

RESPONSIBILITY AND COMPASSION

Purpose

This activity builds on the Who Am I activity and asks you to think about your sense of responsibility (duty) to your community at the local, national, and global scale. In addition, you are asked about your compassion for members of your communities. By looking at our levels of responsibility and compassion in relation to communities at various scales, you will begin to see how interconnected we all are but also how humans can sometimes be passionate about their local community or nation while also being critical or judgmental of others outside of these communities. This can lead people both to value their community or nation over all others (nationalism) and turn away from their fellow humans.

Practices

Contextualization, scale

You will use your scale-switching skills to look at communities across different spatial scales. First, you'll zoom in on your local community and then zoom out to your nation, and finally switch to one of the largest scales—the world—to see how your sense of responsibility or duty tends to decrease as you zoom out. In addition, you will think about how this relates to historical events such as genocide and how developing our sense of empathy, or compassion, might help to prevent these events from occurring in the future.

Process

Take out the Responsibility and Compassion Worksheet and look at the image of the boxes. As you review the boxes, your teacher will ask you a series of questions about them. Once you're done discussing these as a class, answer the additional questions on the worksheet on your own.

Finally, think about how the idea of belonging to a nation and being willing to fight and die for it is a relatively modern idea. People living before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries thought of themselves in a much more local way. Their sense of community was much smaller. Why do you think that might have been the case and what led to changes in the ways we view our obligation to our national community? Do you think there are any negative aspects to having a strong sense of being a part of a national community?

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Name:

Date:

Directions: Think about your sense of responsibility and your compassion for the communities listed in the boxes below. Your teacher will ask you a series of questions about how these feelings change as you move from the inner circle of you and your family to those of your local community, nation, and the world. Then, answer the questions at the end of this activity on your own. Be sure to explain your reasoning.

GLOBAL COMMUNITY (THE WORLD)

NATIONAL COMMUNITY (NATION)

LOCAL COMMUNITY (TOWN, CITY)

YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

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Name:

Date:

Answer the following questions on your own:

1. How did your sense of responsibility change as you moved outside of your own box or your community's box?

2. Were you surprised that your sense of responsibility and compassion decreased—or increased—as you moved outside of your own box or your community's box? Explain your reasoning.

3. Do you think this sense of responsibility and compassion for those far outside your local community was the same for those living in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries? Or do you think this is a relatively recent way of thinking? Explain your reasoning.