

CHAPTER

1

ACTIVITY 1: THE STORY OF THE BLIND SOCIETY¹

Name(s): _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

In your physics class, we begin the year studying geometric optics. On the first day of class before any materials are passed out or procedures discussed, we will do this activity.

The teacher will enter the classroom caring a cane and wearing dark glasses. The teacher tells the class that he/she is a member of a blind society. The teacher has never seen nor met anyone who has sight. The class has stumbled upon this society, and since you keep talking about seeing and light, the members of your class are accusing of witchcraft. The class is on trial and in order to prove themselves not guilty of witchcraft the class must answer the question, “WHAT IS LIGHT?”

You are permitted to give testimony in your defense. As you attempt to answer this question keep a record of your ideas below:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

As your first physics assignment, look up the definition of light in a dictionary or on Internet. Record this definition below

- _____
- _____
- _____

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How do you think this definition would be received in the court of the blind society?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- There is a delightful YouTube by Richard Feynman “What’s the name of a bird?” at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ga_7j72CVlc that ties into this lesson. To read about this incident see *The Pleasure of Finding Things Out*, Richard Feynman, Perseus Publishing, 2000, page 4.
