

Understanding Cooperation

1.1

THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT

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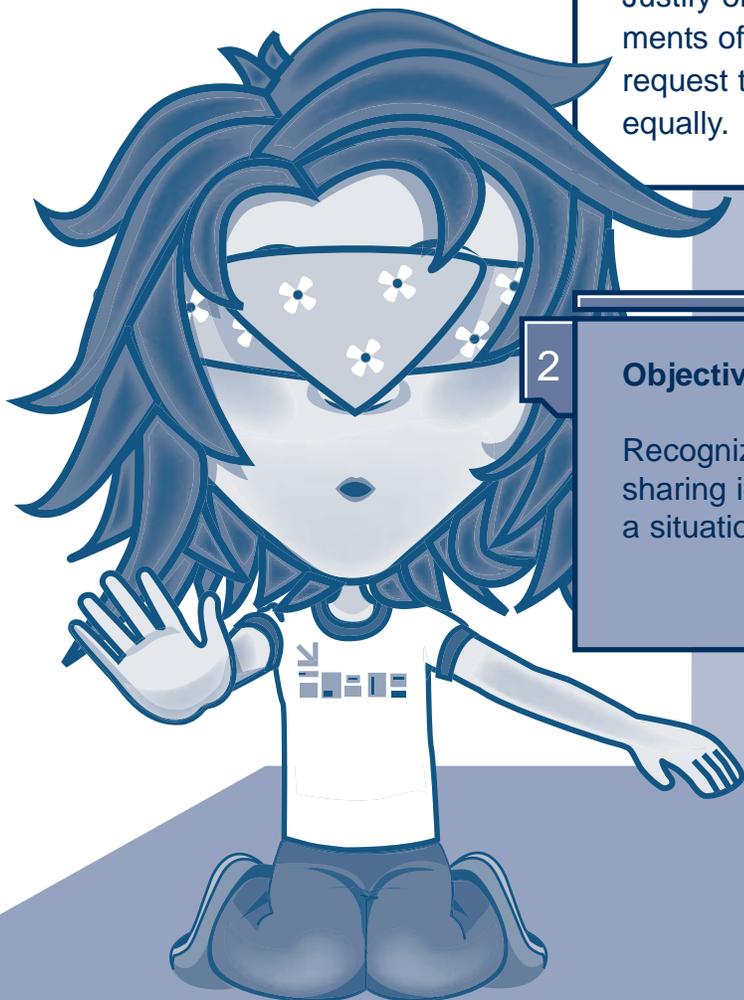
Targeted skills

Justify one's ideas, respect the comments of others in a discussion, request the right to speak, participate equally.

2

Objective

Recognize the importance of sharing ideas to fully understand a situation.



Learning Activity



PREPARATION

Materials for each team

Student sheet “What do you see?” (page 13)
Four student sheets “The Blind Men and the Elephant” (page 14)
Student sheet “Team Summary” (page 15)
Four feedback sheets (page 16)

Cooperative structure

Participation tokens

Roles: spokesperson, secretary, token manager, time keeper / material manager

Group formation

Heterogeneous teams of four students (home groups)



ACTIVITY

Getting started

This is a perception activity in which you ask students to describe what they see (use the student sheet “What do you see?”).

Procedure

Read the text “The Blind Men and the Elephant” individually.

Using the participation tokens, each team answers the questions on the “Team Summary” sheet. The secretary writes the team’s answers down on the sheet.



FEEDBACK

Feedback on what was learned

The teams come together in a class group and the spokesperson from each team presents the team's answers to the questions that are on the "Team Summary" sheet.

The teacher writes down the important elements on the board and, if necessary, may add explanations of the allegory: teamwork helps us broaden our knowledge, listen to different opinions, be open and receptive to different ideas and develop a global view of a situation before making a judgement.

Ask students to describe the links that can be made between the text "The Blind Men and the Elephant" and their everyday life.

Feedback on the cooperative process

Ask students to fill out the feedback sheet:

- How did today's session go?
- Is it easier to come up with ideas alone or in a group?



Reflections

You should train your students on how to use participation tokens before doing this activity.

STUDENT SHEET

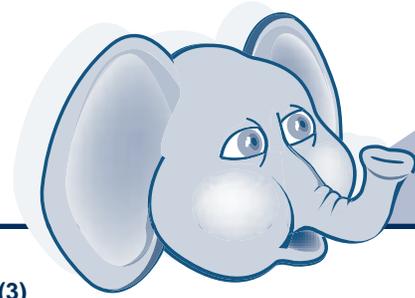


What do you see?(2)



2 - Jacques Lajoie, *Démonstrations de divers phénomènes en perception visuelle*, septembre 20, 2005, accessed August 29, 2007, <http://lajoie.uqam.ca/confven13nov/ambiguites.html>.

STUDENT SHEET



The Blind Men and the Elephant⁽³⁾

Six Hindustani men, eager to expand their knowledge, went to see an elephant (despite the fact that they were all blind), so that each one, having observed it, could satisfy his curiosity about the animal.

As **the first** man drew near the animal, he tripped and fell against the animal's broad and robust flank. He immediately cried out: "Dear Lord, an elephant is very similar to a wall!"

The second one reached out and felt one of the tusks and shouted: "What is this object that is so round, smooth and pointed? There is no doubt about it, the elephant is very similar to a lance!"

The third man approached the elephant and unknowingly seized the elephant's trunk as it twisted about and so he immediately cried out: "To my mind, this elephant is very similar to a snake!"

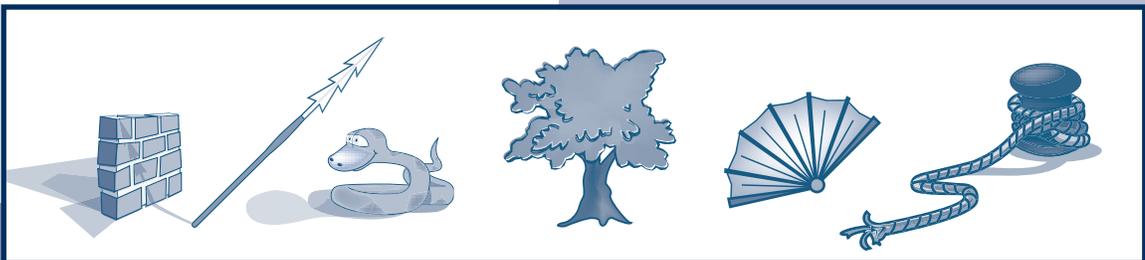
The fourth man held out a trembling hand and felt the animal's knee: "There is no doubt, this fabulous animal is very similar to a tree!"

Number five happened to feel the ear and so said: "Even the blindest of men can describe what an elephant is like and no one will ever convince me of the opposite: why the elephant is like a fan!"

The sixth man was beginning to feel the animal when the creature's tail fell into his hand and so he acclaimed: "I see that the elephant is very much like a rope!"

Thus, the six men from Hindustan continued to discuss at great length and each defended his opinion with great conviction. While each of them was partially right, all of them were in error.

3 - John Godfrey Saxe, American poet (1816-1887).



STUDENT SHEET



Team Summary

Names: _____

1. Which of the blind men gave the answer closest to reality?

2. If you were one of the blind men, what would you do to reach a consensus with your friends about the nature of the elephant?

3. What is the moral of the story?



FEEDBACK SHEET



How did today's session go?

Is it easier to come up with ideas alone or in a group?
