

# 10 chairs: the Boss and Workers

## Teacher guidelines

1. Line up ten chairs across the front of the room facing the pupils
2. Ask for ten volunteers. Identify one person as the 'boss' (Andrew Carnegie). Ideally, choose someone who is tall
3. Ask the ten pupils to stand in line, one behind each of the chairs.
  1. Explain that each chair represents 10% of Carnegie Steel Company's profit in 1892.
  2. Explain that 'boss' is Andrew Carnegie and the other 9 volunteers represent his workers (each pupil stands for 10% of the workforce, that means 100 workers)
  3. While the students are standing in line, one behind each chair, explain this is what the Company's wealth would look like if it was evenly distributed - one person, one chair. If wealth was evenly distributed, each individual worker in the company would have earned over £33,000 that year (the company made a £30 million profit in 1892. That divided by 901 individuals is £33,296 per person)
  4. However, that was not the case!
4. Next, instruct the 'boss' to lay across seven chairs; while the other nine pupils must squeeze into the remaining three chairs. This represents the 'boss' (Andrew Carnegie) keeping 70% of the profits (£21 million) while the remaining 30% (£9 million) is divided between all of his workers (that means that an individual worker earns only £10,000 per year).
  1. Ask pupils trying to squeeze into the remaining three chairs to describe how they feel about this situation
  2. How does the 'boss' feel about his/her situation?
  3. Would you push others off the chairs to make room? Why?
  4. If there are any pupils standing on the floor, who do they represent? (People who have lost their job. If you're not on the chair, you are not employed!!)
5. Suggest to the nine pupils that perhaps their condition is their own fault. Perhaps if they worked harder, they would earn more. Is that true? Who makes the rules in the company about how much people get paid?
6. Is it fair that some people get paid more than others? How much money do you think the the 'boss' should keep?
7. Ask pupils what conclusions they draw about this exercise.
8. Are things any different now, in the 21st century?