



Jana Mohr Lone from the Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children at the University of Washington and fourth grade students at Whittier Elementary School in Seattle had a conversation after reading Barbara Williams's picture book *Albert's Impossible Toothache*. They talked about the relationship between telling a lie, telling the truth, and making a mistake, and how we know that we are talking about the same thing when we talk with someone. The discussion led to an exploration of why the things children say are often less likely to be believed than what adults say. One student commented that adults are seen as more trustworthy than children. The class examined the issue of whether that perception reflects a truth. Afterwards, the students responded to the following question: **Are children more or less trustworthy than adults?**

These answers, the question they are responding to, and the book which inspired the discussion all offer possibilities for further discussion. In addition, we suggest that it could be useful to consider which of these responses gives the best argument. What could make these student reflections even better?

By Elise Marek

I think that kids, for the most part, are more trustworthy than adults are. I think this because adults can lie to kids and they still believe them and so will other adults. Kids, on the other hand, can't lie at all or the adult won't believe them ever again. What if the kid has something serious happen to them and they cry for help? The adults won't come because they think that he/she is lying. Or even if the kid lies just one time, the parent will give that child a scolding. That always hurts in emotional and physical ways. Kids don't lie because if they do, they get punished. No one likes to get punished.

Whenever kids find out that an adult lied, they get mad. Because when they lied, they got in big trouble for it; but when the parents lie, the adults get believed! That's the thing that I'm trying to get to. Adults probably lie more than kids do because they can and nothing bad will happen. Although when kids lie, they get punished and scolded. Everyone hates that. This is why I think that adults lie more than children do.

By Emma Holden

I predict that children think that they are more trustworthy than adults because they are children. Adults think that they are more trustworthy than children because they are adults. Also adults say that children lie more because they are younger.

My mom told me that adults have more things to lie about than children. For example, an adult asks, "Does this shirt look good on me?" and the other says, "Yes; it does," even if it does not look good.

So I have proved that children are more trustworthy than adults. My mom agrees with me.

By Claire Torgelson

I think this is an unfair question because it depends on the person. A person with a kind personality will usually be trustworthy. Some children are really mean and are not trustworthy; they will not keep a secret. Same as children, some adults are not trustworthy and kind.

In general, I think that kids are more trustworthy than adults. If a kid tells one lie, some adults would assume that they just tell a handful of lies. This is not very trustworthy. Kids are more likely to say how they feel or to tell the truth. Adults are more complicated and sometimes they tell lies to avoid hurting other people's feelings. In conclusion, I think this is an unfair question.

By Hanna Weaver

If a child was told something that supposed to be kept confidential by their friend, then I think they wouldn't say anything to anyone. I think there might be a difference, although, if an adult told a child the same thing. They might tell one of their close friends. I also think that as they get older and more mature, they might not tell secrets as often.

If an adult, on the other hand, was told something that was a secret—and someone else asked if they knew this secret—then they would probably shake their heads, "No." I think that if an adult was told a secret that they might tell their family—so they may not be as trustworthy as you think.

In the end, though, I think that adults would be more likely to not tell a lie. I think this because they have more experience with what can go wrong. I also think that it is more likely for adults to think about it before telling someone something confidential. Therefore, I think children are less trustworthy than adults.



YOUNG CHILDREN OUTSIDE THE HO CHI MINH MUSEUM ■ ADAM JONES, CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSED

By Vera Jia Xi Mancini

When first you think about it, you think, “Oh, grown-ups are mature, so they are more trustworthy.” However, then you realize that being trustworthy also means telling your true opinion and being able to keep secrets. Grown-ups are terrible at that! For example, grown-ups will lie to you so they won’t have to tell you that your new haircut stinks, but kids, on the other hand, will say to you, “Hi, Mom! Did I tell you how ugly your haircut is?” Grown-ups are the worst at keeping secrets. Kids, however, will keep a secret forever . . . to the grave!

However, after thinking about it for an extremely long time (until your head feels like it’s going to explode), you realize that it’s not really about your age or if you’re a grown-up or child; it’s about who you are. If you’re a child who lies, then you will probably be a grown-up who doesn’t tell the truth often. But, if you’re a truthful child, then you’ll end up being a truthful adult. In summary, I believe it’s your character that determines if you’re worthy of trust.



HAPPY ■ SEIDE TRIPP THE DAELIUS NEUTRINOSTARTRAVELER(L.O.L.), CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSED

By Corinna Singer

I think that kids are more trustworthy than adults are. I think that because kids will lie to protect a secret. This quality of kids is one that adults don’t notice.

Most kids who don’t think deeper about this problem think that adults are more trustworthy. I think that some kids think that because when they think of an adult they think of their parents. Parents usually make their kids feel safe. Most kids’ parents keep their kids’ secrets because they feel protective over their kids; but you never know. I’m a kid, so how can I know?

I think that kids look at adults and say, “My parents have never lied to me so no other adult lies.” Or, at least that’s what their brain says without them knowing. Then adults look at kids and say, “My kid lied to me; so now I know that kids always are lying.”

One last thing that I think is a variable is the person. If a kid or adult is really mean, then they are probably not going to be trustworthy. If a kid or adult is really nice, they are probably going to be trustworthy. From my experience so far, this is what I think. In the future my opinion might be completely different.



ABBYNORMY ■ CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSED

By Spencer Beaudette

Ms. Barnes’s fifth-grade class is a very excitable bunch. Each student has her own idea about any given subject and is not afraid to share. One of the greatest values I find in philosophy is its ability to encourage cooperation through mutual understanding. With this in mind, I hoped to develop and lead a lesson urging the students to try out unfamiliar perspectives. In particular, I wanted the students to discover the possibility of rejecting a particular outlook without declaring it altogether stupid or invalid. Art is a subject tailor-made for this purpose. In general, people have wildly diverging

ideas about what qualifies as art, and yet, it is a subject which most of us regard with a level of impassivity. I thought that if none of the students had deeply held beliefs about art, they might be more receptive to alternate ideas.

To begin the session, I presented a certain example of art, which I anticipated most students would fail to immediately recognize as art. I used Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain*, the urinal turned upside down, signed, and then submitted for exhibition. I initially showed only a picture of the piece, and asked the class for an explanation. Naturally, no one