

Lesson plan for *Game of Life* (approximately 90 minutes)

0. General remark:

We recommend the game as an introduction to a lesson on the subject of homosexuality and gender. In following lessons groups of students could continue to work on individual topics (for example coming out, marriage, adoption, sexual orientation, legal prosecution). During the whole series of lessons, one can refer to sample situations from *Game of Life* to discuss certain aspects of the subject in detail.

Furthermore, the game leads to a change of perspective as the students see through the eyes of a homosexual boy / young adult. This creates empathy, the students are also sensitized to the topic, and they develop awareness for the problems and challenges homosexuals are confronted with in their daily life.

Game of Life can also be used at a closure of a series of lessons (that possibly started off with a more theoretical focus on the subject) in order to draw the students' attention to the real time problems and daily life challenges of homosexuals.

1. Introduction:

A thought-provoking question such as the following one is addressed to the class:

"Ben has just told his parents about his new relationship. They are really confused and have to digest what they just heard. Why?"

Very quickly, the students' answers and first guesses are collected and noted on the blackboard without any further comments.

Depending on the type of student answers, the attention must now be drawn to the actual topic:

The valuation of the students' answers can be done by asking „If you were Ben, which of the situations would you find the most uncomfortable?"

Optionally, the teacher could then make the students justify why that is so. This, however, must be done sensitively.

Subsequently, one of the answers could be picked out to elaborate on (if this answer hasn't come up yet, the teacher can add it as it as another possible reason for Ben's parents' confusion):

"Now we focus on one of these situations, which can actually be very uncomfortable for many people, and try to look at it from a different perspective: Why is it even more difficult for Ben to tell his parents that he fell in love with a boy than it is for his parents to learn about this news?"

2. Working phase

Game of Life is played in groups of 3 to 5 students. The rules have to be presented in class before each group starts. Getting to the end of the game will take approximately 45 minutes.

3. Evaluation, closing

At the end, the number of points of the individual groups are written on the board without any comment. Eventually, a discussion can be started by leading questions such as:

"Are 70 happiness points better than 60? What does the final number of points actually tell us? Can life be evaluated or measured in happiness points?"

After that, the teacher can go on to discuss important outcomes of the game. Two different methods are possible:

3.1. Active, extrovert, lively class

The teacher starts a brainstorm in the center of the blackboard by noting the following question:

"What did you notice while playing the game?" or "What did you talk about the most?"

Subsequently, in a conversation moderated by the teacher, the aspects are discussed and grouped by using different colors. The students should be guided to the three important results (see below, under 4.). Finally, these results can be added as key words or word groups in the respective color below the outcome of the brainstorm, so that a complete panel picture is developed.

If some aspects have not yet been noted by the students during the brainstorming, the discussion can be supported by the following key questions:

"What relation to your own life do you see? What did you learn from it? Have you experienced similar or comparable situations yourself?"

3.2. Silent, introvert, shy class

Each student is given three identical pieces of paper and should note down aspects with relation to the following questions:

"What are the three important things I learned playing the game?"

The notes are collected, shuffled and read aloud by the teacher or by selected student assistants. While doing that three thematic piles are put on the desk. Three important aspects (see below, under 4.) may be mentioned many times in the students' notes so that these three piles become the highest. If necessary, the teacher can still help by raising other key questions like the ones in 3.1.

4. Three important outcomes

1. Pay attention to your own needs.

However, doing this can cause conflicts between one's own needs and other people's expectations. A "healthy egoism" is necessary.

2. Homosexuals and heterosexuals have a lot in common.

Every individual has experienced the one or the other situation in a similar or comparable way. The students recognize that there are fewer differences than they might have expected. This leads to a better understanding for each other's situation and problems.

3. Change perspectives!

The students develop a sensitization for difficult situations of homosexual persons, which heterosexuals don't know about or aren't confronted with. (Attention: Try to avoid contradictions to outcome 2.)

At the end of the lesson, the teacher can possibly focus on sub-topics for further research. Examples: Why can't they go to Africa for a safari? Are they allowed to get married at all? How can homosexuals actually have children?

Material needed:

- introductory question on a poster (or a pen/some chalk to write it on the board)
- game board, action cards, gaming piece/token (number according to number of groups); the maximum number of students in one group is 5
- Poster, pens, cards/pieces of paper for closing phase