

2024-2025 Middle School Ethics Bowl Case Set

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<https://www.ethicsatkentplace.org/student-programs/middle-school-ethics-bowl>

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Case 4: Concert Conflict

John, a high school sophomore, is passionate about music, especially the songs of his favorite pop singer, Skyler Miller.¹ John and Atul, his best friend, have been fans of Miller since they were much younger, and many of the songs have emotional meaning to them. Miller's music reminds John and Atul of playdates, sleepovers, and carefree times when they were unaware of his problematic views. Miller's music has also helped John through a lot of tough times, including his parent's divorce. John and Atul have long dreamed of attending one of his concerts, and recently, after a year of saving up money, they finally bought tickets to see Miller perform live.

However, Skyler Miller has a history of making offensive comments toward the LGBTQIA+ community that he attributes to deeply held personal beliefs. Miller's opinions are widely known, yet many fans, including John and Atul, believe that artists should be judged by their talent, not their personal beliefs, controversial though these may be. The friends focus on the songs, which they find positive, inspiring, and uplifting.

Their friend Charles, who is openly gay, experiences Skyler Miller's homophobic views as deeply hurtful. Charles came out in 8th grade and has faced challenges since then. Some classmates make fun of him, which makes him feel isolated. However, becoming friends with John and Atul this year has had a positive impact on Charles' mental health and overall happiness at school. Although Charles recognizes Miller's musical talent, he chooses not to support an artist whose views he finds offensive.

A week before the concert, Skyler Miller posts a homophobic message on social media that Charles sees and shares with John, asking how John can still enjoy Miller's music. This conversation causes John to reflect on his support for an artist with hurtful beliefs. John hasn't told Charles that he and Atul will be attending the concert. Now John worries how Charles will react if he finds out that his friends were at the concert. John isn't sure what he should do.

Match Questions

1. Should John go to the concert despite Charles' feelings about Skyler Miller? Why or why not?
2. When is it okay to separate an artist's controversial views from their artistic work?
3. If Charles found out about the concert, would it be fair for him to ask his friends not to attend?

Study Questions

1. How should John decide between his friendship with Charles and his desire to attend Skyler Miller's concert? What should he think about?
2. Should John tell Charles about the concert? Why or why not?
3. Do we have the right to challenge our friends for the interests they pursue?

¹ This is a fictional character.