

Hand it back

Goal. Students feel the lottery of birth instead of reading about it, and decide, as a group, whether they would keep a life they did not choose.

AGES

12 and up

FITS

Ethics, religion, philosophy, tutor time

TIME

45 minutes, one period

You need. Projector with the site open at Hand it back, after Where do you stand has been filled in for your town. Worksheet per student.

The lesson

5 min

Guess

Ask: if we press the button and are born again, weighted by where babies are actually born, in which three countries are we most likely to land? Write guesses on the board.

15 min

Walk

Press Draw a life ten times. For each life, scroll the year-by-year race, then the class votes: keep it or hand it back. Count the votes. Keep a tally on the board.

10 min

Meet

Pick the life the class argued about most. Read its years aloud, with the Yours column. Ask what the person at age 16 in that life wants.

10 min

Move

Worksheet: one drawn life beside your own, year by year, in the student's own words.

5 min

What's working

Press Draw 100 lives. Count the red squares (died before five). Then say: in 1990 it would have been about twice as many. End there.

Questions for the room

1. The class handed back most lives. Is that selfish, or honest?
2. What would have to be true about a life for you to keep it?
3. Nobody chose their first life either. What follows from that?

Answers and sources

The draw is weighted by births: about 1 in 4 babies today is born in India, Nigeria, Pakistan, China or Indonesia. Expect India and Nigeria to come up most. In a hundred draws, usually 3 to 6 die before five (world average about 4 in 100). Life expectancy on the site is UN World Population Prospects; income lines are modelled from national data. Every figure and its source is shown on the site at the stop.

Hand it back

Name _____

Class _____

Date _____

The life I was handed

That life

My life

Born in _____

Age 5: alive? electricity? _____

Age 12: still in school? _____

Age 16: finished school? _____

Age 30: passport opens how many countries? _____

Lives to _____

I would keep it / hand it back (circle one), because

The class tally: kept ____ handed back ____

Hand it back

Name _____

Class _____

Date _____

One drawn life beside my own

Age

That life

My life

Born

5

12

16

20

30

45

End

The vote. Our class kept ___ of 10 lives. Explain the class's choice in one paragraph, then say whether you agree.

John Rawls asked what rules we would choose for the world if we did not know where we would be born. Write two rules you would want.