

WORKERS OF ZEN

Background.

I was introduced to this activity at an NQT induction course run by Lincolnshire County Council and have used it with classes from year 9 upwards. It has always been very well received.

Aims.

This activity encourages team work and communication.

The *winning* team will necessarily be the one whose members communicate most effectively and efficiently.

Mathematics knowledge required.

The only real mathematics required is the volume of a cuboid.

Each team of between 4 to 6 students will require the **accompanying statements** (see below) photocopied onto individual cards.

Share the individual statements out **randomly** between the members of the group so that (ideally) each student has the same number of cards (e.g. 6 cards each).

No individual student is allowed to see another's cards. All communication must be verbal.

The 24 statements detail a fictitious world and a mathematical problem. The first team to correctly identify and solve the problem are the winners! Simple!

Notes.

- i) The final 4 statements are '*red herrings*'!
- ii) The problem to be solved is the one using all relevant information and so, for example, is not as simple as:
 "How many blocks in a randol?"
or "How many plonks does each worker work in a week?"
- iii) The actual problem is "On which day does work on a new randol finish?" This uses all the information except the *red herrings*.

The answer is 'Mermaiday' since it will take 32.05... days to complete work on a randol.

The first day of the Zen week is called Aquaday.

The second day of the Zen week is called Dolphinday.

The third day of the Zen week is called Teleday.

The fourth day of the Zen week is called Mermaiday.

The fifth day of the Zen week is called Manicday.

The sixth day of the Zen week is called Pompomday.

There are 6 days in a Zen week.

No work takes place on Teleday's.

A working day consists of 8 schlibs.

There are 2 plonks in a schlib.

There are 9 workers in a gang.

1 worker in each gang oversees the work and does not lay blocks.

Each worker lays 6 blocks in a single plonk.

Each worker rests for 1 plonk in each working day.

Work on building a new randol begins on Aquaday.

There are 2 gangs working on a single randol.

The width of a randol is 40 blocks.

The length of a randol is 50 blocks.

The height of a randol is 20 blocks.

All workers partake in a religious service every day which lasts for 1 schlib.

Each block is green in colour.

There are 48 weeks in a Zen year.

Workers must be at least 20 years of age.

The national symbol of Zen is a shark.