



ACTIVITY: 'MONARCHS AND MALCONTENTS'

TIME: 20+ minutes
SIZE: Large groups/whole of class
SPACE: Empty space to mingle
RESOURCES: Character Cards 1 & 2 (pp.72–75), hat/bucket, tape

The aim is to place students in a situation where one has absolute control and attendant responsibilities, and others have curtailed control and experience attendant thoughts and feelings.

The result should be rewarding discussion about how control is a matter of perception, and even those seemingly in complete control may not feel that way, and vice-versa.

1. Set the scene: it is the Middle Ages – feudal times where monarchs have both complete control over and complete responsibility for their subjects.
2. Select a Monarch – that person will have absolute control over his/her subjects.
3. The remaining students each select a Character Card from the hat/bucket which shows their medieval profession (baker, swineherd, cooper). Do not let them open and read their Character Cards yet.
4. Allow everyone time to come up with medieval names for themselves, then a few more minutes to mingle. Insist that subjects address the Monarch as 'Highness'. Allow the king/queen to boss around the peasantry as he/she sees fit. Anyone showing disrespect might be clapped in irons (no beheadings, please!).
5. Get down to business: today is People's Day, when the Monarch will 'hear all grievances and, as is his/her duty, solve his/her subjects' problems'. Subjects open their Character Cards to see the problem that they are experiencing (e.g. their pigs are escaping through unmended fences). Have them queue up for their one-on-one audiences with the Monarch.
6. The problems are not easily solved: each problem impacts on others in the village. Keep the pressure on the Monarch AND the subjects. Those in the queue might get restless and angry – in which case soldiers may need to do their job. Of course, harsh treatment may result in revolution! But remember, no violence and no executions.



DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS

- **Monarch:** how did you feel at the start of the activity? How would you describe your Sense of Control? How did those feelings change as the activity progressed? What thoughts went through your head? How in control did you feel by the end of the activity?
- **Subjects:** how did you feel at the start of the activity? What thoughts went through your head? How would you describe your Sense of Control? How did those thoughts and feelings change throughout the activity? How would you describe your Sense of Control at the end of the activity?
- What actions resulted from people's changing Sense of Control? (For instance, if Monarchs became more in control, was subjects' anger assuaged? If control wore thin, were rowdy subjects clapped in irons?)
- How might students have thought differently/more helpfully during the activity? How could those thoughts have changed the dynamic of the situation?
- Did people's sense of perspective alter at all during the activity as heard one another's problems? How? Why? What impact did that have on your Sense of Control?
- What similarities does this activity have with your present day life? Do you see yourself as a Monarch or a subject (or both or neither)? What makes you think that way? How can you change your thinking to feel more in control?
- Discuss how many jobs/roles seem to offer a lot of power/autonomy/control (e.g. Queen Elizabeth II, passenger plane pilot) but do they really have a lot of control?