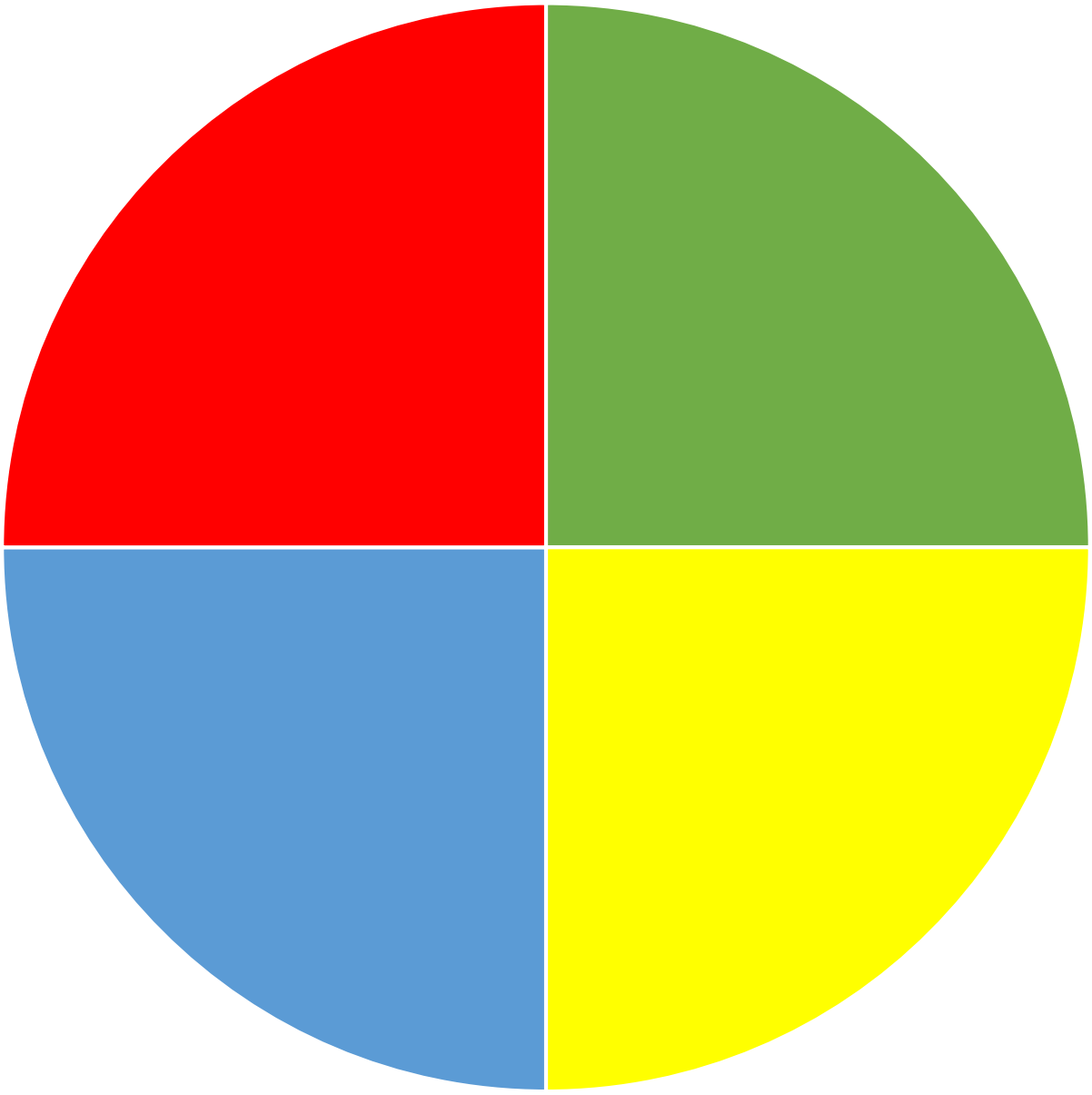
The Explanation Game



- I notice…
- I think it is…
- I think this because…
- It could also be…

THE EXPLANATION GAME 

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Taking a close look at the object you are trying to understand:

- **Name it:** Name a feature of the object that you notice.
- **Explain it:** What could it be? What role might it serve? Why might it be there?
- **Give reasons:** What makes you say that? Why do you think it happened that way?
- **Generate alternatives:** What else could it be? What makes you say that?

Purpose:

- This routine involves looking closely at the parts of an object rather than the whole. Students try to build explanations and interpretations.
- The object should be one that students recognize, but don't fully understand how it operates or functions.
- Students are asked to build causal explanations for why something is the way it is. This makes **THE EXPLANATION GAME** powerful for developing understanding.

Appropriate Content	Uses and Variations	Assessment and Tips
• Content should have various parts and functions that would allow for closer examination. • Appropriate content includes science phenomena, historical events, geographical images, or mathematical models.	• Looking at a work of art • Thinking like an archaeologist • The process of giving reasons is significant to making the culture of your classroom one of hypothesizing.	• Analyze the quality of student explanations. • Encourage students to resist the urge to name the object; keep the focus on observations.

The Steps

1. **Set up:** Focus students on the object you want them to understand better. Ask them to look carefully at the object to see all they can possibly see.

2. **Name it:** Ask students to share with their group the various features they noticed. Students should record all the different parts they can observe. Working in a group helps students to see features they might miss if they are working alone.

3. **Explain it:** In groups, students take their list of features and begin to explain them. Their goal is to come up with as many explanations as possible. They should document their work.

4. **Give reasons:** Students generate reasons that describe why the explanations make sense. Students provide evidence to support their explanations.

5. **Generate alternatives:** Students are required to give alternative explanations beyond the ones they already shared. This continues to keep students focused on the features and why they might be the way they are.