



ACTIVITY: 'THE WORD THIEF'

TIME: 20+ minutes
SIZE: Groups of four
SPACE: Room for small groups to work
RESOURCES: Paper, pens

The aim is to place obstacles in front of students who share a common goal, and to give them an opportunity to work together to achieve their objective.

The result should be rewarding discussion about the important roles that help-seeking and support play in creating a Sense of Purpose.

1. Explain what a haiku is (example below): 17 syllables over 3 lines: 5, 7, 5.
2. Have everyone write a haiku about something that gives meaning to their life.
3. Now explain that you are a word thief, and you are going to steal all but four words in their haikus – give students one minute to choose which four words they want to keep.
4. Invite students to find a partner. These pairs can now add their four words together to make eight. (Pairs try to use these eight words to write another haiku if they have sufficient syllables.)
5. Have each pair now join up with another pair, to make quartets. Have everyone in each quartet use their cache of 16 words to write a haiku – it should be about something that gives all of their lives meaning.
6. Have students willing to share their haikus (and attendant meanings) read them to the rest of the class.

EXAMPLE

Heron is flying
White wings arc across the sky
Pale parentheses.



DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS

- What went through your mind when asked to create a haiku with only four words? Were those thoughts helpful or unhelpful?
- How much easier was it to achieve the goal when you had the assistance of another person? And then another two people? What was the cost of this assistance (e.g. you could not choose the words they brought to the table)?
- How different was the process of creating a haiku with a palette of 16 words than creating it with your entire vocabulary? Were you still able to express meaning in your poem? How might this be similar to when some of your options in life are no longer available to you?
- Some goals are not achievable without the assistance of others. How do we know when to seek help in achieving our goals? What thinking skills allow us to seek help at the right time?