

# 1 What is a crisis?

## Introduction

This unit supports learners to explore the meaning of the word 'crisis' and consider the seriousness of different crises within a group setting.



Key Stage: 2

Time: 60 mins

Learning Style: teacher-led  
(+ group learning)

## Why should we think about this ?

Global crises regularly bombard us through the news, and today's learners will arguably deal with many crises in their lifetimes. Knowing what a crisis is can support learners to develop the abilities and attitudes to better respond in a crisis situation.

## When should we think about this ?

This fits well into PSHE or circle time, but is also highly relevant for use in Geography, Citizenship, English, and other areas of the curriculum.

It could also fit well into supporting the SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) requirements that were introduced into schools in January 2012.

## Learning Activities

### What do I think about... CRISIS ?

Discuss the word 'crisis' as a class and support an open and safe discussion about what it means. Choose two learners to scribe on a board or flipchart and record some of the words and phrases that appear.

Discussion of crisis could raise sensitive issues for some learners and it is important we are able to deal with these as teachers. We recommend that you review the **Time 2 Think** CPD materials on **Creating a Safe Space** and **Controversial Classrooms** before using this activity.

### How can I develop my thinking ?

Ask your class to think about the different types of crises by using the Crisis cards in **Sheet A** on page 5. You may like to add your own cards based on your discussions in the previous stage.

There are a number of ways that you could use these to support discussion and thinking. Here is one suggestion.

**1.** Ask your learners to rank the different crises in terms of 'most serious' to 'least serious'. They may find this challenging as each crisis could be serious to someone at a particular time or in particular circumstances. Enabling the discussion about this to develop amongst and between groups of learners should bring out more questions, such as 'what kind of fire?' and statements like 'it depends on what test result'.

This is great reasoning practice, and you can decide either to fix the scenario and state the exact situation concerned, or leave learners to decide without knowing the full circumstances.

**2.** Next ask your learners to have a go at categorising the crises into personal, local, regional, national and global crises (you may like to use fewer categories for younger learners). Draw a nest of circles on large paper to show the different scales and then place the cards accordingly.

Again, this could lead to considerable discussion as to where the different crises belong, further developing critical literacy skills and also deepening understanding of global learning and the links between the local and the global.

As teachers we need to learn how to be the facilitator, devil's advocate and challenger to learning rather than the instructor. For advice on developing these skills see the **Time 2 Think** CPD materials **Facilitator Skills** and **Critical Thinking** as support to this activity.

## What do I think now ?

Ask each group to write a definition of crisis, starting:

### A crisis is when...

Once they have done this ask the class to consider the ideas on **Sheet B** on page 6. You might also like to return to the list of ideas from your initial class discussion.

Once they have had a chance to consider these different ideas ask whether or not they agree with the ideas. How similar are the ideas on **Sheet B** to the definitions that they came up with?

## Why do I think this ?

This question deepens the critical literacy skills of learners. Where learners are able to trace the origins of their thoughts and feelings (family, experience, peers, media etc) they can become confident to challenge their own thoughts and engage with the ideas and opinions of others.

This is also the most challenging part of the process and teachers/facilitators will need to decide whether to include this stage when working with younger or less able learners. We feel it remains vital for teachers/facilitators to be aware of and reflect on this stage for themselves as it may help to deal with responses and reactions from learners, and identify future learning needs.

If you feel confident to explore your learners' thoughts and feelings in greater depth you could gently encourage learners to think about the following questions/issues in relation to this activity:

- *What experiences have I had of crises? How serious have they been?*
- *What skills and knowledge might children in crisis develop? Might they think differently to me?*
- *Am I vulnerable to a crisis in my life? What might that crisis be?*

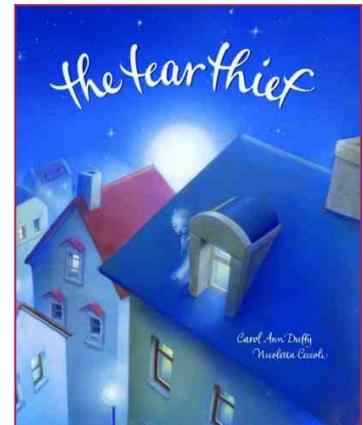
## Extension ideas

### ► Where can we take this thinking ?

*The Tear Thief* by Carol Ann Duffy (current Poet Laureate) is a great story to think about how different children respond to crises. Each child crying in the story is crying about something different, from the superficial to the tragic.

Learners can use the book to discuss what we 'should' be sad about and how we 'should' cope the rest of the time.

Another great next step for a class would be to consider what should be done, how we should act, how we could act, and how we might act, in a crisis situation. Are these different for different people? Is there always a right way? Are there some actions we all agree on, or not?



If you have used this activity in your classroom and have any examples you would like to share or would like to provide any comments or feedback as a teacher then we'd love to hear from you.

We want **Time 2 Think** to evolve into a community of practice to further develop ideas and organise events and opportunities, but for this we need the involvement of users such as yourself.

Send any contributions, or contact us to find out more, at [ask@lifeworldslearning.co.uk](mailto:ask@lifeworldslearning.co.uk)

## Sheet A: Crisis cards

(cut into cards - one set per group)

your football  
team losing

losing your job

natural disasters:  
earthquake, flood

running out of  
chocolate

loneliness

fire

someone dying

getting a bad  
test result

bullying

war in your  
country

a pet dying

a family member  
being injured

## Sheet B: A crisis is when

(provide a copy per group)

- ...your needs are not being met
- ...it is difficult to deal with things
- ...you feel out of control
- ...something is unwanted or unusual
- ...you feel more vulnerable
- ...there is not enough support
- ...you don't have the skills or experience to cope
- ...it passes a certain point
- ...you are unable to plan and make decisions
- ...you feel you stop belonging or being who you want to be
- ...your ability is taken away from you

This list is adapted from a Lifeworlds Learning workshop for British Red Cross, but does not in any way represent the views or opinions of British Red Cross.