

THE 3 Ys

NURTURING A DISPOSITION TO DISCERN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A SITUATION, TOPIC OR ISSUE
KEEPING GLOBAL, LOCAL AND PERSONAL CONNECTIONS IN MIND.

The 3 Ys

1. **Why** might this [topic, question] matter to me?
2. **Why** might it matter to people around me [family, friends, city, nation]?
3. **Why** might it matter to the world?

THE 3 Ys : Q & A

Why consider the 3Ys? Intrinsic motivation is a key engine of deep learning. As humans we are motivated to learn when we come to believe that a topic or body of knowledge matters. However, gauging significance – i.e. determining whether something matters and why -- is a capacity seldom taught. Significance is not a fixed quality of objects, places or events. Rather it is attributed, constructed by learners. Assessing global and local significance requires the mind to operate at several levels at once. The 3Y's routine invites learners to move step by step across personal, local and global spheres.

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage? This routine encourages students to develop intrinsic motivation to investigate a topic by uncovering the significance of the topic in multiple contexts. The routine also helps students make local-global connections and situate themselves in local and global spheres

When and where can I use this routine? You may find this routine useful early in a unit after the initial introduction of a theme, when you want students to consider carefully why a topic might be worth investigating further. Teachers have also used the routine to expand on a given topic (e.g. local elections, goods consumption) to help students become aware of how such a topic, issue or question has far-ranging impact and consequences at the local and the global levels. In other cases, (e.g. studying poverty in Brazil) the routine is used to create a personal connection to a theme that seems initially remote.

What kinds of topics and provocations might lend themselves to this routine? The routine can be applied to a broad range of topics (from social inequality, to a mathematician's biography, balance in ecosystems, writing a story, to attending school). You may use a rich image, text, quote, video or other inviting materials as provocations to ground students' thinking. One important consideration in using this routine is to ensure that the students have clarity about the focal point of the analysis. For example

you might ask “Why might understanding social inequality matter to me, my people, the world?” as opposed to “Why might this image matter?”

How might I prepare students to engage in this routine? Students will need initial clarity about the phenomenon to be explored, e.g. the meaning of social inequality, in order to unveil its significance. When using an image or text, you may choose to prepare students for this routine by asking them what they think the image is about and why and then focusing their attention on the theme to be explored through the 3Ys.

What are some tips about how to carry out the routine? Use the questions in the order proposed or in reverse order beginning with the more accessible entry point. For instance, students might unfold the purpose and significance of a story they are writing by first reflecting about why the story matters to them, and then moving out to the world from there. In other cases, a teacher may seek to construct a more personal connection to a distant event (e.g. the holocaust), thus beginning with the world working inward. It is recommended that students work on one step at a time as interesting nuances and distinctions between the personal local and global may be lost if they work with the three questions in mind at once. If time allows, you may compare and group students’ thoughts to find shared motivations and rationales for learning the topic under study.

What may we look for in students’ thinking? There are multiple criteria against which one can assess the significance of an idea, a phenomenon or an event. In some cases, an event is significant because of its *universality* or reach, because a large number of people are affected by it (i.e a global economic crisis). Other times we consider something significant because it is visibly *original* or new (e.g. the internet in 1992). Sometimes significance is *personal* (the topic compels us emotionally, cognitively). Other markers include *generativity* (the capacity to generate new questions, lines of inquiry, or work), explanatory power (the capacity to explain why something happens) or ethical insight (how an idea or a situation helps us discern the right course of action) that adds importance to a theme. When listening to students, you may want to highlight such variability as well as the distinctions and connections between personal, local and global. Perhaps most importantly, you may want to consider students’ statements about relevance as the beginning (not the end) of meaningful conversations.