

Doing the Tiddalick role-play

Read Part One of the story to the children and stop. Then say something like: 'Let's imagine we are the animals. We've had our meeting and we are going to try to persuade Tiddalick to change his mind by giving our best reasons.'

Arrange for someone (adult helper or child) to play the role of Tiddalick. Tell them to puff out their cheeks as if they are full of water. Also say that whatever reasons the children give in support of sharing, they should shake their head. Then ask for volunteers to stand up and make their arguments to Tiddalick, starting with a phrase like: 'Tiddalick, you should share the water because ...'

I've done this with several classes of 7 year-olds and they started with arguments like: 'Tiddalick, you should share the water because we will die of thirst if you don't.'

Encourage children in your group to come up with reasons that would be likely to appeal to Tiddalick, or to general rules that everyone – including Tiddalick – should accept. The pupils I worked with elaborated on their initial reasons or came up with some new ones. For example:

'... we will die of thirst and it will be your fault.'

'... you will be killing us and killing is wrong.'

'... we will die and so you won't have any friends.'

'... we will die AND your own children and all your family will die.'

Keep encouraging them to come up with more and better reasons. You might draw attention to the concepts such as consequence, principle and responsibility that are implied by the reasons they give.

Your helper in the role play will keep shaking their head. At some point, you should say: 'It seems Tiddalick isn't persuaded by our arguments. We'd better have another meeting to decide what to do. This is very serious. We want to make the best decision, so I think we should listen carefully to what everyone has to say. We should give reasons why we think some things should be done and not others.'

A few children might know the traditional story and, at this point, they might say: 'We should try to make Tiddalick laugh'. Ask why this would be a good thing and wait for reasons to be given. Then ask what alternative ideas children have and what reasons support those. The children I worked with suggested the following:

- 'Make Tiddalick laugh (because he will have to open his mouth and the water will come rushing out).'
- 'Suggest a race between the animals. The jiggling up and down will cause the water to come out.'
- 'Force a stick into Tiddalick's mouth to keep it open and give him a big squeeze. It is a good way to get the water out and it might be the quickest way.'
- 'Stick a pin in Tiddalick so he will pop like a water balloon. This will solve the problem but it will kill Tiddalick.'
- 'Pretend we are dead so Tiddalick will feel bad. Then he will cry and the water will come out or he might decide to give it back.'

There is plenty here to stimulate discussion. The reasons seem to speak to the criterion of effectiveness but might also stimulate questions about doing less or more harm to Tiddalick. The 'laughter' solution might cause least harm. Would a good principle be: solve the problem in a way that causes least harm? If you ask this question, children might assume that you were leading the discussion towards a pre-conceived conclusion. But you could ask if the 'least-harm' principle had any drawbacks. Encourage children to think aloud and explore all the possibilities. For example, some children might say: 'If you tricked him, he might just do it again.' Others might say that deceiving Tiddalick (pretending to organise a race or pretending to be dead) is wrong too because it involves lying.

As in any P4C session, avoid forcing children into a consensus that doesn't arise naturally. Leave them space to argue for their own points of view.

At some point the children will have explored some of the alternatives and they will be ready to move on. There may be agreement about what should be done or there may not. It doesn't matter either way.

Ask the children if they want to know what the animals in the story decided to do. **Then read Part Two**