

Day One: Introduction to Social Studies

About a Boy - Killing Me Softly

Focus: Multiple perspectives, bias, emphasis, facts, opinions, knowledge, context and meaning.

[\(1\) About a Boy \(2002\) OST: Killing Me Softly with His Song - Nicholas Hoult & Hugh Grant - YouTube](#)

- 1) Watch “one of my favourite movie clips” without context of instruction
- 2) After it is done, ask students to write down in point form “what happened” in the video they just watched in as much detail as possible.
- 3) Have students pair up and compare their point form notes: Students should not add to their notes - but should indicate similarities with a check mark and note differences
- 4) Have students form groups of 4 and repeat process from #3
- 5) As a class, compile a list of things that everyone included.
- 6) Compile a list of things that only a few or one person included.
- 7) On another sheet of paper have students divide the information they have gathered and other information they have into facts (names, events, things that happened) knowledge from context (it is a school, a talent show), opinions or assumptions (Will embarrassed himself, Marcus was scared)
- 8) Ask students if they know why we are doing this? (Social Studies is based on the primary accounts of individuals who observed events and the secondary documents of those that write about them after - this is why modern academics focus on impacts of multiple perspectives, bias, emphasis, facts, opinions, knowledge, context and meaning when studying the past. The more you know the better the quality of your understanding.
- 9) Ask if any of the students have seen the movie before (value of background knowledge or education). Discuss how this might have affected the quality of responses.

Ask students to speculate (opinions) on the following questions (only those that have seen more of the movie can really answer)

- 1) Why was Marcus singing in the talent show? (he was trying to make his depressed mother happy)
- 2) Why did Will try to help Marcus and sing with his eyes closed? (he was a selfish lonely man who avoided relationships because he was afraid of getting hurt)
- 3) Why was Rachel (Rachel Weisz) angry at the beginning and smiling at the end? (Will had lied to her and she thought he was a cad but realised his situation was more complicated)
- 4) What does the poem “No Man is an Island” have to do with the theme? Happiness can only be found in others and every person counts.

The intention of these questions is not to elicit an answer but to emphasize that without the full picture our opinions can be deeply flawed.

No man is an island,

Entire of itself;

Every man is a piece of the continent,

A part of the main.

If a clod be washed away by the sea,

Europe is the less,

As well as if a promontory were:

As well as if a manor of thy friend's

Or of thine own were.

Any man's death diminishes me,

Because I am involved in mankind.

And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;

It tolls for thee.

"No Man is an Island" is an excerpt from a series of meditations and reflections on the meaning of life written by John Donne. Donne argues that every human being is connected to every other human being by comparing humanity itself to a vast landmass. No one is "an island" in the sense that no one is separate from this metaphorical "continent"; just by being human, everyone is part of humanity.

On one level, Donne's conceit emphasizes the importance of connection and community. The human continent is made up of individual clumps of earth that represent individual people. When all those "clods" come together, they form something larger and stronger than themselves. On their own, meanwhile, a clod might "be washed away by the sea." In other words, Donne is saying that people are social creatures and that no one can be truly self-sufficient; people need each other and are better together than they are apart.

Because people are all connected, Donne continues, something that happens to one person affects every person. The loss of a single "clod" into the ocean diminishes (however subtly) humanity's metaphorical continent. Basically, Donne is implying that no one is expendable. Anyone who is truly "involved" with humankind is directly affected by things that happen to other human beings.

Building on this idea, Donne argues that "any man's death diminishes me" and tells the reader not to ask "for whom the bell tolls." That is, they don't need to ask who death is coming for, because it's coming for everyone. Another implicit point here, then, is that people should cherish being alive, and, while alive, embrace being part of the wider human family.

An essential element of Social Studies is the essential understanding that we are all part of a society, we all have value, and that we should cherish each other by trying to understand the social, political, economic and environmental dimensions of our human story.