



Can You Believe It?

Objective

To use a role play activity to explore the issues around the legality of tobacco and why it is promoted as a substance worth using.

Requirements

- Photocopy enough 'Can you believe it' role play for your group (following pages)

Getting started

1. Put pupils into small groups of 4. Groups to read the script and take on the different characters to act out the play.
2. Each group to perform the sketch to at least one other group or the whole class.
3. Teacher to lead a discussion on:
 - ❖ Why is tobacco so readily available?
 - ❖ Should tobacco be a legal product?

Make the point that medical experts agree that smoking is extremely harmful, and is one of the major causes of heart disease and lung cancer and many other illnesses.

Can You Believe It Role Play Sheet

Introduction

Can you imagine a meeting taking place in a luxury office? The investor of a new product is present. He desperately wants the group of “big business” people to produce the new product. The investor has been describing his invention to the group. The chair of the meeting interrupts him ...

Chair Excuse me. Just a moment, please. Did I hear you say that you put a match to this thing?

Inventor Well ... yes. But it's not as silly as it sounds.

1st Director It sounds funny to me. I thought you were joking.

2nd Director May I ask a question? Why do you go to all the trouble to make this ... this thing, then just burn it?

3rd Director Yes, why do you burn it? What's the point?

Inventor That is the point. You have to burn it so that you can inhale the smoke.

Chair Did you say, “Inhale the smoke”? You mean, into your lungs?

Inventor Yes, I know it sounds a bit wacky but ...

2nd Director A bit wacky! That's an understatement if ever I heard one.

Chair Give him a chance. Go on, you were saying ...

Inventor Thank you. As I said, you collect the leaves of this particular plant, then you dry them, and then you cut into tiny pieces.

Chair Please, don't laugh. Let him have his say. You said, “Then you cut them into tiny pieces”. You mean, sort of shred them?

Inventor Exactly. You shred them up.

3rd Director And then what do you do with them? Make them into a jigsaw?

Inventor Of course not. You get small pieces of paper and put some of the shredded leaves onto the paper and then you roll the leaves up inside the piece of paper. Have I made myself clear?

2nd Director I can just see it. People sitting down and putting some fried, cut up leaves onto a piece of paper, rolling them up ... and, please tell us again, they set fire to it?

Inventor Well, yes, but it's not quite the way it sounds.

Chair Then you tell us how it really is.

Inventor The idea is to get the leaves smouldering, not really blazing. When these leaves smoulder they give off a very pleasant smell.

1st Director Who says the smell is pleasant?

Inventor The people who inhale the smoke. They say it's great.

2nd Director So you just smell the smoke and sometimes you sort of suck it into your lungs. Doesn't it make you cough

Inventor Only sometimes. Anyway, you don't cough all the time.

3rd Director Would you see people inhaling the smoke from these rolled up pieces of paper filled with dried leaves in, for example, buses or cafes?

Inventor Why not? If that's what people want to do.

Chair Can we do back to the coughing effect? In your experience is it only the people inhaling the smoke who cough?

Inventor That's the interesting thing... the smokers. By the way, that's the name I have given to people who tested my invention. They actually share some of their smoke, in fact, a good deal of it, with everyone else who just happens to be nearby. That's bound to make the smokers very popular. After all, they are sharing their smoke.

1st Director Suppose the other people don't want any of the smoke? Have you a plan to keep all the smoke from going into the non-smoker's lung?

Inventor Not at the moment, but I am working on it. But who could possibly object to free smoke?

Chair Why would anyone want to pay good money for smouldering dried leaves which cause you to cough ... at least sometimes, you say? Can you answer that one?

Inventor Some of the people who have tried it said it made them feel calm.

3rd Director Are you saying that everyone who inhales this smoke will feel calm?

Inventor Not everyone.

Chair Well then ...

Inventor Some people said it sort of woke them up.

2nd Director So, it calms some, wakes up others, but we can't really say what exactly smokers will get out of inhaling this smoke?

1st Director Except a cough...

Inventor Does it matter what people get out of it as long as they buy the stuff? We can always make them believe that this is the latest fashion, that all the famous people are into it, ... and so on. It seems to me that once they start they want to go on smoking it.

Chair You may have something there. You can get some people to believe almost anything. We could even say that the fact they get a cough shows just how strong the leaves are, and strong things are always good things. Yes, I can see the idea has possibilities for making a very great deal of money.

1st Director Yes, and we can always say that we are creating employment.

Chair Well it all sounds worth a try then.

Inventor Do we have a deal?

All Directors Yes. We have a deal.

Adapted from 'Smokebusting' Smokebusters England, 1996