

VOICES

Topic The voice is not without its paradoxes. Though part of us, it seems to only exist in its departure from us: unless I speak I have no voice, but as soon as I have spoken my voice is gone. It is that piece of ourselves we possess only in its vanishing. And it is that piece of ourselves that can only exist beyond us. It thus dissolves the boundaries between ourselves and the world. And though our bodies may be dwarfed by caverns and halls, our voices can fill them; unlike the body, the voice can expand and shrink at will, from a bellow to a whisper. It carries our thoughts and promises and yet is a substance no firmer than air.

Props None

Action 1 In unison ask the class to repeat a certain word five times, 'conker' for instance. Then ask them to sit in silence for 5 seconds.

- *Question 1* Does your voice still exist while you are silent?
 - If it does still exist, where is it?
 - Does it make sense to say that we have a silent voice?
 - Is your voice an ability or an entity?
 - If it does not exist, do you have a different voice every time you speak?

Action 2 OK, this is pretty weird, nevertheless... ask the class to sit with their mouths open while a volunteer (x) loudly says a word, 'gargoyle' for instance.

- *Question 2* Did x's voice enter your mouth?

- If x 's voice entered your ears, does that mean it also entered your mouth?
- If you swallow while x is talking, are you swallowing her voice?
- If x 's voice entered your mouth, does that mean her words entered it too?

Action 3 Ask a volunteer (x) to loudly say a word, 'defenestrate' for instance. Ask another (y) to stand at the back of the room, and another (z) to stand midway between the other two.

- *Question 3* Who is closest to x 's voice?
 - Is being close to the source of the voice the same as being close to the voice?
 - If x 's voice exists everywhere it can be heard, is everyone who hears it the same distance from it?
 - If x 's voice exists everywhere it can be heard, is there any distance between it and those who can hear it?
 - Is it possible to get closer to x 's voice than x is?
 - Where is x 's voice?

Action 4 Ask the class to imagine a man standing beside a jet engine screaming as loudly as he can. His aim is to try to hear his own voice, but so great is the din he can only hear the sound of the engine.

- *Question 4* Is the man making a sound?
 - If the man is impossible to hear, is he silent?
 - If a sound is impossible to hear, does it exist?
 - If he isn't making a sound, is he even screaming?

Action 5 Show the class this argument –

Your voice is a large part of who you are, and your voice is made of air, so you are largely made of air.

– Question 5 Is this correct?

- If your voice is a part of you, and your voice travels at 343 metres per second (the speed of sound), does that mean you can travel at 343 metres per second?