



**Philosophy
Circles**

When do you stop being a child?

This dialogue is based on views expressed by Year 7 and 8 pupils at an Alien Adventures in Philosophy workshop for Mayflower and Billericay Schools, Billericay. All the points of view in this dialogue came up. I've just changed the sequence and added some joking so that it flows from point to point.



The sheer amount of times a child is told 'you can when you're old enough' reinforces the idea that adults determine when they are a grown up. So it's good to begin with a community building problem that doesn't require an adult to validate their success:

Give each pupil a number between 1 and the total number of the group. They must organise themselves into numerical order without talking, and check for accuracy themselves. They can repeat with any number of things – for example height or house number. Even better with age, given the subject of the stimulus.



Have some pupils act out the dialogue. There are lots of points, and you probably won't be able to cover them all. The most popular will come up in the subsequent discussion.

ALEX – Self-sufficiency
LOU – Legal definition
SAM - Maturity
TOM's DAD – Financial independence
KRISHNAN – Biology
AMY – Society's attitude toward you
MO – Experience/wishing
TOM – You can choose



Encourage pupils to raise counterexamples or problems to create more connected dialogue. For instance, 'financial independence' invites the counter-example of a broke 25 year old. Is he/she still a child? Each definition might have its problems, so you could end up with pupils working together to form a definition of a 'child'. Or a debate on whether such a definition is achievable.

NEXT STEPS

Whatever conclusions pupils come to, ask for the implications. If all decide that 'childhood' is impossible to define, does this mean the Unicef Rights of a Child become unenforceable? Do they feel any laws should be changed as a result of their discussion?

ALEX My mum still treats me like I'm a kid.

LOU Well, you sort of are. It's not like you're 18.

ALEX That's irrelevant. I don't want a wild party with loads of booze. But I can look after myself. I don't need her worrying about me all the time.

LOU OK, maybe. But the law still says you're a child.

SAM I don't think being adult is an age thing. I think it's about how mature you are. I'm more mature than my brother. He's 20 and he's a nincompoop.

TOM What's one of those?

SAM It's what my dad says my brother is.

TOM My dad says when I can buy my own house, with my own TV and my own electricity, then I'll be a man. And until then, he gets to watch the snooker when he wants.

KRISH Biologically, you're an adult once you're able to reproduce.

ALEX Who are you going to reproduce with, then?

KRISH Ha ha. Very funny.

AMY I think it's how people treat you. Back in Victorian times, we'd have been working in a mine or something by now. It's only because we have to go to school that everyone treats you like you're still a child.

ALEX You wouldn't have worked in a mine. Your dad's loaded.

MO I think you're an adult when you stop wanting to be an adult, and start wishing you were a child instead. We all want to be doing adult stuff, but once you're an adult you wish you were a kid.

SAM That's a bit depressing. Then nobody's ever what they want to be.

TOM I think you choose. I can be quite serious when I want to, or I can just lark about. My uncle is the biggest kid ever, and he's 30 something.

MO I don't think everyone can choose. If you've seen some really bad things, like if you saw a war, maybe you grow up quickly.

ALEX Alright, alright, I'll stop complaining about my mum.