

Chapter 4 Families and households

Topic 2 Childhood

Page 186

Activity: Discussion

Has the position of children improved?

Learning objectives

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Identify key features of sociological perspectives on childhood.
- Evaluate perspectives, highlighting strengths and limitations of each one.
- Apply perspectives on childhood to the position of children in the UK today.

- A. Divide into two groups. Group 1 will adopt the march of progress view of childhood, Group 2 will adopt the conflict view of childhood. Prepare for a debate on whether childhood has improved in society today.

Your aim as a group is to be able to argue your own view but also to counter argue the view of the other group. To do this you will need to prepare material on your view but also on the opposing view.

1. Make a list of key points relating to your view of childhood. These should be presented as arguments on favour of your view of childhood.
2. Make a list of key points from the *other* view of childhood. For each of these you need to be able to produce a counter argument from your own perspective.

Here are some points to help you get started. Add as many as you can:

- Read pages 183-186 relating to your perspective and the other perspectives. Also look back at pages 179-181 on childhood as a social construct.
- Look back at your answers to the activity on child labour.
- Is your view of childhood positive or negative?
- What issues does your view focus on?
- Use examples from your knowledge and experience of your own or other people's family/household to highlight key points.

- B. The debate: 'The position of children has improved in society today.'
Decide which group will go first.

Group one will present the first point in their argument. For example the march of progress view may cite laws restricting child labour have improved the position of childhood and children in the UK. The conflict view needs to counter this with evidence that shows that children may still have to work (this may come from the activity on child labour).

Group two should now present a point which supports their view of the family. Group one will then present a counter argument.

- C. As a class, decide which view is the most useful in understanding childhood today. When making your choice, you must only consider evidence presented during the discussion.
- D. Write a summary of your findings as a class.