

the science of...
SPYING

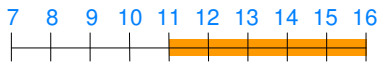
Who do you believe?

Communicating – Empathy and Language

Purpose

To explore how we make decisions in situations that are open to interpretation.

Age range (years)



Subjects

English, Drama,
Psychology.



Background

Spies often have to make decisions based on conflicting data. This information might be found in camera footage, emails or subjective reports.

Steps

1. Warm up with an exercise in remembering facts.
 - Split the class into pairs. In each pair there is a 'teller' and a 'listener'.
 - 'Tellers' describe in full detail their journey to school to the 'listeners'
 - Now pairs exchange one member each. Those who were listeners in the first pair retell what they have heard to their new partner
 - The groups now come together and the second set of listeners recount what they have just been told
 - Has any information been related in a way that the first teller did not expect? What appears to have changed?
2. Present the following story: best friends Jo and Ali have fallen out badly because they have both been accused of stealing a DVD from the school library.
3. Ask the class to read Jo and Ali's accounts (presented on page two). Who do they believe?

4. Split the class into pairs to discuss possible explanations for what has happened. Do they believe one person over the other?
5. Select different pairs to present their thoughts to the class, giving reasons for their viewpoint.
6. Ask them, 'if you had to make a decision about what should be done next what would it be?'

Discussion

- Is there a clear right and wrong to be found in Jo and Ali's situation?
- Do we always have all the facts?
- Do people remember things differently?
- Do you think anyone was lying?

Extensions

In small groups, create a new drama featuring Jo and Ali but where the stakes are much higher. (For instance, if one of them is exposed as a liar they might be sent to jail.) Get each group to act out their scene.

Who does the audience believe and why?

Who do you believe?

Jo's story

To: TJones@Hillhigh.sch.uk
CC: School Council
From: JBull@Hillhigh.sch.uk
Subject: Re: Reported theft of the history DVDs

You asked me to tell you my version of what happened. Mr Smith said we could borrow his DVD set for a day, because he knows we like history especially about wars and stuff. I knew Ali wanted to borrow it too, but I got there first. I signed it out, and then I signed it out to Ali as well to save time, after my name.

I watched a bit of it at lunchtime, on the computer in the school library, but there was loads of it and I hadn't finished, so I decided to take it home with me. I saw Ali running after me at the end of the day but my Mum was waiting in the car, and, believe me, you don't want to keep my mum waiting. I was just going to watch it at home and then bring it back the next day. Which is what I did.

Then the next thing, Mr Jones is accusing us of stealing it, saying it must be one of us, and who was it? Ali is having a go at me and saying I've nicked it and I'm trying to pass it off as her, because I signed it out to Ali as well. But I brought it back the next day, after I'd watched it. I got a text saying something like, 'Have you got it?' and I answered truthfully.

Ali's story

To: Tjones@HillHigh.sch.uk
CC: School Council
From: Awright@Hillhigh.sch.uk
Subject: Re: Reported theft of the history DVDs

Jo said "I'll sign it out and give it you by the end of the day". I guess I should have been suspicious when Jo signed my name as well, when I hadn't even got them, but I didn't think anything of it.

So, Jo has it over lunchtime, but then doesn't get it back to me so I can stay after school and watch it. And then I see, at the end of the day, Jo's running off to get a lift home. I called out, but Jo just looked at me and then carried on running. So I'm thinking Jo's run off with it, taking it home.

I texted Jo later, saying 'Have you got it?' and got the reply, 'You know the answer to that'.

Then two days later I'm accused of stealing it! Jo says 'I brought it back', and now my name's showing as the last one in the book. But the DVD set is nowhere, and I haven't even watched it. Jo was the last person seen with it. I ask you, who is the most likely person to have it?