



# Once upon a time 45 min

EXPLORING FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

STORYTELLING  
PLENARY EXERCISE

## About the exercise

### TARGET AUDIENCE

A story-based exercise best suited to grassroots-level communities/faith groups including youth groups. Works particularly well in communities with strong oral traditions. By adapting the reflection questions, the story can be used with younger children.

### PURPOSE

To help participants reflect on whether they value the things freedom of religion or belief (FORB) protects, and if/how these things are valued in their traditions and cultures.

### DESCRIPTION

This exercise is based around the story 'The songs of the flute and the drum'. The story illustrates seven key words that relate to the rights protected by FORB: Think, Believe, Belong, Practice, Question, Change and Refuse. The exercise has four parts: storytelling – plenary discussion – group discussion – feedback/conclusion. Follow this exercise with a knowledge input to introduce FORB.



## Instructions

### RESOURCES

- Script of the [story](#): 'The songs of the flute and the drum'.
- Slides 3-23 of the Local Changemakers Course Session 2 [PowerPoint](#), which illustrate the story, OR a printout of the [posters](#) with the same illustrations. (It is possible to do the exercise without these if necessary.)
- [Handouts](#) of the 'Once upon a time' groupwork questions (one per 3-4 participants) OR a pre-prepared flipchart sheet with the groupwork questions on.
- Optional: a ready-made [knowledge input](#) to follow the exercise (also illustrated in the PowerPoint referenced above).

Find all resources connected to this exercise at

[www.forb-learning.org/flute-and-drum](http://www.forb-learning.org/flute-and-drum).

This exercise and the accompanying resources are available in multiple languages as part of Session 2 of the Local Changemakers Course:

[www.forb-learning.org/changemakers-languages](http://www.forb-learning.org/changemakers-languages).

### ADVANCE PREPARATION

Practice reading out the story or retelling it in your own words, so that you can be an engaging storyteller and feel confident about which PowerPoint slide or poster to show when. If you are using the posters, consider putting them up in sequence on a wall in advance. This will make it easier to point to the right poster at the appropriate moment.

**HOW TO INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE** 1 MIN

Explain that the group is going to listen to a storytale and reflect on what it means for us.

**HOW TO RUN THE EXERCISE** 35 MIN

- **STORYTELLING** (15 MIN)

Tell the story and show the PowerPoint slides/posters. Try to read with lots of feeling!

- **QUICK PLENARY DISCUSSION** (5 MIN)

Ask people to put their hands up to answer the following questions – only take one or two responses to each question.

- What do you think are the messages or morals of the story?
- Was there anything you appreciated in the way the characters behaved?  
(If people find it hard to relate to the idea of drums and flutes being important, explain that they represent the villagers' belief system and religious practices.)

- **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION** (15 MIN)

Divide participants into groups of 3-4, giving each group a copy of the groupwork questions. Show PowerPoint slide 24 with the seven key words on, or a flipchart sheet with the words listed. Explain that all of these words relate to the story in some way.

(Key words: Think, Believe, Belong, Practice, Question, Change and Refuse.)

Ask the groups to discuss the following questions:

- How do these words relate to what happened in the story and to things you appreciate or dislike about the characters?
- Can you think of stories from your culture or faith tradition that say positive things about people thinking, believing, belonging, practicing, changing, questioning or refusing?
- Does the community benefit when people are allowed to do these things or is it a threat to the community? Or both?
- Is positive change possible without people who do these things?

**HOW TO CONCLUDE THE EXERCISE** 9 MIN

Ask each group to share one thing that they found inspiring, important or difficult in their discussion.

Conclude by saying something along the following lines:

We have been reflecting on this story as a way of beginning to explore the values and rights connected to the human right to freedom of religion or belief.

- These values and rights are not simple or uncontroversial. They may make us feel a bit concerned. For example, you might be wondering:
  - If people are free to think for themselves and choose how they live their lives, won't our culture, traditions and beliefs be threatened?
  - What guarantee do we have that people will use these freedoms for good? There are people who have bad ideas or bad intentions. Not everyone is like Ziana who wanted life to be better for her friends. Sometimes people use their beliefs to justify acting in ways that harm other people – like the tea stallholder who harassed Ono and organised a gang to rip down the 'everyone welcome' signs.

**TIP!** Be careful of time management to ensure there is enough time for small group discussion.

- These are important questions which we are going to keep exploring! On the other hand, positive change cannot happen unless people are allowed to think and believe and to question things that they think are bad – like discrimination in the marketplace.
- So, what rights should people have and when should the government be able to limit those rights? We are now going to learn about what international human rights law has to say about this.

Follow the exercise with a knowledge input on FORB. A ready-made input designed to follow the story is available (and illustrated in the same PowerPoint as the story) in the accompanying materials to Session 2 of the Local Changemakers Course. Find all the resources at [www.forb-learning.org/changemakers-course-materials](http://www.forb-learning.org/changemakers-course-materials).

**Source**

Local Changemakers Course, FORB Learning Platform, [www.forb-learning.org/changemakers](http://www.forb-learning.org/changemakers)



Illustration from the story 'The Songs of the flute and the drum'.