

THINKING CITIZENS: HOW TO MAKE PSE PHILOSOPHICAL

A CEWC-Cymru resource for Key Stage 2 teachers

(i) *Children as philosophers*

This resource is for Key Stage 2 teachers. It aims to develop children's thinking skills through Personal and Social Education, or vice versa. It uses the **Philosophy for Children (P4C)** method to enable the discussion of morals and values to take place in the public setting of the classroom.

The principle of P4C is that pupils should be given the opportunity to ask 'deep' philosophical questions and to discuss these openly. If they participate regularly in such discussions, a **community of enquiry** will develop which enhances their critical thinking, language skills and moral awareness. P4C can also help to develop an atmosphere of co-operation and inclusiveness in the school as a whole, because it encourages children to consider each other's feelings and opinions, and to respond appropriately.

- See www.sapere.org.uk/what-is-p4c/ for evidence about the difference that P4C can make
- See www.sapere.org.uk/2005/08/04/research-project/ for academic proof that P4C can help raise pupils' IQ

A typical P4C session may begin with the reading of a folk story or picture book. After reading, pupils talk in pairs or small groups about any particularly interesting elements: perhaps a sentence which made them stop to think, or a picture which struck them as unusual. From these discussions, they formulate **philosophical questions**. The class should aim to move away from the concrete questions about plot or character that might be asked in the Literacy Hour, towards more general, abstract questions: instead of asking "How would you feel if you were the Ugly Duckling?", pupils might ask "Is it possible to be ugly and happy?".

- See *The stages of an enquiry* (page 5) for more about the structure of a P4C session.

Key to the success of P4C is that the teacher is a **facilitator**, rather than an all-knowing figure of authority. The facilitator encourages pupils to think more deeply, to question each other and to express their thoughts more clearly; s/he must not give the impression of 'knowing all the answers'. If you are using a story or poem 'with a moral', it is important that the facilitator does not point out the 'meaning'; in fact, children may be encouraged to question the validity of such morals.

It is recommended that teachers undertake some training in this role before beginning to use P4C in their classrooms. Comprehensive, accredited training is available from SAPERE (Society for Advancing Philosophical Enquiry in Education), starting with a two-day Level 1 course. CEWC-Cymru can provide shorter, non-accredited sessions which consider P4C within the overall context of PSE and citizenship education.

Activity sheet 2: *Pupils should... show care and consideration for others and be sensitive towards their feelings*

Warm-ups:

- *Feel good about yourself.* Each pupil draws an outline of their hand on a sheet of paper or card, and writes their name at the top of the sheet. The sheets are passed from person to person in a circle. Each time, pupils must write something positive about the named person. This continues for a specified number of turns, or until all pupils have written something positive about all others.
- *Trust game.* Pair up and walk each other blindfolded through the classroom, playground or hall.
- *Talking pictures:* provide one large picture of a person (particularly a child) from a different country or culture. Going round the circle, each person should say one question that they would ask that person if they could meet them. (It is possible, of course, to pass.)

Sample stimulus: *Pierre*

Adapted by Martin Pollard from *Existentialism is a Humanism* by Jean-Paul Sartre.

Questions:

- How do people react when faced with danger?
- Is it good to take revenge?
- What should Pierre do?
- Why do his mother's feelings matter?
- Can killing ever be right?
- In a war, is there always one side which is more in the right than the other?
- What is more important – the life of one person you know or the lives of many people you don't know?

Other stimuli:

- 'What Is Better Than Gold?' from *Values for Thinking* by Robert Fisher (Nash Pollock, 2001)
- *The Three Robbers* by Tomi Ungerer (Methuen, 1962) – available as 'print on demand' book from www.blackwells.co.uk
- *The Angel of Nitshill Road* by Anne Fine (Methuen, 1992)
- *Don't Do That!* by Tony Ross (Red Fox, 1998)
- *Frog and the Stranger* by Max Velthuijs (Andersen, 1993)
- *Our Brother Has Down's Syndrome* by Shelley Cairo (Annick Press, 1985)
- 'Back in the Playground Blues' by Adrian Mitchell, reproduced in *Poems for Thinking* by Robert Fisher (Nash Pollock, 1997)

Pierre

(adapted by Martin Pollard from Jean-Paul Sartre)

Pierre lived with his mother and father in France in 1940. At that time, France had surrendered to Germany and was under control by Nazi soldiers. However, many young men decided to go on fighting Germany and joined the Free French Forces.

Pierre's elder brother had been killed when the Germans attacked France. Pierre wanted to have his revenge against the Nazis. But his father did not want to fight the Germans; in fact, he was happy to help them out in return for rewards. He was always arguing with Pierre's mother.

Pierre's mother was very troubled by the death of her eldest son, and by the treachery of her husband. Pierre was her one comfort.

So Pierre had to make a choice: should he go to join the Free French Forces, or should he stay with his mother and help her to live? He knew that she lived only for him, and that if he disappeared – or was killed – she would plunge into despair. He also knew that he could be sure of helping her at home, whereas if he went to fight he could not be sure of what might happen. But if he went to fight, then he would be working for the greater good of all French people, and could avenge his brother's death; whereas if he stayed at home he could only help one person – his mother.

Pierre did not know what to do.