

34. We Are What We Do

INTRODUCTION

Show children the following quotes:

"We are what we do." - Mahatma Gandhi.

"Our own acts and behaviours tell the world who we are and what kind of world (society) we think it should be." - Ai Wei Wei.

Ask the children for their reflections on such questions as:

- What do these words mean?
- What message is the speaker trying to share?
- What does the speaker believe?
- Why would they say these things?
- What is similar about the two quotes? (if both are shared)

ACTIVITY

Ask children to share the sorts of things that they 'do' in their lives outside of school or in school e.g. ride a bike, go to tennis club, paint, go to Brownies, visit the cinema.

On paper (perhaps cut in the shape of a person) ask the children to draw images to show the different things they 'do' in their life.

Share these by choosing a few examples and ask the children to consider:

- Do people do similar things?
- Are there things that are the same about some of these activities?
- How they can be categorised or grouped?
- Does any of the actions affect anyone else? e.g. because it's done collaboratively or because it helps others.
- What sort of person do the actions describe? e.g. someone who enjoys being outside, someone who spends time with others.

Tell the story of Wangari Maathai who spent much of her life re-planting areas of Kenya following deforestation (available ISBN 9780152065454 Harcourt books or online information).

Talk about the actions Wangari took in her life.

Re-consider the initial quotes and ask children to respond to questions such as:

- How would you describe Wangari? e.g. thoughtful, caring, passionate, determined – make a list of descriptors.
- What makes you think this?
- Can you link Wangari's actions to the word(s) that describe(s) the sort of person Wangari is?
- Did your list in the previous activity describe you in this way?
- How you *ever* acted in ways that might make others describe you in these ways? What did you do?

Provide the children with pieces of paper (or more cut-out 'person shapes') that you have labelled with headings that describe some of Wangari's qualities or new ones, e.g. caring, thoughtful, peaceful and some 'opposite' qualities e.g. selfish, uncaring, aggressive.

On each piece (perhaps using sticky notes) ask children to draw an image that shows an example of what a person might be doing if they had this quality, i.e. what actions might you see someone who was peaceful or selfish doing? Ask the children to draw on a range of pieces.

Share the collection of images and ask children to consider such questions as:

- What do you notice?
- Do people agree in what they draw?
- Can the pieces be categorised into 'positive' and 'negative'?
- Are any of your actions from the first activity drawn?
- Will an action always lead to that quality?

CONCLUSIONS

Ask children to consider and reflect on questions such as:

- Can it ever be ok to carry out some of these 'negative' actions? e.g. act selfishly? When? Why?
- Can it ever be ok sometimes to not carry out 'positive' actions? e.g. not be caring or thoughtful. When? Why?

Return to the first quote(s) and ask pupils again to consider:

- What message is the speaker trying to share?