

Negotiation



Teacher-led



Group exercise



45-60 minutes

A workshop for the whole class. Can they use their imaginations and get the best deal in the negotiation?

The class will take turns at negotiating for the city states of Corinth and Thebes. As the facilitator of this workshop you're going to lead the discussion and help them improvise. The steps below will guide you through the exercise, but do feel free to make adjustments to suit your class.

Before you start

Set up the room so that there are four chairs round a table in the centre, and the other chairs are in a circle observing them.

What you say

“ Hello everyone! You're going to lead a negotiation.

“ The date is 400BCE, and two city states are at war. On one side will sit the representatives of Thebes, and on the other side will sit the representatives of Corinth. These two city states are of around equal power, and they are fighting over control of the large bay (an area of sea water) between their two territories. Thebes is richer and can continue to fight, while Corinth is poorer and has suffered more from the battles which have already happened.

“ Corinth says that they need control of the bay because they are worried that their powerful neighbour Sparta might attack them, and if Sparta attacks over land then across the water is their only way to escape. Thebes say they need control of the bay in order to fish, and that there isn't enough farmland to feed all their people. Both Corinth and Thebes want to have sole control of the bay.

“ So, here's how it works...”

IMPORTANT! Ground rules:

- No physical fighting
- No bargaining with real objects or favours – no one should promise to give someone else chocolate or do their homework!
- Anything else you think this particular class needs.

What you do

1. Choose four people. As they are doing the exercise first, these people should be outgoing and reasonably confident. Two of these four people will be the representatives from Thebes. The other two will be the representatives from Corinth. The rest of the group sit on the outside chairs and observe.
2. Give each pair paper and pens. Give them three minutes to consider what they will say – send one pair out of the room, which the other pair plans at the central table. Let them know that they can make things up beyond the initial story that Corinth is scared of Sparta and Thebes want to fish in the bay – perhaps there is some further history which provides further explanation.
3. After three minutes, call the two pairs together and sit them at the table. They now have five minutes to negotiate. Read them the ground rules before they start.

The two pairs should then discuss what they want. It's fine for them to open with “we want to fish” or “we need to put our wars ships there”. Give them five minutes.

4. After five minutes, stop the negotiations. Ask the observers what they thought. Was one side better than the other side? What did they think of the arguments?

Spend up to another five minutes on the wider conversation. Then move on to the next steps.

(see next page)

What you do (continued)

5. Choose another two pairs and repeat the exercise! As before, give them three minutes to prepare, five minutes to negotiate, and then a few minutes for feedback from the whole group. These children have seen their peers do it already, so they are likely to come up with different ideas. Suggest that they build on what has been already been said – for example, if a time share deal has been discussed then they could work out the details and ask for particular days of the week.

If you feel that the group can handle it...

6. After the first two negotiations, you could remind the children that the rules say no fighting, no real life objects, and no favours – but they DON'T say that the observers must stay quiet or that there must only be two negotiators from each side. What happens if the observers are allowed to cheer for one of the sides? Or to join in the negotiations?

To end the exercise

7. Finish with an open discussion. What did the children think about the two sides? Was there a way out of the conflict?

What you're looking for

Imagination is key. Do the children come up with interesting and imaginative solutions to the disagreement?

What could they offer during the negotiation? If they are struggling suggest options such as:

- A time share arrangement
- Thebes helping Corinth protect themselves against Sparta.
- Corinth giving a part of their daily catch of fish to Thebes.

Did they build on the points made by earlier negotiations? If someone mentions a suggestion made earlier, mention it – most successful negotiations rely on multiple meetings between lots of different people!

Be flexible with how you interpret the rules! This should be an exercise where the children can push boundaries.

You should watch out for and be prepared to step in if a child suggests inappropriate deals. Make individual judgements about suggestions such as "our princess will marry your prince". Are the princess and prince some of the people at the table, and so making the offer themselves – or are these unnamed, un-consenting people? These issues can lead on to useful and informative discussions.

Extra research

Corinth and Thebes were real city states in Ancient Greece, and they really were separated by a bay. However, they usually fought on the same side in wars, and there are no records of arguments over the bay – although it's not impossible!

In 395BC Corinth and Thebes joined forces with Athens and Argos to fight Sparta. This war, called the Corinthian War, lasted eight years, and was fought to reduce the control that Sparta had over the rest of Greece. While the war weakened Sparta, it also weakened the other city states.



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