

Pass The Fish

Description of activity:

If you can accommodate sitting in a circle, this ritual is best done in the spirit of stories around a campfire. I light a candle, turn off overhead lights, and pass a stuffed fish to designate the person who has the floor. You can, of course, pass any portable item, but the item does serve an important role as focuser and confidence booster. (Students are always free to say “pass” or “come back to me”.) I usually begin with my own answer to the question. Since I generate the questions they typically have a backstory or context that I share. It has become a joyful part of my own routine to think about the day’s question on my way to work. It focuses me and serves to build bridges between my personal life and the goings on of my classroom. I like to build questions that link to material we are working on in class, or actual events in my daily life. When I can find links between both, it does make teaching feel more relevant.

Alternate Approaches:

Time constraints and larger class sizes can make this routine unfeasible. Some solutions for compressing the activity are to use the questions as journal prompts and ask a few volunteers to share their responses, or to do sharing in small groups.

Potential Questions:

“musical memory” Do you have a memory that is associated with a particular song?

Share something that is on your “bucket list”, a thing you really want to do inside of your lifetime.

What is time? Think of a moment in your life when time seemed to move really slowly or very rapidly.

An act of kindness that someone did for you **OR** an act of kindness you did for someone else.

Share a weird and wonderful interaction that you’ve had with an animal.

If you could be any animal, with its special abilities (flying, swimming, digging holes...) what animal and why?

When I was younger, I used to think... (a myth you had about the world)

If an alien landed in your backyard (ET style) and you could only give them one bit of advice/help for navigating planet earth, what would you share with them?

Can you communicate an idea without using words? try...

One of the wackiest, most wonderful gifts you have ever given or received.

What do you like to do when you are home sick?

Imagine you are a member of a famous rock band, what is your “stage name” and why?



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If you could change one thing about your community, what would you change?

Share a humbling experience you've had in the natural world.

Can you think of something in your room or your home that you like to have left a particular way?

From your perspective are there problems in the world with clear solutions that adults are not fixing? What are they?

If you found a 100 dollar bill what would you do with it?

If you had the opportunity to explore new space frontiers (i.e. be a pioneer on Mars) would you be willing to leave Earth and never return? why? why not?

Have you ever had to fight for something you believe in? What was it and what was your tactic?

What is your superpower and your superhero name?

If you could invent anything (no materials limitations) what would you invent?

The 3 things you would take with you to survive alone on a tropical island.

One thing that brought you joy this weekend.

Share your ideal summer job, what is it and why?

If you chose to be cryogenically frozen what would you do first thing, when you were thawed out 100 years from now?

Is there life on other planets? Ideas for what it might be like...

A moment in history (big or small, recent or uber ancient) that you would want to witness.

Have you ever done something scary that turned out awesome?

Share something you do that calms you.

Have you ever been made to feel like you didn't belong?

Something you've done or learned to do that makes you feel proud.

A favorite book you read when you were young.

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Can you think of a sound that has an emotional affect on you?

If you were a rooted thing, where would you choose to root?

A routine in your life that you would like to change or do away with.

Do you gravitate toward or away from Danger?

Think of something you want that feels out of the range of possibility...

Is there some quality that you admire and aspire to in your parent or guardian?

What scared you when you were younger? What scares you now?

A character that you relate to from a show, why?

Taking suggestions: Do you have a question for our Pass the Fish routine? What is it?

How do you heal yourself when you are sick?

How do you feel about change?

Can you think of a time/situation when you thought one way about something and then things turned out really differently?

What do you want out of your education? What are you getting out of your education?

Imagine yourself in a world famous band, what would you choose for a stage name?

Where do you spend most of your time in your head? In the past? In the present? in the future?
Can you connect a general feeling to each of those places?

How does our environment shape us? (behaviorally, mentally, physically)

Can you think of nonverbal cues that you read in people? What is the gesture? What does it say to you?

What is something you like about your body?

Describe yourself in 10 years. Where do you live? What do you do for a living? What do you do for fun? What do your friends say about you?

Share a memorable musical experience you've had.

Return to a moment when you felt afraid but it ended up being less scary than you anticipated.

Name 3 things you carry with you almost all the time.

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Pass The Fish

Think of your day or week like a pie chart, sketch out a visual of how you spend your time (i.e. half the pie sleeping).

What does the word OLD mean to you? (throw out word associations)

Conflict, how do you handle it? What is your process? How does it affect you emotionally?

Something you really wanted but when you finally got it you were disappointed.

What is your relationship with water? Do you prefer swimming in lakes, rivers, oceans, swimming pools or not swimming?

“What will you do with your one wild and precious life?” - Mary Oliver

Do you think political activism can make a difference? Why or why not?

Think of an invention that amazes you or has really made your life better/easier.

How could the “School” experience be improved?

Which makes a better pet, a recliner or a refrigerator?



What does this image conjure for you?

Extensions:

As a tool for School Community building - teachers across a school each generate a question. Those questions are asked in all classrooms (with a brief intro of that teacher) in the first several weeks of school.

Students generate a collection of questions.

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