

Lesson 1

Responsibilities at home

People experience conflicts of loyalty – how should they decide?

Learning objectives	To explore the range of responsibilities people have. To understand that responsibilities can come into conflict with each other. To explore the moral reasoning underlying decisions about conflicts of responsibility.
Student tasks	Students analyse the moral dilemma. Students discuss alternative analyses. Students make individual statements.
Resources	Copies of the story “Milan makes a choice”. Paper for written tasks.
Methods	Individual and small group discussion. Plenary discussion. Individual written work.

Conceptual learning

Responsibility: Something people have to do – responsibilities can be legal, moral or social, depending on how they arise.

Moral conflict: The conflict people experience when they have to decide between two or more courses of action.

Civic responsibility: People’s duties to the wider community. These responsibilities arise because membership of a community brings rights in return for responsibilities.

The lesson

The teacher introduces the idea that everyone has responsibilities of some kind and that problems can arise when people put some responsibilities above others. There are difficult choices to make. The teacher reads the story “Milan makes a choice” to the class and asks students to think about the following issues. Some questions could be discussed in pairs before answers are finalised. With others, students could usefully make notes before sharing their ideas with the class.

1. What does the story say about the kind of responsibilities Milan has? How many different kinds of responsibility can you see (responsibility to himself, to his family, to the school, to the local community or to the wider world)?
2. What do you think Milan should do and why? Does everyone in the class agree?
3. How difficult a decision do you think Milan has? What makes it difficult?
4. What responsibilities does Milan’s father have in the story? How many can you see?
5. Do you think that Milan’s father was right to ask him to stay at home?
6. How serious would it be if Milan disobeyed his father? Would this be a difficult decision for Milan to make? Give reasons for your answer.

Written task

In your own words, write down what you think Milan wrote to his father. Compare your version with those of others in the class. The students share their ideas with the class.

Generalisation

Perhaps the students have already addressed some general aspects of moral conflict.

The teacher responds to these thoughts or asks the class to think more generally about the kinds of responsibility people have towards:

- themselves;
- their family;
- their local community;
- the national community;
- the wider world.

The students work in groups again. They could use a table to set out the different responsibilities. The reasons why people disagree about the extent to which people have responsibilities for others and for the community are then discussed in class.

Individual statements

The teacher should then give the following information to the students. “In the story some of Milan’s responsibilities come into conflict with each other. Think of some examples of your own where people’s responsibilities might conflict. Take some specific examples and talk about how you think people resolve such conflicts of responsibility.”

If students find this difficult to think about, the teacher should provide some specific examples, drawing on local context.