
LINE GAME

OBJECTIVE

The Line Game is a great opportunity to become more familiar with your class and for your students to learn about each other in a non-threatening, and interactive way. This activity enables you to solicit information from your students that they may not feel comfortable sharing with a teacher. Knowledge about your students' lives will enable you to craft relevant lesson plans that effectively engage them in the learning process. Sharing information about each other will also build a sense of community within the classroom that involves everyone's participation. Sometimes it is difficult for students to open up in front of their peers, but the Line Game gives students an opportunity to speak volumes, without ever saying a word.

DESCRIPTION

Students will split into two lines, facing each other. You will ask them a set of questions ranging from general to specific, which range from pop culture to family to personal beliefs and experiences. For a sample list of questions, please refer to the last page of this lesson. If a student's response is "yes" to any of the questions, they must step on the line.

MS. G'S TIP

To make this activity more fun, and throw the Freedom Writers off my trail, I would choose a few of our class clowns to start the Line Game off with a quirky rendition of the *Soul Train* line. Because the students will have an opportunity to ask their own questions at the end of the activity, it is important to lay down the ground rules early on. Remind your students that you are a mandated reporter, and their questions should not be about sexual or physical abuse, drug use, or other crimes. Also, be sure to

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remember to take a minute after class to write down what you learned about your students during the activity. This information will guide you during future lesson plans.

MATERIALS

- An empty area large enough to accommodate the whole class
- Something to divide the area into two equal sides (i.e. a bright-colored tape, such as painter's tape.)

PROCESS

Ground Rules: Before you begin the game, it is important to establish expectations. Students should not talk, high-five each other, or share details about their experiences between questions. Also, everyone must stand, everyone must participate, and everyone must walk on the line when it is relevant. In order for the students to expose their vulnerabilities, it is crucial that the parameters are enforced clearly and specifically at the beginning of the game.

Step 1: Have your students move all their chairs against the wall so they have a large enough space to move in. If you move outside of the classroom, be sure to move far away from other classes, so that your students know that no outsiders are listening.

Step 2: Place the tape or ribbon down the center of the area, creating two equal sides.

Step 3: Establish ground rules that the students must adhere to during the activity, including the following:

- Absolutely no talking, laughing, or joking.
- If their answer to the question is "yes," then they should move forward, and step on the line.
- If their answer to the question is "no," then no movement is necessary.

Step 4: Use a random method to separate the class into two groups. For example, have everyone say either "one" or "two" as you point to them, and then separate the "ones" and "twos" to form two parallel lines of students.

Step 5: Begin by asking questions that are simple, silly, and obviously pertain to the majority of the students. In order to get the students famil-

iar with the exercise, the questions should be easy. Please refer to the suggested questions at the end of this lesson. Keep the game at a brisk pace because a sense of urgency allows more questions to be covered.

- A. These questions should be easy, generally pertaining to everyday activities (i.e. riding the bus), or pop culture.

Sample Question: Do you own the new Snoop Dogg (or other popular artist) CD?

- B. Judging by the students' level of comfort, these questions should become more specific. Possible secondary topics include school, family, and community.

Sample Question: Do you live with your mom and your dad?

- C. The last set of questions, although sensitive in nature, may be the most enlightening for you and your students. To avoid precarious situations, begin this set of questions with "Do you know someone who..." When you feel that the students are participating fully and are truly engaged, you may start to ask more personal questions.

Sample Question: Do you know someone who is in a gang?

Step 6: Tell the students that they can also ask questions. Volunteers will most likely ask questions that pertain to them, which is an excellent way to learn something that you may have missed, or prompt additional questions from other students. Remind them to ask their questions by saying, "Do you know someone who..."

Below are sample questions that should be adapted to your students. In preparation for this activity, memorize the questions you want to ask, so you do not have to refer to your notes in front of your students. Doing so will help create a spontaneous environment, and will allow you to gradually increase the seriousness of the activity.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Set 1: School, family, and community

1. Who has ever had detention?
2. Who takes a bus to school? Two buses? Three buses?

3. Who lives only with their mom or their dad?
4. Who lives with a relative that isn't your mom or dad?
5. Who trusts your teachers?
6. Who trusts the police?
7. Who plays school sports?
8. Who feels safe in their neighborhood?
9. Who has ever had a family reunion?
10. Who has ever been in a fight?

Set 2: Day to day activities and pop culture

1. Who has a brother/sister?
2. Who likes rap/country/pop/?
3. Who likes (a particular entertainer)?
4. Who likes (a particular show)?
5. Who has seen (the latest movie)?
6. Who watched last night's (sporting event)?
7. Who likes to dance? Who thinks they're a good dancer?
8. Who lives in (the city where your school is located)?
9. Who would like to own a car?
10. Who has ever been late to class?

Set 3: Personal experiences and sensitive subject matter

1. Who knows someone with a learning disability?
2. Who has ever heard gunshots?
3. Whose electricity/gas/water/ has ever been turned off?
4. Who has ever been asked to join a gang?
5. Who knows someone who is in a gang?
6. Who has had a close friend or a relative die?
7. Who knows where to find drugs?
8. Who has a family member who has done or is doing time in jail?
9. Who has ever been in juvenile hall or boot camp?
10. Who has lost someone to senseless violence?

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
"NCTE" STANDARDS**

- Standard 2. Reading for Understanding
- Standard 3. Evaluation Strategies
- Standard 4. Communication Skills
- Standard 5. Communication Strategies
- Standard 6. Applying Knowledge

Standard 9. Multicultural Understanding
 Standard 11. Participating in Society
 Standard 12. Applying Language Skills

VISUAL GRAPHIC INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions: The graphic on page _____ is an opportunity for the students to write or draw their feelings from the activity. On the outside of the shoes, they can write or draw how they felt during the activity. On the inside of the shoes, they can write or draw what they perceive others were thinking or feeling.

VOCABULARY CONCEPTS

Validated -
 Acceptance -
 Bias -
 Prejudiced -
 Relevance -

ASSESSMENT

Describe how you felt standing on the line. How did you feel when there were only a few people on the line? How did you feel when a lot of people stepped in? Was there ever a point when the whole class stepped in? How did that feel? Were you ever the only person on the line? How did you feel? What did you learn about yourself from participating in this activity? What did you learn about others?

TAKING IT FURTHER

This activity elicits a lot of emotion from its participants, and having a class discussion following the activity may be helpful. Following the actual game, it may be interesting to show a clip from “Freedom Writers,” and discuss the game with your students. This is a great way to gauge your students’ reaction to the activity, and to show how their experiences may parallel those portrayed in the film.

Freedom Writer Feedback

As a shy student, this game got me to open up and share my personal experiences with a room full of strangers, in a way that didn’t make me feel like I was being put on the spot. Each time that I stepped on the line, I looked around and realized that I was not alone.

Freedom Writer’s Diary Quote

“...I was able to express my own feelings in a place where people heard my voice, and my opinions were never judged.” —Diary 10

Teacher Talk

My students love the line game and once we play it, they beg to play it again. This game sneaks up on them and my favorite part is the reaction writing after the game. They always think it starts out as another goofy day in English class playing some weird game, but they walk away with new knowledge about each other and themselves, and a connection to their classmates they never thought possible. I have also used the line game to safely discuss a situation or special event. The activity brings the class together on a deep level; one day you are a group of people, the next day you are a family.