

CIRCLE OF VIEWPOINTS ROUTINE

A routine for exploring diverse perspectives

Brainstorm a list of different perspectives and then use this script skeleton to explore each one:

1. I AM THINKING OF ...*the topic* ... FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF...*the viewpoint you've chosen*
2. I THINK...*describe the topic from your viewpoint. Be an actor--take on the character of your viewpoint*
3. A QUESTION I HAVE FROM THIS VIEWPOINT IS...*ask a question from this viewpoint*

WRAP UP: *What new ideas do you have about the topic that you didn't have before? What new questions do you have?*

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine helps students consider different and diverse perspectives involved in and around a topic. Understanding that people may think and feel differently about things is a key aspect of the Fairness Ideal.

Application: When and where can it be used?

This routine can be used at the beginning of a unit of study to help students brainstorm new perspectives about a topic, and imagine different characters, themes and questions connected to it. It can be used after reading a book or chapter. Provocative topics and issues are encouraged and the routine also works especially well when students are having a hard time seeing other perspectives or when things seem black and white. The routine can be used to open discussions about dilemmas and other controversial issues.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

After identifying a topic, ask students to brainstorm various viewpoints about this topic. This can be done solo, or as a class, but make sure to give the initial brainstorm enough time for students to really stretch and explore diverse ideas. If students need help thinking of different viewpoints, try using the following prompts:

- How does it look from different points in space and different points in time?
- Who (and what) is affected by it?
- Who is involved?
- Who might care?

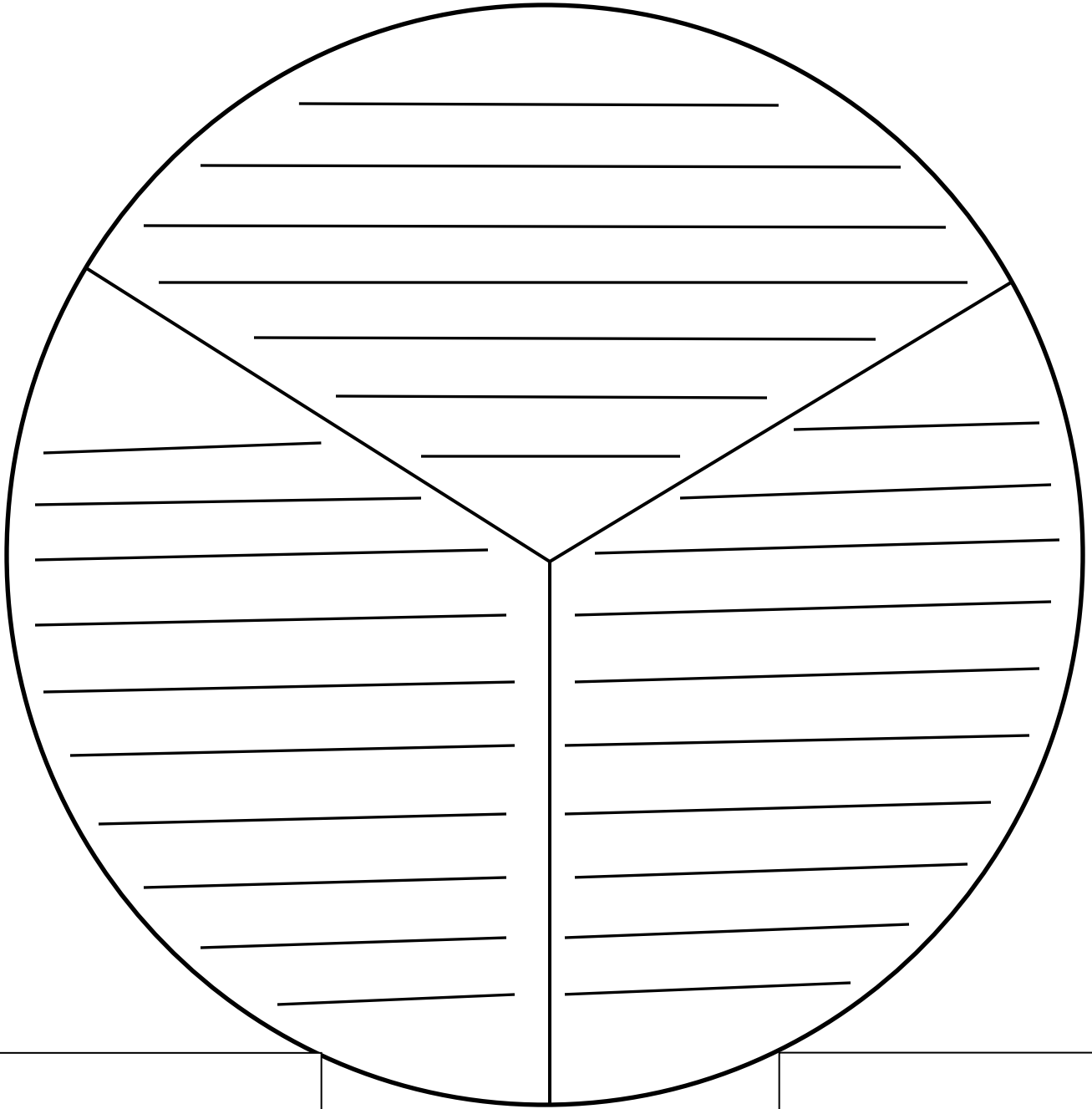
After the brainstorm, ask each student to choose one of these viewpoints. Give them time to prepare to speak about the topic from that perspective and to embody the viewpoint using the script skeleton to structure what he or she says.

Once students have prepared their “characters”, the class should be ready to go around the circle and act out their various perspectives. Taking turns, ask students to speak briefly about their chosen viewpoint using the script skeleton. Invite them to stand up and use gestures and movement if necessary. The discussion at this point might move fairly quickly, capitalizing on the immediacy of the experience as each student goes through the script and presents a perspective. The array of responses will hopefully be broad and distinct, as each student should strive to produce a unique viewpoint. If some students choose the same character, encourage them to perform differently. For example, if several students choose the viewpoint of an explorer, one may be trying to seek out wealth through trade, another explorer might be adventurous or want to become famous. Ask them to raise different questions in order to elaborate their viewpoints.

Viewpoints connect to the idea of physical perspective taking and you may notice that your students interpret this literally at first by naming and describing what their characters *see*. While it is fine to help students get started with concrete examples, try to move your students to consider *thoughts and feelings* of characters, rather than describing a scene or object.

As students perform their viewpoint in the circle, their ideas can be recorded or written on the board so that a class list of perspectives is created. The last question of the routine asks students to think of a question they might have from their chosen viewpoint. Collect these questions or ask students to write them down and answer them as they think more about the topic as it is studied in class. Once everyone in the circle has spoken, the teacher can lead a discussion by asking: “What new ideas do you have about the topic that you didn’t have before?” and “What new questions do you have?”

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Circle of Viewpoints

Place Topic or Unit Here