

Exploring reasons

What makes a reason strong or weak?

‘I stole the bread because ...

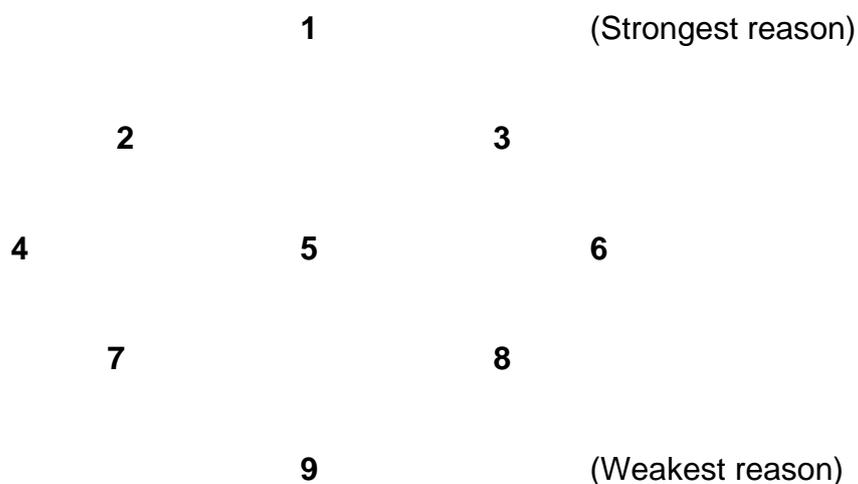
I was bored	I didn't have any money on me, but I felt hungry	My sister was hungry and we are very poor
I would be bullied by some boys for "being afraid" if I didn't	I like the thrill of taking a risk	All my friends were doing it too
It was a hot Tuesday afternoon	The shop keeper was rude to me last week	I won't get caught! The police don't care!

Explanation

It's one thing for a person to offer an opinion, another to offer a reason for that opinion, and yet another to offer a good reason. This exercise will help pupils to:

- Recognise different strengths or qualities of reason
- Practice evaluating and ranking reasons
- Explore why reasons might be strong or weak
- Consider categories for reasons

Pupil groups should cut these out, and discuss where to place them in a **Diamond 9** shape with *Strongest reasons* for stealing bread at the top, and *Weakest reasons* at the bottom:



Groups could rotate to compare their results with other groups, and explore common themes and differences through dialogue. They might then consider their own reasons for not stealing (such as 'It's unfair on the shopkeeper'), and rank those in a similar way. Further dialogue might derive from considering whether the reasons for not stealing bread are ever outweighed by the reasons for stealing bread?

NB: Perhaps point out that reasons can be weak or strong for different reasons! It might be worth categorising 'types of weak / strong reason'. For example, a reason might be weak because it is:

- **insufficient** ('No-one else wanted it' ... so what? You wouldn't steal a used tissue solely because 'no-one else wanted it'. There must be other reasons to add...)
- **inaccurate** ('There's no risk' ... an assumption, and probably not true)
- **unrelated** (It was a hot Tuesday afternoon ... how does that relate to stealing the bread?!))
- **appeal to popularity** ('All my friends were doing it too' ... popularity does not make something right or true ... everyone used to believe in a flat Earth!)
- **morally questionable** ('the shop keeper was rude ... 'ie, I did it out of revenge)