

Eulogy Virtues



"The eulogy virtues are the ones that are talked about at your funeral — whether you were kind, brave, honest or faithful. Were you capable of deep love?"

David Brooks

Activity 1



Aim(s)

- Consider the virtues that the young people feel are important for them to be remembered for.
- Consider the ways in which individuals can develop these virtues.



Resources

- Power Point slide.
- Paper and pens / art materials as necessary.



Delivery Guide



Facilitators can take part in this along with the young people, completing the activity and sharing their own thoughts.



This should ideally be completed as individuals, but young people can work in pairs or small groups to help each other.

Part I

Introduce this scenario to the young people:

Imagine this. It is 70 or 80 years from now. You look back over your life. Unlike many other people you knew, you have been blessed with a particularly long life. You are thinking about what you felt, what you did and why you did the things you did. You look at what you enjoyed, and what caused you pain. You look at what you gained and what you lost. You look at what you achieved and where you failed. You see where you were strong, and where you were weak. You think through what you came to know, and what you may have missed. You think about the people you loved and the quality of love that you showed them.

Ask them to imagine they are the person in the scenario and that they are looking back on their life.

- What kind of life have you lived?
- What kind of a person were you?
- Is it easy or difficult to imagine your whole life like this?

Ask them to create a piece of writing or art work to describe what kind of life they hope to have lived. Afterwards, they can explain it or read it to the facilitator or to the rest of the group (if appropriate).

Part II

Have a discussion about the differences between everyone's ideas. Are there lots of differences, or are there some common themes in people's imaginings of their lives? Things that come up may be:

- Love and good relationships;
- Money – enough to live well but also enough for luxuries;
- Adventure and fun;
- Stability;
- Being good or skilled at something.

Ask the young people to highlight:

- the main virtues (courage, compassion, honesty, love, justice) that they have shown in their lives, and
- the areas where they have shown wisdom and made good choices (or where they might have made bad choices)?

Share these with the group.

Ask them to think about their current actions, choices and character – are they on track to live the kind of life they have imagined? If not, what do they need to do?



You can choose to deliver this without asking the young people to share with everyone else their thoughts/ideas of a life well lived. They can still do a piece of writing or art work, but then ask them to highlight the virtues in their story of their life (or add the relevant ones to their artwork) and to mark the points in their life when they have shown wisdom and made a good choice – or alternatively, where they've made a bad choice.

Points to highlight

- There are many different types of lives, but there are often lots of similar themes in a 'good' life (security, love, friendship etc.).
- It's useful to look at where you want to get to and then reassess what you're doing now. Is your life helping you to reach your aim?

Activity 2



Aim(s)

- To introduce the idea of 'candidate' or 'template' lives.
- To look at other people's lives in order to see what kind of person they were/are.



Resources

- *Candidate Lives* Worksheet or Power Point Slide.
- *Candidate Lives Examples* (if needed).
- Internet connection would be helpful.



Delivery Guide



Facilitators can take part in this, looking at their own life to see if it fits any candidate lives.

A philosopher, Aristotle, came up with ideas for candidate lives. These were 'types of lives' that he felt would describe the kind of lives people would come up with in response to the questions asked in Activity 1. They are:

- A life that has been about chasing **pleasure**; feelings and sensations that 'feel good'.
- A life that has been about the **pursuit of wealth** and money, and of getting 'things'.
- A life that has been arranged around wanting **status**, respect, fame, and influence.
- A life that has been motivated by the thirst for **power**; wanting to have your own way, and making others agree to it either by force, or by reasoned persuasion.
- A life that has been shaped around the search for **knowledge**; wanting to learn, being curious about things and asking lots of questions.
- A life that has been driven by **ethical living** and how to live out morally virtuous activities – a life that has been marked by feeling, thinking and acting well.

He believed that most lives will be made up of different bits of all of these, but one of them will be the most important and will motivate and affect that person's whole life.

Go through these steps:

1. Talk through the different descriptions and check for understanding.
2. Ask the young people what they think of these and if they think there are other candidate lives that have been missed out.
3. Which is the best one? What are the strengths and weaknesses associated with living different lives?
4. You can ask them to look at the life they imagined for themselves in Activity 1. Which candidate life does their story fit? Does it fit any of them?

You could also give the young people a selection of obituaries or stories of well-known people (see *Candidate Lives Example* worksheet) or ask them to do some research and find their own ones. Get them to look at each life and decide which one of the candidate lives best fit it. Have they been pursuing pleasure, ethical living, wealth, power or status?



This can be done as a small group or in pairs.

5.

Do these candidate lives work? Do you agree with Aristotle – can one life be roughly described as fitting into one of the candidate lives he suggested? If not, why not? Ask them to use some evidence from the examples they have been given.

Points to highlight

- It can be argued that the candidate lives don't describe people's lives and that people's motivations change as their life changes.
- There are lots of different motivations that drive us.



Extension Activities

Ask the young people to imagine themselves at 80 years old and ask them to write a letter to their 16 year old self (or the age they are now). What advice would their 80 year old self give their 16 year old self? What do they regret? What do they wish they had done? What are they most proud of? They do not have to write this letter, it can be filmed instead.

You can add an element of reality to this and arrange for an email (or video) to be sent to yourself from the future via the website: www.futureme.org (available 8/16). We would recommend setting it to send in 2020 or similar, rather than leaving it 80 years!



Further Resources

This short video by David Brooks introduces the idea of Eulogy Virtues and Resume Virtues, although this is more suitable for facilitators/teachers' learning than students' www.ted.com/talks/david_brooks_should_you_live_for_your_resume_or_your_eulogy?language=en (available 8/16)



Links to Other Areas of the Curriculum

Various:

Activity 2 can involve the stories of characters in texts they are studying in other lessons such as History or English. Links can also be made to Citizenship, Art and Design, and Computing.

Literacy:

The Extension Activity can be linked to the English curriculum and general literacy development.