

## Directions

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**A simple activity can give information about the students you work with each day. Students make, and then defend their choices in this activity, called Rock or Feather?**

*Are you more like a rock or a feather? Summer or winter? The city or the country? Which word in each of those word pairs best describes you, your personality, and your dreams?*

The idea behind this activity is simple. Students make choices. For example, are they rocks or feathers? They have to choose one -- the one that describes them the best -- and they have to be able to explain **why** they made the choice.

Students could consider the following pairs:

- Drama or comedy
- Rock band or string quartet
- Clothesline or kite string
- Big Mac or sirloin steak
- River or pond
- Bat or ball

Many students want to be able to pick something in the middle. That is not allowed, however. There is no middle choice.

Some teachers use the activity as a simple either-or checklist; kids use a pencil to mark their choices and a follow-up discussion ensues. To make it interesting and movement-oriented, instead of using it as a worksheet exercise, have all the students stand in the middle of the room. Then, for each pair of words, they have to move to one side of the room or the other. This makes it a little tougher for them. Their actions/choices are right out there and they can't hide.

**GREAT TO USE AS AN ICEBREAKER -- OR ANYTIME**

One teacher likes the Rock or Feather activity as an icebreaker when school opens, with the physical movement. *"The activity quickly let me know which kids have higher-level reasoning [skills], which kids are shy about speaking out loud, and which kids are followers."*

" Students really appreciate being able to move around, and they watch in amazement as some of their peers choose and justify their -- to them -- bizarre selections".

## AN ACTIVITY WITH MANY POSSIBILITIES

The variations on this activity are endless. Some teachers use it as a simple checklist. Others give the assignment for homework and ask students to write the reasons for their choices. Some use the individual word pairs as prompts for journal writing. Others invite students to think up word pairs to add to the activity.

It is a great opportunity to challenge students to think, make choices, and learn about themselves and others.

Some teachers have used another variation on the activity -- one that uses four corners of the room rather than two sides. A teacher posted some examples of four-choices questions:

- Are you a 911 Porsche, a Cadillac Seville, a Toyota Camry, or a Ford Windstar?
- Are you a mansion, a farmhouse, an apartment, or a semi-detached?
- Are you an elephant, a gazelle, a Siamese cat, or a falcon?

"I used the four-corner ones because I like forcing adolescents to make decisions," stated one teacher. "I also wrote the words on construction paper and had them arranged in piles -- one pile in each corner. When we were ready to go to the next group of choices, one student in each corner lifted the top card. I really believe that, whenever possible, being able to see the words as well as hear them helps students think."

*Article by Gary Hopkins, Education World® Editor in Chief  
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