

A Tough Call

Lesson 5: Conversation in the Round

Focus Questions

What is a theme? How are themes expressed in literary works?

What is an “unanswerable” question?

What effect do moral decisions have on one’s personal history as well as society as a whole?

Core Understandings

Students will understand the impact of the Black Sox scandal on the game of baseball and the city of Chicago. They will understand that moral decisions affect individuals, societies, and cultures. They will understand that everything in Chicago’s history has a story behind it, just as everyone has a story to tell.

Knowledge

Students will know key historical facts about Chicago baseball and the White Sox. They will know how to recognize and identify themes in both works of fiction and in history. They will know that sometimes moral decisions can have a major effect on history and culture.

Skills

Students will be able to define and recognize themes in both literature and history. They will use their language arts skills to express their opinions and formulate questions for personal and collective inquiry.

Common Core ELA Standards

CCSSR1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSSR3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

ISBE Social Science Standards

Goal 15: Understand economic systems, with an emphasis on the US.

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the US, and other nations.

Goal 18: Understand social systems, with an emphasis on the US.

In This Lesson

Students will identify the big themes posed in *A Tough Call* and be challenged to evaluate Danny’s ethical decision through a group discussion. The story element of resolution is addressed. This lesson was researched and written by Amy Andrews.



Activity

If possible have students arrange their chairs in a circle. Lead a class discussion to identify the one-word themes students began in their Lesson 4 Home Connection. Examples include cheating, decisions, honesty, scandal, family, honor, greed, etc. Post themes around the room or on the board.

Next, ask students to share some of their “unanswerable” discussion questions from Lesson 4. Each student should share at least one question and write it on a sentence strip. Organize the sentence strips under the one-word themes identified above.

Conduct a conversation in the round, having students respond to each others’ questions and ideas. If it does not come up, refer back to Danny’s conflict. Ask students how he resolved his conflict and if they agree with the decision he made. Also, have students discuss why they think he made the decision he did.

Materials & Resources

- *A Tough Call* story:
http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/pdf/story/A_Tough_Call_by_Pamela_Dell.pdf
- Sentence strips

Instructional Notes

Try to let students facilitate their own discussion as much as possible.

Extension Activities

Have students create board games (or card games) that encompass the themes/characters in the story. Come up with a list of criteria together and create a checklist students can consult as they work. If possible have students incorporate their discussion questions and/or story themes. (This might be tricky for some—offer guidance.) Be sure to write instructions for how the game should be played. When finished, allow time for students to play their games and/or present them to the class.

Sample Criteria for Games

Design some type of physical board for your game.

Use at least five ideas from the story.

Use at least five ideas (and/or images) from the *Tough Call* map interactive.

Use at least five ideas (and/or images) from other sources (books, websites).