

Compassionate people study

— Compassion

EXPLANATION:

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion
~Dalai Lama

In history there are many people who have made a difference through their compassionate actions. Students will choose a person of consequence to research highlighting how they embodied components of compassion.

YEAR LEVELS: Years 11–12

STUDENT GROUPING: Whole group discussion — research in pairs or small groups to facilitate discussion — plus group presentations

ACTIVITY LENGTH: Dedicate a lesson time for research and also time for presentations

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

Representation of General capabilities in Senior English can be linked to this activity:

Critical and creative thinking:

Critical and creative thinking is integral to the study of and creation of texts in *English*. Students analyse and evaluate issues and ideas presented in texts. In both thinking about and creating their own texts, they recognise and develop arguments, use evidence and draw reasoned conclusions. Students experiment with text structures and language features as they transform and adapt texts for different purposes, contexts and audiences. Students use critical thinking when they use their knowledge of language to analyse a range of texts in relation to their purpose, context, audience, structural and language features, and underlying and unstated assumptions. They investigate the ways language is used to position individuals and social and cultural groups. Creative thinking enables students to apply imaginative and inventive capacities in the creation of their own original works.

Information and communication technology (ICT) capability:

There is a particular focus in *English* on ICT through the use of digital texts and on understanding and creating multimodal texts. For example, students explore the effects of sound and image as they consider how ideas are communicated in digital texts. They use digital technologies when they access, manage and use information and when creating their own texts. They develop skills in reading, viewing and responding to digital and multimodal texts and analysing the effects of the use of different mediums on meaning and interpretation.

SCOPE OF TASK:

Some notes about compassion:

- The definition of compassion, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is the 'sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it. (more definitions can be explored).
- The component of action is what separates compassion from empathy and sympathy.
- There are four key components to compassion:
 - (i) An awareness of suffering (cognitive component)
 - (ii) A sympathetic concern related to being emotionally moved by suffering (affective component)
 - (iii) A wish to see the relief of that suffering (intentional component)
 - (iv) A responsiveness or readiness to help relieve that suffering (motivational component).

1. Activate students' prior knowledge about compassion. Pose questions and if students are unsure allow time to search the web for definitions:

- What is compassion?
- Have you felt compassion?
- How did you act on your feelings — what did you do?
- Can you share any examples of others acting compassionately?

2. Share with the students some names of people in history that were considered compassionate and inquire as to whether they know these people and what they did:

- Dalai Lama
- Mother Teresa
- Martin Luther King, Jr
- St. Francis of Assisi
- Mahatma Gandhi.

There might be more contemporary people that the students can identify!

3. Share the objective of the activity with the students: Working in small groups students can choose (with the assistance of the teacher) someone in history that has been identified as engaging in compassionate acts.

The investigation aim is to discover the following information:

- Demographical information about the person — where and when they lived?
- Why have they been recognised as compassionate?
- Evidence of the person's awareness of suffering, sympathetic concern related to being emotionally moved by suffering, a wish to see the relief of that suffering and an action to relieve suffering (4 key components discussed above)



If needed before students engage in their research study model an investigation with the whole group of students utilising web-based and print resources as available.

4. Students will need to engage in developing questions, find, sort and evaluate information, read and analyse, think creatively, collaborate, problem solve, and communicate results.
5. At the completion of the research investigation students can present their findings to the whole group sharing details of the compassionate acts.
6. In reflection, question the students:
 - Why should we recognise acts of compassion?
 - How does the 'every-day' person engage in compassion? Examples?
 - Have they examples of compassionate acts they have personally engaged in?

RESOURCES:

- Computers
- Internet
- Relevant information texts.