

Task for *Here on Earth*

Instructions for paper ball throwing

Aim

To give students the opportunity to provide honest, personal responses to a text

Introduction

Students often feel inhibited to express opinions in class, especially if they fear they will appear silly in front of their peers. This is a highly effective strategy for providing students with an anonymous, yet public forum for expressing their opinions. This is also a very effective way for students to discover the opinions of a range of other students in the class.

Procedure

1. Students sit on chairs in a large circle, facing each other. Each student requires a pen.
2. The teacher provides each student with a slip of paper (about a quarter of an A4 page).
3. On the slip, students provide their personal response to one or more questions from the teacher. For *Here on Earth*, these are: *Were you persuaded by Flannery's argument? Why or why not? What was the big message you took away from Here on Earth?*
4. Completed slips are crumpled into a loose ball.
5. The teacher explains the remaining steps and outlines some basic safety procedures, especially aiming below the head and throwing reasonably gently.
6. Students then toss the paper ball to someone sitting opposite them.
7. As the paper balls are tossed towards them, each student catches one, uncrumples it and reads it silently. (If any students miss out initially, another student will either have an extra, or one or two will be somewhere on the floor.)
8. The teacher asks for three students to read the comment on the slip of paper in front of them.
9. Once these have been read, slips are crumpled into balls again.
10. On the signal of the teacher, the balls are tossed again, in a different direction to prevent students receiving their own slip of paper back. (If students do receive their own, they can swap with a neighbouring student.)
11. Again, students read silently and three are asked to read aloud any new comments that have not yet been heard.
12. Repeat the process once or twice more.
13. At the end, the teacher takes a bin around the circle into which students toss their paper balls.
14. The teacher might then conclude the activity with a verbal summary of opinions heard.

Adapted from Williams, L. (2009). *English Teaching Survival Manual Volume 1*. Wordsmart Consulting: Rochedale South. Used with permission of the author.