more detail and clarity

Say more about...
What about this feels important to you?
When you say... what does that mean to you?



Fill in the blank
Choose one of the following sentences and fill in the blanks to make it true for you. Choose the one that you feel most passionate about right now.

_____ is the best holiday of the year.

_____ is/are better than _____.

There should be a school rule that _____.

_____ should no longer be taught in school.

Break out into pairs
One person shares their statement. The second person asks questions to better understand the first person's perspective and where their belief comes from. The first person responds honestly. Continue asking and answering questions for the full time.

Classroom Activity Overview

ACTIVITY PT. ONE

- Have each student fill in the blank for one sentence in the box.

ACTIVITY PT. TWO

- Divide the students into pairs.
- Each pair should decide one person to say their statement and one person to ask questions.
- Set a timer for **one minute**.
- When you start the timer:
 - The first student should say their statement, and the second student should ask questions to persuade them to think differently.
 - Even if the student agrees with the statement, for the purposes of the exercise, they should try to persuade their partner to think differently.
 - There are question stems on the slide and in the handout for people struggling to find a question.
 - The student making the statement should respond to the questions naturally.
- Students should continue to ask/respond to questions for the full minute.
- When the timer is finished, let students know to stop.
- Have students take a deep breath or two to regulate their systems and transition out of the exercise.

(If there is time, you can do two rounds and have students take on both roles. Take a deep breath between switching roles.)

Facilitation note: If you have an odd number of students, you (the teacher) can do the exercise with a student, or you can create a group of three. In a group of three, have two people ask questions to one person.

Closing (5 Mins) | Show of Hands

- How many people learned something new about your partner, their experiences, or perspectives that you didn't know before?
- How many people felt like you ran out of time — maybe you only had a chance to ask one or two questions before the time ran out?
- How many people feel like their perspective on the issue/statement their partner talked about has grown, broadened, or shifted — even if you don't agree?



Closing (5 Mins) | Wrap Up

The kinds of questions we ask impact the kinds of conversations that we have. Different kinds of questions invite different kinds of responses.

- Questions of understanding:
 - Open up possibilities for different directions in the conversation.
 - Allow a chance to learn something new about the other person — to make a connection with someone, even if you disagree.
 - Slow down the conversation.
 - Allow you to disagree without arguing.



Closing (5 Mins) | Final Thoughts

Ask students to take two minutes to quietly reflect and make notes on their handout about one of the following questions. Then, have them take two minutes to turn to a partner and share their response.

Thinking back on the past week,

- When was a time you asked a question to understand someone's perspective better?
- or
- When was a time you wished someone had asked you a question of understanding?

