

Different, Similar, Connected

Suitable for:	Upper primary and secondary
Time:	20–30 minutes
Format:	Pair/group activity / discussion / creative reflection
Evergreen:	Yes

The idea

People do not have to be the same in order to connect.

Differences can become a source of curiosity, creativity and strength, but they can also be used to exclude, stereotype or isolate.

This activity asks:

What connects us, and what happens when difference is used against someone?

1. Start with similarities

Put pupils into pairs or small groups.

Ask them to find **three things they have in common** that are not immediately obvious.

For example:

- something they both enjoy
- somewhere they have both been
- a food they both like
- a fear they both have
- something they are both good at
- something they both find difficult

Avoid using physical contact or activities that make anyone reveal personal information they do not want to share.

2. Then notice difference

Ask:

What is useful about people being different?

Possible answers might include:

- different ideas
- different skills
- different experiences
- different ways of solving problems
- different languages or cultures
- different interests
- different ways of seeing the world

Then ask:

When can difference become difficult?

Explore how people may be mocked, stereotyped, excluded or treated unfairly because they are seen as different.

3. Same person, different groups

Give a fictional example:

A pupil is confident and popular in one group but quiet and isolated in another.

Ask:

Has the person changed, or has the situation changed?

This can help pupils think about how belonging, confidence and behaviour are shaped by the people and environment around us.

4. Find a connection

Give each group two fictional characters who appear very different.

For example:

- a new pupil and a long-established pupil
- someone who loves sport and someone who dislikes it
- a very confident speaker and someone who prefers not to speak in groups
- two pupils from different cultural backgrounds

Ask:

What might connect them?

The connection does not have to erase their differences.

5. Difference without judgement

Ask pupils to complete:

“Different does not mean...”

and:

“One thing difference can bring to a group is...”

Discuss how quickly people sometimes turn difference into a judgement about value, ability or belonging.

6. When difference becomes a target

Use a fictional scenario:

A pupil is repeatedly teased because of something that makes them stand out.

Ask:

- Who is defining what is “normal”?
- Why might the group join in?
- What could someone do differently?
- What could adults change around the situation?
- How might the person being targeted want to be supported?

Avoid asking pupils to disclose whether this has happened to them.

Final reflection

Complete:

“One thing we may share even when we seem different is...”

and:

“A group is stronger when difference is...”

Key message

Connection does not require everyone to be the same. Difference can belong too.