

Capture the Castle

If you don't think, you lose!



Complexity



8-13 years



120 minutes



16-30 children,
2-3 adults or older
facilitators



Peace



Violence



Human Rights

Type of activity

Active adventure game, experiential learning

Overview

Children represent different sides in a battle and need to organise themselves in order to win. Afterwards they discuss the different feelings on opposing sides of a conflict, the reasons and mechanisms behind it.

Objectives

- To develop empathy with opposing sides to a conflict
- To develop skills of co-operation
- To raise awareness of emotions present in a conflict
- To foster strategic thinking and planning

Preparation

If the game is played outside, examine the area and mark clear boundaries for the activity. Identify any potentially dangerous areas and point them out to the children and group leaders.

Cut three pieces of orange paper into 10 equal strips each (30 pieces in total) and do the same for the three pieces of blue paper. These represent three 'Action Plans' for the Orange group (in 30 pieces) and three for the Blue group (in 30 pieces).

Materials

- A very large space that allows the children to run and to hide
- Three sheets of orange paper, three sheets of blue paper. These are the 'Action Plans'.
- Three different distinguishing signs for each separate group (e.g. coloured face paints or visible ribbons)
- Drinks and snacks for after the game

Instructions

1. Explain there is a beautiful city with a castle at its centre. The city is controlled by the Purple Party, but there are two opposing groups who want to invade and take over the castle: the Blue Party to the south and the Orange Party to the north.
2. Divide the children into 3 groups in roughly the following proportions: 40% Purples, 30% Blues and 30% Oranges. It is important to have exactly the same number of children in the Orange and Blue groups. There can be fewer in the Purple group. Explain the boundaries of the playing area. Give the Blue Party the 30 pieces of orange paper (3 Orange 'Action Plans'), and the Orange Party the 30 pieces of blue paper (the Blue group's Action Plans).
3. Explain the activity carefully so that all the children understand:

- Everyone must stay within the boundaries of the activity area.
- Each group should establish a camp within the game's boundaries. The city that the Purple Party is defending should be exactly in the middle, the Blue Party's camp on one side and the Orange Party's camp on the other.
- The Orange and Blue parties have each other's action plans at the start. To be able to capture the Castle, the two invading parties need to retrieve one of their action plans from the opposing side (10 pieces). They do this by exchanging pieces of the opposing side's plans: for example, a Blue group member can acquire a piece of Blue plan by handing over a piece of Orange plan – and vice versa. Each piece of an Action Plan needs to be taken separately by one of the invaders to the opposite camp. Only one piece can be carried at a time. When an invader reaches the opposite camp, he/she hands over the piece he/she has brought with him/her and swaps it for a piece of his/her own Plan. This is then taken back to his/her own camp.
- To defend the Castle, the Purples must try to prevent the Blues and Oranges from exchanging their plans. They try to catch the invaders and take away the pieces of their plans. 'Catching' means just touching lightly on the shoulder or arm.
- When caught, the Blue or Orange player has two choices: 1) give their piece of the plan away to the Purples and then be free to rejoin the game; 2) refuse to give the piece away and remain a 'prisoner' in the city until the game is over or the piece is handed over to the Purples. The Blue and Orange Parties can help each other.
- All pieces of the plans must be carried in a visible way.
- The two or three facilitators do not take part in the game but supervise to see that the rules are respected.
- Once the Blue Party or the Orange Party has collected ten pieces, to make a complete action plan, they have won! If the Purple Party manage to get ten pieces of either the Blue Party's or Orange Party's plan, the Purple party has won.
- The game is over when one Party has won or when the set time limit decided by the facilitator has run out.

Debriefing and evaluation

1. Discuss the activity, using questions such as these:
 - What happened in the game? How did you find it? Did you complete your mission?
 - What strategy did you have? Did everyone participate? How were decisions made in your group?
 - How did you feel about the other two parties?
 - Did the Blue and Orange Parties team up or fight each other? How did that affect the outcome of the activity?
 - Did the Blue and Orange Parties fight against the Purple Party and vice versa? If yes, why?
2. Relate the activity to conflicts by using questions such as these:
 - Was the situation realistic? Can you think of similar situations in real life? What are some reasons why such conflicts happen in real life?
 - How do you think this situation could be changed? How could such conflicts be prevented?
 - Do you know of any other conflicts in your life? What, if anything, are you doing to resolve them? What could be done to change these situations?
 - How do conflicts arise? What can we do to avoid them, solve them, manage them and/or safeguard peace (depending on the examples discussed)?

3. Relate the activity to human rights by asking questions such as these:
 - What are some human rights that are often violated when people are in conflict? What about in an armed conflict?
 - How are different parties in a conflict affected by having their rights violated? How might this affect their futures?
 - How are children affected by conflict? How does this affect their futures?
 - What can be done to prevent conflicts and human rights violations such as these?
 - What does it mean to 'resolve' a conflict. Can you think of an example?
4. Sum up by recalling relevant articles from the CRC, such as article 38.

Suggestions for follow-up

Look into some of the conflicts present in the group or in the community, or perhaps more widely. Help children to understand the reasons behind particular conflicts and allow them space to discuss this in more detail.

The activity 'The Battle for the Orange' can be a good activity to show children how conflicts can be resolved. You could even run it before this activity to see if children can apply their knowledge!

Ideas for action

If your debriefing discussions focused on armed conflict and peace, try to organise an action or symbolic demonstration for peace and/or visit a peace organisation. Help the children find out about how peace organisations understand peace and approach conflict resolution.

Discuss with the children the ways they deal with conflict among themselves. Help them develop some ground rules for addressing conflicts within their group that reflect human rights standards (for example: no physical violence, no insulting language, everyone has the right to an opinion and to express it freely, everyone should have the same chance to participate).

Tips for the facilitator

No-one has to fight over anything in this activity. Children in weaker physical conditions can achieve much more through strategy, quickness and co-operation than those who rely on aggression and strength. If you have children of different ages, try to make sure there is a mix of older and younger children in each group. Make sure there is a gender balance in groups and be aware of any children with disabilities that might need consideration.

Prepare the adult facilitators or helpers. Make sure they understand the rules and boundaries and are aware of any potential dangers in the area.

Explain to the Blue and Orange Parties the importance of having a strategy – for example when people are caught. Emphasise that 'to catch' means simply touching the person. See some variations below for how to adapt to differently-abled groups.

The duration of the game will depend on the group. Be prepared for the activity to be shorter or longer than expected.

Adaptation

If one group or an individual child is weaker than the others, provide some hints on possible strategies (e.g. they could verify how many pieces of which plan have already reached the other camp; risk the loss of some pieces to save the others; not send pieces of all the plans at the very beginning but save some until you have understood the rhythm of the game).

Rather than a simple 'catch', include a test after a Purple Party member tags a Blue or Orange Party member (e.g. when they meet, they play 'rock, paper, scissors'; if the Purple wins, then the Blue or Orange gives up the piece; if the Blue or Orange wins he or she goes free). This variation is effective when the children vary in their ages and physical condition, because it gives younger or the weaker children an equal chance.

Instead of actions plans, you could use balls of different colours that each camp needs to get hold of. For example, the Orange group has 15 orange balls and the Blue group has 15 blue balls. To win, they need to get 6 balls from the opposite camp. The Purple group wins if they get 6 balls of the same colour. Balls cannot be thrown but must be passed hand to hand.

You could also allow members of the Blue and Orange teams to 'free' their team members imprisoned in the castle. They need to enter the Purple castle and touch the team member.