



YES-NO-MAYBE: GANGS DOING GOOD FOR SOCIETY



Early Street Gang (Library of Congress)

Are gangs trying to do good for society?

Rationale: In this lesson, students will learn how to take a stance by answering “yes”, “no” or “maybe” to a statement about gangs and explain their stance. This will enable students to further develop the fundamental habits for respectful communication, engaged dialogue, and peer opinion sharing, which are the foundations of democratic action.

Objective(s): Students will reflect on their opinions related to gangs, people involved in them, and the impact that they have on society. Also, students will discuss the perceptions that surround gangs and gang-related activity.

Target Grade Levels: 5-8

Social Studies & ELA Standards:

- **NJSLS-SS.6.1.8.CivicsPI.4:** Investigate the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people’s lives and share this information with individuals who might benefit from this information.

- **NJSLSA.R1.** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Focal SEL Skill(s): Social Awareness

- Recognize and identify the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others.

Materials & Resources:

- Signs that indicate “Yes”, “No”, and “Maybe” (posted in corners of the room)
- Pencils
- Highlighters
- Notebook
- Copies of [Yes-No-Maybe Student Resource](#)
- Pictures of [“Early street gang”](#) and [“East Coast Crips”](#)
- Copies of article [“Gangs are good for society”](#) by Caspar Walsh
- Copies of [Yes-No-Maybe Lesson Reflection](#)

Timing: Two, forty-five minute periods

Lesson Procedure:

Part I: Introduction & Free Write (20 minutes)

1. Present two pictures to the students ([“Early street gang”](#) and [“East Coast Crips”](#)) and explain that they both show pictures of gangs at different points in history. *“Today, we are going to examine your views on gangs, by engaging in activities with your classmates. We will then explore several statements related to gangs and have the opportunity to take a stance on each.”*
2. Explain that students will first engage in free writing related to the following prompts. First, they will record the statements as they are presented below on their worksheet. Then, given a statement, the students will write a few sentences explaining their thoughts. *“For each statement, write whatever comes to your mind and do not focus on the structure or conventions. The intent is to help you sort out your thinking.”*
 - *A: There is a link between gangs and drugs, violence, and crime.*
 - *B: People can be motivated to join gangs to make money and to gain power.*

- *C: Gangs can give people a sense of purpose.*
- *D: Young people who live in an area where gangs are prevalent are often pressured to join.*

Part II: Yes-No-Maybe Round I (25-30 minutes)

1. Tell students: *“Today, we are going to start learning some skills that you will need, now and as you get older, to be effective and involved citizens of your classrooms, your school, your community, and the wider world. It involves thinking about our own opinion on issues and considering others’ opinions as well.”*
2. Designate 3 separate spaces/areas in the room, one for “Yes”, “No”, and “Maybe”.
3. Tell students: *“I am going to read a sentence and when I am done, you will move to the Yes, No, or Maybe spot of the room depending on if you agree or not (Yes=agree, No=disagree, Maybe=not sure). If you agree and move to ‘Yes’, you have to share one reason why you agree. If you move to ‘No’, you have to say why you do not agree. If you pick ‘Maybe,’ you have to share both something you agree with and something you disagree with about the statement. Then, we will have a spokesperson from each of the areas summarize the main points of your discussion with the whole class.”*

A: There is a link between gangs and drugs, violence, and crime.

B: People can be motivated to join gangs to make money and to gain power.

C: Gangs can give people a sense of purpose.

D: Young people who live in an area where gangs are prevalent are often pressured to join.

4. Have students return to their seats and reflect in their journals: “What surprised you about the activity? Did your opinion(s) change at all? If so, how?”

Part III: Reading about Gangs (15 minutes)

1. Have the students read the article [“Gangs are good for society”](#) by Caspar Walsh. As they are reading, encourage students to annotate the article related to the four statements (either display them on the board or have the students refer to them in their notebooks). Students can annotate by assigning a color for each statement or using the letters they are assigned when writing notes in the margin.

2. Then, in your notebook, respond to: “What is the argument the author is trying to make? What evidence does he have to support the argument?”

Part IV: Yes-No-Maybe Round II (10-12 minutes)

1. Tell students: *“I will read the same statements from before, and you will move to the Yes, No, or Maybe spot of the room depending on if you agree or not (Yes = agree, No=disagree, Maybe=not sure). We will briefly share out after each YES-NO-MAYBE round. Then, reflect on this experience when you’re back to your seat.”*

Part V: Reflection & Assessment (5 minutes)

1. In your notebook, please respond to each of the following reflection prompts. (If you prefer for students to have a copy of a the worksheet with reflection questions, please refer to the Materials & Resources section.):
 - a. **Reflection 1:** Did your responses to any of the prompts change during this round? If you did experience changes, explain why that occurred as best as you can.
 - b. **Reflection 2:** What did you learn from this activity? Please be specific.
2. As a whole class, debrief how their perspectives have changed from the beginning to the end of the activity.

Formative Assessment: The reflection questions in Part IV can be presented as an “exit slip” or in an interactive format, using Jamboard. You can also have students create a Flipgrid video presenting their answers orally as another alternative.

Lesson Extension: Identify two examples of the media’s negative portrayal of gangs. This can be a video clip, article, or social media post. Write a letter to the media outlet challenging their biased portrayal of the gang(s) and task them to consider all sides of the story **OR** revise a poster to reflect a more equitable portrayal.



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East Coast Crips (www.rapdict.org)