



Belief, truth and knowledge

Curriculum connections

Use of this learning and teaching activity may contribute to achievement of elements of the Standards. Indications of relevant Domains and Levels in the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* are provided to assist teachers to make decisions about the appropriateness of the activity for their students.

Refer to introductory notes for VELS curriculum connections which define the relevant standards in greater detail.

Victorian Essential Learning Standards Domains and (Levels):

Health and Physical Education (4,5,6)
Thinking Processes (4,5)

Duration: 1 hour

Setting: The classroom

Summary

This activity brings into focus how shifting beliefs and knowledge shape everyday choices and behaviours. Examples relating to food production and consumption are used to encourage critical reflection on the thinking processes that lead to decision making.

Student outcomes

This activity will enable students to:

- Distinguish between beliefs and knowledge
- Describe how their beliefs and knowledge affect their decisions using food choices as a focus
- Describe their thinking and reflect on their thinking process
- Understand that changes may occur in their beliefs and knowledge over time.

Background notes for teachers

The interaction between belief, truth and knowledge are complex and important for students to understand when reflecting on and managing their thinking. This activity encourages students to challenge their beliefs to enable them to distinguish between belief and knowledge.

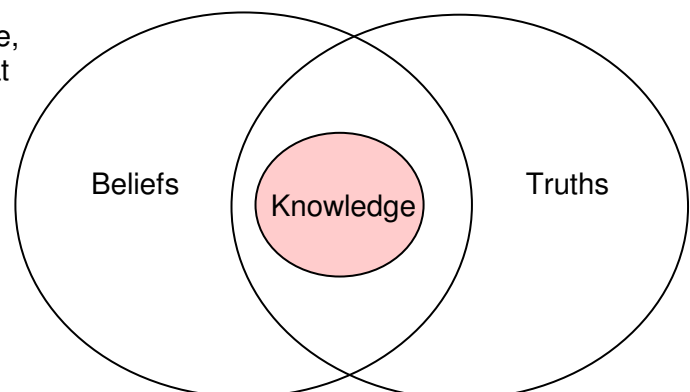
The classical definition, described by Plato, states that to count as **knowledge**, a statement must be justified, true, and believed.

Therefore, the relationship between belief and knowledge is that a belief is knowledge if the belief is **true**, and if the believer has a **justification** (reasonable and necessarily plausible assertions / evidence / guidance) for believing it is true.

A **belief** is the psychological state in which an individual holds a proposition or premise to be true. **Truth** is an objective state independent of the individual.

A false belief is not considered to be knowledge, even if it is sincere. A sincere believer in the flat earth theory does not *know* that the Earth is flat.

Similarly, a truth that nobody believes is not knowledge, because in order to be knowledge, there must be some person who believes it.



Materials

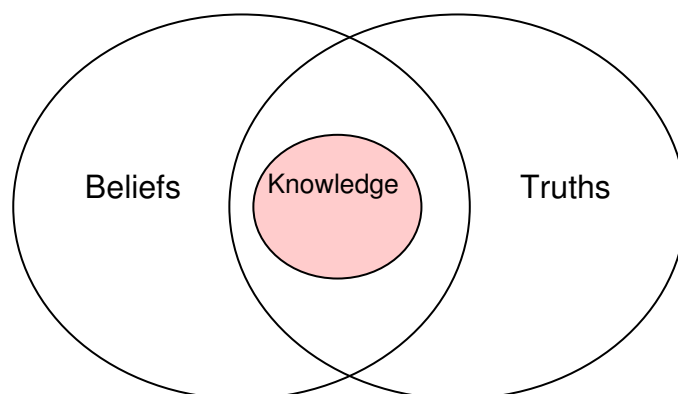
- Student Work Sheet: Belief, truth and knowledge scenarios

The activity

1. As a class brainstorm a range of different beliefs that are held in the community.
2. Introduce the concept of knowledge being a subset of truth and belief.
3. Challenge students to consider how they know that their beliefs are true?
4. Hand out a copy of the Student Worksheets to each student and ask students to answer each question.
5. In small groups students should discuss their answers.
6. As a class talk about the discussion questions.
7. What role do personal values and ethics play in determining beliefs and knowledge?
8. Discuss where students generally source their 'knowledge' from and if they believe these are reliable sources of information.

Related LandLearn activities

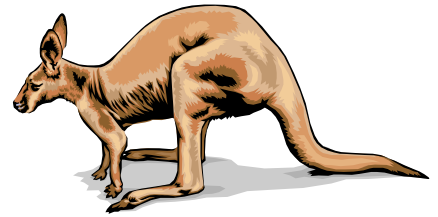
'Exploring Values' activity found in the **Planning for Sustainable Landuse** booklet on the *LandLearn Resources CD*.



 **Student Worksheet: Belief, truth and knowledge scenarios**

To eat or not to eat - that is the question

Your family is invited to have dinner at the home of your fathers boss. Your father is excited as he is expecting to receive a promotion soon and thinks that this will be a step in the right direction – he wants to make a good impression. Once you have sat down at the table they bring out the first course which they are delighted to be offering you. They put on the table roast kangaroo.



What do you do? _____

Why? I believe that ... _____

This is based on my knowledge that ... _____

I know that this is true because ... _____

Crushing dilemma

You are standing in the Fruit and Vegetable section of the supermarket. You are going to make some garlic bread from scratch for dinner that night and you need to purchase some garlic. There are two types to choose from. One is labelled that is grown in China and costs \$2.50. The other is organically grown in Victoria, is slightly larger and costs \$5.00.



What do you do? _____

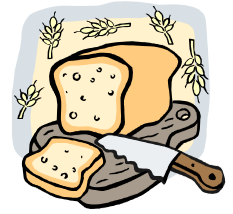
Why? I believe that ... _____

This is based on my knowledge that ... _____

I know that this is true because ... _____

Genetic catch

Extended severe drought in north western Victoria has led to seven years of failed grain crops. In the US a company has developed a range of 'drought resistant' genetically modified (GM) grains that could be grown in Victoria. After a trial period, the grains start to be sold on the market and are being used in your favourite brand of bread. Would you still purchase and eat this bread which now contains GM grains?



What do you do? _____

Why? I believe that ... _____

This is based on my knowledge that ... _____

I know that this is true because ... _____

Discussion questions

Are your choices based mostly on beliefs or on knowledge? _____

Do your beliefs differ depending on the situation? _____

Do you feel that you have enough knowledge to make an informed decision in each situation? If no does this bother you? Why? _____

Describe and explain how and why changes may occur in your ideas and beliefs over time.
