



Goodness Me! Goodness You!

Lesson Samples

Strand: Thinking time

Class level: Third/Fourth class

Learning outcome: Think imaginatively and critically in response to stories, images and other stimuli.

Learning experiences:

- Explore the concept of thought through engagement with the story 'The Obstinate Pen'.
- Use drama to portray the emotions evident in the story.

Lesson sample



Story: 'The Obstinate Pen' by Frank Dormer

Plot summary: The 'obstinate pen' is a pen with a mind of its own. Each adult who ends up with the pen finds that it won't write what the adult intends, but instead writes what seem to be the pen's own thoughts and observations, which are often insulting and consistently hilarious. For example, Uncle Flood wants to write his first sentence with his new pen: 'The following story is all true.' The pen instead writes: You have a big nose! However, when Horace finds and admires the pen, it lets him draw what he wants.



Activity: Read the story to the children and ask them to make initial comments. Brainstorm these ideas.

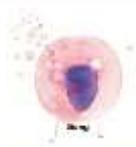


Conversation:

- Where do thoughts come from?
- Do we always do what we intend?
- What is the relationship between what we intend and our actions?
- Do we have control over our thoughts? Over our actions?
- What is the mind?
- What kinds of things have minds?
- Can a pen have a mind? A table? A plant? An ant? An infant?
- Do we express ourselves differently in drawing than in words? If yes, how?
- Why do you think the pen let Horace draw what he wanted to draw?



Activity: The children work in groups to create 'freeze frames' of the different scenes from the story. The children must try to capture the reaction of the characters when they read what the obstinate pen has written.





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Lesson Samples

Song: ['Imagination Song'](#)

Taking stock:

- Recap the children's discussion.
- Discuss pathways the argument/discussion could have taken. Children also participate more in plenary in Thinking time than is usual.



Resources:

- Philosophy for Children resources worldwide (developed locally)
- [Philosophy in Ireland](#)
- Story: 'The Obstinate Pen' by Frank Dormer
- Song: 'Imagination Song'

Linkage and integration:

- **Drama:** To develop the ability to enter physically, mentally and emotionally into the fictional drama context and discover its possibilities through cooperation with others.
- **English:** To justify and defend opinions and present a coherent argument orally and in writing.



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Lesson Samples

Strand: Thinking time

Class level: Third/Fourth class

Learning outcomes: Explore different types of questions, formulate questions based on a variety of stimuli and discuss possible answers using respectful discussion skills.

Learning experiences:

- Explore the concept of aspiration through engagement with the story of 'The Mirror of Erised'.
- Identify their own aspirations.

Lesson sample



Story: Chapter 12, 'The Mirror of Erised', in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K. Rowling

Plot summary: Harry discovers the 'Mirror of Erised', a mystical mirror that shows us the 'deepest and most desperate desires of our hearts.' The mirror shows Harry images of himself surrounded by a loving family, and he becomes entranced by the images he sees, wanting to return to the mirror again and again to stare into it. The school's headmaster, Dumbledore, warns him, 'The mirror will give us neither knowledge nor truth,' and that "it does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live.'



Watch this: [Mirror of Erised Scene](#)



Conversation:

- What do you think you would see looking into this mirror?
- Would the mirror be able to tell him something you don't already know?
- Can the mirror really tell you the deepest desire of your heart? If you don't already know what it is, can it really be your deepest desire?
- What does Dumbledore mean when he tells Harry that the mirror cannot give him knowledge or truth?
- Can images like those in the mirror give us knowledge?
- What would you learn about yourself from looking in the Mirror of Erised?



Activity: Draw an image of what you imagine you would see in the Mirror of Erised.



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Lesson Samples



Taking stock:

- Recap the main aspects of story.
- Recap all the different responses.
- Discuss ways in which we can understand ourselves better. Can we each reflect on what this story might tell us about our own aims in life and our own feelings about ourselves?

Resources:

- Story: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K. Rowling
- YouTube video

Linkage and integration:

- **Visual art:** To express ideas, feelings and experiences in visual form and with imagination, enjoyment and a sense of fulfilment.
- **English:** To justify and defend opinions and present a coherent argument orally and in writing.



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Lesson Samples

Strand: Thinking time

Class level: Third/Fourth class

Learning outcome: Explore different types of questions, formulate questions based on a variety of stimuli and discuss possible answers using respectful discussion skills.

Learning experiences:

- Explore the concept of questioning through engagement with the story 'Why?'.
- Identify and discuss the questions that interest them.

Lesson sample

Story: 'Why?' By Lindsay Camp and Tony Ross



Plot summary: Lily, in response to virtually anything that happens, asks the question, "Why?" Her dad tries to respond to her questioning, but sometimes, 'when he was a bit tired or too busy', he'd say only, 'It just does, Lily. It just does.' One day a giant spaceship lands and the aliens that emerge from the ship announce that their mission is to destroy the planet. Terrified, no one responds, except Lily, who asks, of course, 'Why?'. After a series of 'why' questions, the aliens realise that they don't know why, and they leave.

Conversation:



- Why do we ask why?
- Why do we ask questions? What makes a question a good one?
- Is curiosity a good thing?
- Why do you think Lily's father sometimes became annoyed with Lily when she asked 'Why'?
- Could a question really save the world? Could it destroy it?
- Can asking 'why?' be dangerous? Can not asking it be dangerous?



Activities: Children compose ten questions that they would like to know the answer to.



Watch this: ['Questions Start with These'](#) (song for kids about questions vs. statements)



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Taking stock:



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- Discuss pathways the argument/discussion could have taken. Children also participate more in plenary in Thinking time than is usual.

- Philosophy for Children resources worldwide (developed locally)
- [Philosophy in Ireland](#)
- Story: 'Why?' by Lindsay Camp and Tony Ross
- YouTube video

Linkage and integration:

- **English:** To become fluent and explicit in communicating ideas and experiences.



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Lesson Samples

Strand: Thinking time

Class level: Third/Fourth class

Learning outcome: Become aware of their own personal characteristics in building and maintaining positive self-worth and self-esteem.

Learning experiences:

- Explore the concept of imagination through engagement with the story 'Where the Wild Things Are'.
- Discuss their understanding of the passing of time.

Lesson sample



Story: 'Where the Wild Things Are' by Maurice Sendak

Plot summary: Max misbehaves and gets sent to his room without supper. Suddenly, a magnificent forest grows in Max's room, and Max finds a private boat that enables him to sail forward in time. Max meets some huge monsters who live there, and he and the monsters spend time playing and doing fantastical things. Max decides that it is time to return to his home where his mother loves him best of all. Max quickly travels back in time in his boat—over a year—and returns to his room where he finds the supper that his mother left him. It's still hot.



Conversation:

- Max experiences the fantastical forest and monsters as if they are real. Does that mean that the forest and monsters are real?
- How do you know whether something is real or imagined?
- How do you know whether or not you are dreaming right now?
- Is it possible for time to go by without anything changing?
- Why does time appear to move more slowly when we are doing boring things, but more rapidly when we are doing fun things? What might this suggest about the nature of time?
- Despite the fact that Max is having fun with the monsters in the forest, he chooses to go home to be with his mother. What does this say about what Max values in life?



Activity: Children draw a picture that represents time and share it with the group. Discuss their reasons for representing time this way?



Watch this: Watch the movie of 'Where the Wild Things Are'.



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Resources:

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- [Philosophy in Ireland](#)
- Story: 'Where the Wild Things Are' by Maurice Sendak

Linkage and integration:

- **English:** To become fluent and explicit in communicating ideas and experiences.



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Lesson Samples

Strand: Thinking time

Class level: Fifth/Sixth class

Learning outcome: Develop an appreciation of their own wellbeing and examine personal characteristics that influence their wellbeing.

Learning experiences:

- Explore the concept of emotion through engagement with the story 'The Man Who Kept His Heart in a Bucket'.
- Discuss why it is important to express our emotions.
- Identify how we can express our emotions.

Lesson sample



Story: 'The Man Who Kept His Heart in a Bucket' by Sonia Levitin

Plot summary: Jack, who once had his heart broken, keeps his heart in a bucket so that he can focus on his work. This protects him from being hurt again, but it also means that he feels no joy or deep emotion.

Conversation:



- Jack has real experiences, but doesn't feel anything. Is an experience real if you cannot feel it?
- Jack is breathing and working and eating and sleeping, but he is feeling nothing. Why does his situation seem so sad to us?
- Why are our feelings important?
- Do our feelings make us act differently sometimes?
- What would it be like to not feel anything?
- Is it important to let people know how you are feeling? Why?



Activity: Children write about a time when they felt very happy.



Song: ['Can't Stop the Feeling'](#)



Poetry: This lesson can also be extended through looking at other explorations of feelings and emotions, for example through the example of poetry. This also might allow for some cross-curricular integration with the Story strand. One example is Matthew Sweeney's poem for children, 'Smile', which can be used as a basis for further discussion of feelings.



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Lesson Samples

Smile by Matthew Sweeney

Smile, go on, smile!

Anyone would think, to look at you, that your cat was on the barbecue or your best friend had died.

Go on, curve your mouth.

Take a look at that beggar, or that one-legged bus conductor.

Where's your cross? Smile, slap your thigh.

Hiccup, make a horse noise, lollop through the house, fizz up your coffee.

Take down your guitar from its air-shelf and play imaginary reggae out through the open door.

And smile, remember, smile, give those teeth some sun, grin at everyone, do it now, go on, SMILE!



Taking stock:

Recap the children's discussion. Discuss pathways the argument/discussion could have taken. Children also participate more in plenary in Thinking time than is usual.

Resources:

- Philosophy for Children resources worldwide (developed locally)
- [Philosophy in Ireland](#)
- Story: 'The Man Who Kept His Heart in a Bucket' by Sonia Levitin
- Song: 'Can't Stop the Feeling'

Linkage and integration:

- **SPHE:** To develop an understanding of healthy living, an ability to implement healthy behaviour and a willingness to participate in activities that promote and sustain health.
- **English:** To become fluent and explicit in communicating ideas and experiences.



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Lesson Samples

Strand: Thinking time

Class level: Fifth/Sixth class

Learning outcome: Think critically and imaginatively in response to questions, debates and ideas they encounter in philosophical fables and stories.

Learning experiences:

- Explore the concept of right and wrong through engagement with the story of 'Ring of Gyges'.
- Discuss how we identify an action or thought as being right or wrong.

Lesson sample

Story: 'Ring of Gyges' fable from Plato's *Republic*



Plot summary: The Ring of Gyges is a mythical magical artefact mentioned by the philosopher Plato in Book 2 of his *Republic* (2.359a–2.360d). It granted its owner the power to become invisible at will.

Read the story to the children and ask them to make initial comments. Brainstorm these ideas.

Conversation:



- What would you do if you had a ring that made you invisible? If we all had a ring of Gyges, what would happen?
- Do you think Plato is right, that we are good only because we are afraid of getting caught?
- Do people want to be good, or are they only good because they will get something out of it, like the approval of their parents or some other reward?



Activity: Compose a list of five things you would do if you had the power of invisibility.



Taking stock:

- Recap the children's discussion.
- Discuss pathways the argument/discussion could have taken. Children also participate more in plenary in Thinking time than is usual.



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Lesson Samples

Resources:

- Philosophy for Children resources worldwide (developed locally)
- [Philosophy in Ireland](#)
- Story: 'Ring of Gyges'

Linkage and integration:

- **English:** To become fluent and explicit in communicating ideas and experiences.



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Lesson Samples

Strand: Thinking time

Class level: Fifth/Sixth class

Learning outcome: Think critically and imaginatively in response to questions, debates and ideas they encounter in philosophical fables and stories.

Learning experiences:

- Explore the philosophical story 'The Cave'.
- Discuss their interpretation of the story and the meaning they take from it.

Lesson sample

Story: 'Allegory of the Cave' by Plato



Plot summary: In the dialogue, Socrates asks Glaucon to imagine a cave, in which prisoners are kept. These prisoners have been in the cave since their childhood, and each of them is held there in a peculiar manner - they are all chained so that their legs and necks are immobile, forced to look at a wall in front of them. Behind the prisoners is a fire and between the fire and the prisoners is a raised walkway, on which people can walk.

Then Socrates offered a twist in the plot - what if one of the prisoners were to be freed and made to turn and look at the fire? The bright light would hurt his eyes, as accustomed as he was to the shadows, and even in turning back to the wall and its flickering images (which would be only natural), the prisoner couldn't help but notice that they weren't real at all, but only shadows of the real items on the walkway behind him.

Read the story to the children and ask them to make initial comments. Brainstorm these ideas.

Conversation:



- What is an allegory? A kind of story in which what happens is being compared to something else that is similar and unstated.
- What do you think the 'Allegory of the Cave' is being compared with?



Activity: Small-group discussions—discussion question sheets—choose a reporter to write down the group's responses and report back to class.

Small-group discussion questions

- Would you want to be released from the cave? Why or why not?
- What is like the cave in our world?



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- How is the way you understand the world, your ideas and beliefs, shaped by the actions of others?
- Who has the power to shape your ideas and beliefs? In what ways is this good and in what ways is it not so good?
- Are there things you know to be true? What are they, and how do you know them?

Whole group discussion

- Reports from small groups.
- What is Plato trying to tell us in the allegory?
- Perception vs. reason – how can we know things about the world?



Watch this:

- [The 'Allegory of the Cave' explained](#)
- [The 'Allegory of the Cave' animated](#)



Taking stock:

- Recap the children's discussion.
- Discuss pathways the argument/discussion could have taken. Children also participate more in plenary in Thinking time than is usual.

Resources:

- Philosophy for Children resources worldwide (developed locally)
- [Philosophy in Ireland](#)
- Story: The Cave
- YouTube Videos

Linkage and Integration:

- **English:** To explore and develop ideas and concepts through talk, directed discussion and writing.



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Lesson Samples

Strand: Thinking time

Class level: Fifth /Sixth class

Learning outcome: Develop an appreciation of their own wellbeing and examine personal characteristics that influence their wellbeing.

Learning experiences:

- Explore the concept of death through engagement with the story of 'Duck, Death and the Tulip'.

Lesson sample

Story: 'Duck, Death and the Tulip' by Wolf Erlbruch



Plot summary: Duck meets Death, who informs Duck that 'I've been close by all your life.' The two spend some time together, and they talk about death. In many of the frames, Death is carrying a tulip. At the end of the story, Duck dies and Death carries her to a river and lays her in the water, placing the tulip on her body. 'When she was lost to sight, he was almost a little moved. But that's life, thought Death.'



Conversation:

- What does it mean to die?
- Where do we go when we die?
- What happens to our minds when we die? Our souls?
- Why do you think people are so scared of death?
- What would life be like without death?
- Would you want to know when you are going to die? Why or why not?
- Why do you think that Duck and Death became friends?
- What was the significance of the tulip? What do you think it meant to Death? To Duck?



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