

PETER WORLEY



FOR
PRIMARY
TEACHERS

LESSONS TO GET CHILDREN THINKING

Philosophical thought adventures across the curriculum

B L O O M S B U R Y

40

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For Peter: the boy who wanted to philosophise, though there was no tomorrow.

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Online resources accompany this book at **philosophy-foundation.org/resources/40**

Please type the URL into your web browser to download the resources mentioned throughout the book.

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FOREWORD

First of all, this book is easy to use. Pick it up, flick through, find a session that interests you, and use it. However, the attentive and more patient reader can get a lot more from this book. As well as having a reasonably extensive section introducing philosophy itself, I've also cross-referenced this book with all my other books; it therefore functions as a kind of 'heart', pumping blood around all the others while connecting them too, as a single body.

Once Upon an If is a book about stories and storytelling for thinking. In that book, I make a distinction between 'thinking with' and 'thinking about' stories. My previous books have been concerned with using stories to 'think with' or 'through' them; using a story to bring an audience to an encounter with a philosophical problem or dilemma. In this book, I have developed some ways to 'think about' stories, or to tackle the thorny issue of textual interpretation with young people. Apart from a miscellany of entirely new sessions for the classroom, how to think *about* stories is the original, new idea that this book offers.

A word that you'll come across a good deal in philosophy when broaching *interpretation* is 'hermeneutics'. At first, I was going to avoid this rather intimidating, scary-sounding word altogether; the kind of word that puts people off philosophy. Then I started to research it. Its origins lie with the Greek god Hermes, the messenger and herald of the gods, often coming down from Olympus to carry messages to people of the human world. Hermes is described as 'crafty and full of trickery'¹; he was warned by Zeus not to tell lies, though Zeus recognised in him ingenuity, eloquence and persuasiveness. Hermes promised that he would never tell lies. 'But,' he said, 'I cannot promise always to tell the whole truth.'² He was even said to have helped the Three Fates in the creation of the alphabet, so the association he now has with interpretation is apt, to say the least. Hermes, therefore, joins Ariadne (*The If Machine* and *The Philosophy Shop*), Demodocus (*The If Odyssey*) and Sheherazade (*Once Upon an If*) as the emblematic figure of this book.

Following David Birch, in his book *Provocations: Philosophy For Secondary Schools*, I will occasionally use the expression 'hermeneutic question' and this means that the question is one that asks the children to say something about what they think a certain passage means; a necessary first step before being able to critically engage with an issue, which is usually the role of the 'task question' that follows it.

PaRDeS (see Appendix 2) is the new, general method for bringing children to interpret a text, which can be added to 'The Concept Box' from *Once Upon an If* (which is another method for interpreting texts), but there are also some other, standalone sessions that tackle interpretation in different ways, such as 'The never-ending letter' (interpreting prose), 'The ghost' (interpreting poetry), the *Hamlet* section of 'The glass of water' (interpreting Shakespeare) and 'Humpty Dumpty' (thinking about *meaning* itself in the manner of Lewis Carroll).

With this book I also want to show the important role philosophy can play within the curriculum: helping a teacher both *diagnose* and *assess* conceptual understanding within the class before, during and/or after a teaching module (see Appendix 5 for more on this). Given all the warnings we read in the literature about 'teaching to understand' over 'teaching to the test', it's no small need that philosophy is able to meet in the repertoire of any good, self-improving teacher. Incorporating good facilitation with good teaching should be a natural, complementary coupling, where eliciting from the student through enquiry paves the way for what it is the teacher needs to teach; conferring the right knowledge, the right information and the right facts for *that* child or *this* class, *when* they need to know it. Or when they ask.

Peter Worley, The Philosophy Foundation, September 2015

INTRODUCTION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is philosophy?

This is a notoriously difficult question to answer, so I will answer it with this caveat: when I explain what philosophy is I will explain what *I mean by it* and by doing so I will provide a *framework* for the purposes of being able to say what I do in the classroom, and what this book – and my other books – hopes to achieve. In other words, what I say philosophy *is* is not the whole story but my account should provide you with something to work with, to understand, to aim for and possibly assess (see Appendix 3 for a list of intellectual virtues).

So, philosophy, done well, should be a rigorous, structured, sequential conversation (with others or oneself) that is both collaborative and oppositional, that attempts to explore, explain and justify the structure and content of our thoughts in response to perceived problems and puzzles about reality, knowledge, value and meaning.

Philosophy employs a method/process (more often than not ongoing) of reflection, reasoning and re-evaluation, by employing the appropriate intellectual virtues or excellences, in order to make good, though *provisional* judgments about what seems (metaphysically) true, (morally) right, and (logically) coherent. The aim is to improve our understanding (also understanding what we *don't* understand) of: the world, ourselves, our experiences and other people, by refining how we think about those things. The hope is that, by doing philosophy, we learn to think better, to act more wisely, and thereby help to improve the quality of all our lives.

At the heart of this is the philosophical *process* captured in my 'Four Rs of philosophy'. According to these philosophy is:

- **Responsive** – philosophers (children or adults) respond to a problem that they have recognised, for themselves, to be a problem: 'That's not fair! But it kind of is fair as well!' (See 'Key controversies' on page ix.)
- **Reflective** – philosophers are invited to contemplate the nature of concept X or Y: 'What is *fair*, exactly?'
- **Reasoned** – philosophers should be guided to reason about what it is they have reflected on to attempt to order their thoughts supported by reasons: 'Fair is when you ... because ...', 'Fair can't be ... because ...', 'Fair must be ... because ...'
- **Re-evaluative** – philosophers should be invited to critically engage with the reflections and reasons offered either by others or by themselves.

Remember: philosophy in the classroom is about *doing* philosophy, not learning about the subject of philosophy; in short, it is about *philosophising*. I have focused on the four Rs because they are at the heart of the process of philosophising.

Why do philosophy with children?

First of all, thinking, questioning, challenging assumptions, contemplating, conversing, and many other intellectual virtues honed by doing philosophy, are central to what it is to be an exemplary human being. In addition, children are capable of doing all of these things, so it stands to reason that they should be invited to practise mastering these competencies from an early age so that they become second nature by adulthood.

Children also experience philosophical problems in their daily lives. I characterise a philosophical problem as what happens when your experience of the world doesn't fit with your understanding of it. For instance, a child may understand *time* to be constant (clocks run at a steady speed) but experience time as fluctuating ('Time flies when you're having fun!') or another child may think of herself as a single, unchanging unity but experience herself changing, growing and maturing ('I am the same person and I'm not the same person!'). Among other things, the job of education is to provide the tools to help students tackle problems they are likely to encounter. If children encounter philosophical problems, as I argue they do, then it should fall to the education system they are in to provide them with the tools to begin to approach and tackle those problems.

How will philosophy help the children in my class?

Philosophy is centrally concerned with concepts (basic ideas and notions that lie behind our words and thoughts), and one contention of this book is that *conceptual understanding* lies at the heart of any child's ability to successfully navigate his or her way through new topics of learning in the school curriculum (for example, one has to have a grasp of relational concepts to understand how words like 'big', 'small' or 'longer' work). Philosophy allows the children to think about and explore the concepts that lie at the heart of many curriculum topics, giving teachers an opportunity to diagnose, observe and assess their class's understanding of the concepts involved in a particular teaching module, whether it be *dissolving*, *art appreciation*, *forces* or *sound* and so on. Research has found, among other things, that doing philosophy improves performance in maths and literacy (Gorard et al 2015), confidence, speaking and listening, improvement in IQ scores (Tricky and Topping 2007), and reduction in psychotic tendencies (Garcia et al 2005). See Appendix 3 for more details of Intellectual virtues.

What prior experience or knowledge of philosophy do I need?

You need no knowledge of the subject of philosophy to use this book (though I hope you will learn something about philosophy while using it), but you will need to develop your questioning skills to be able to use it successfully, and you can do that *while* using the book, as a *result* of using the book. To begin with, familiarise yourself with Appendix 1: Facilitating idea diversity, which will furnish you with most of the tools you'll need to become a better questioner. The 'Key facilitation tool' entries, peppered throughout the book, contextualise many of the facilitation tools and strategies within the lesson plans and the classroom. My other books (and their accompanying online supplements) have some of the questioning and facilitation strategies explained in more detail, so, though it is not necessary to buy the other books to make use of this one, reading and using them may also supplement your facilitation skills:

- *The If Machine*: 'Section 1: How to do philosophical enquiry in the classroom', pages 1-45
- *Once Upon an If*: 'Storythinking' pp. 56-82 (especially 'Child-centred questioning', pages 68-70)
- *The If Odyssey*: 'Logos: Teaching Strategies for Developing Reasoning' pages 13-21

See bibliography for more reading to help develop your facilitation skills.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Each of the 40 lessons in this book uses the same format with the same features to make it easier for you to put each one into practice. The elements they include are explained below.

Thought Adventure

A well-facilitated Thought Adventure (a stimulus followed by properly structured questions and activities) provides the conditions for the children to be able to see a philosophical problem for themselves understood and experienced *as a problem* (see the *responsive R* on page vii). When children 'see' a problem, it will often be seen as controversial, and this creates a 'buzz' in the room, an irrepressible hum of conversation. When this happens, we call it – what The Philosophy Foundation (TPF) specialist Steve Hoggins has coined – 'the bite point': when the philosophical puzzle has really bitten.

'Do' and 'Say'

To help the teacher use the lesson plans without having to wade through and separate instruction text from guidance and 'read out' text, I have distinguished *for you* that which is to be read out to the class and that which is meant for the teacher to do. This should save on preparation time and make the book much more pick-up-and-usable, usually requiring that you only read a lesson plan through once thoroughly before using. I have, on occasion, when demanded – and *only* when demanded – included some instructional text inside the 'Say' box. Where this is necessary it is enclosed in a [square bracket]. So, where you see text in a [square bracket] inside a 'Say' box, this is NOT meant to be read out, however, this should be self evident from the context.

Equipment and preparation needed

As you would with a cooking recipe, you should at the very least carefully read through the lesson plan you intend to use. In addition, you should prepare whatever is mentioned in the 'Equipment and preparation needed' box at the start of each Thought Adventure. You should not need to memorise the session, simply follow the 'Say' and 'Do' boxes. If you are a storyteller or would like to implement more storytelling in your teaching and would like to tell some of the stories as opposed to reading them from the page, then see *Once Upon an If: 'Sheherezad's Handbook'* (pages 20-55) for some useful guidance on improving your storytelling; a very powerful technique for engaging your class.

Key controversies

Philosophical problems can be characterised as what follows when one recognises a conceptual controversy in one of the following ways:

- 1) An apparent contradiction: 'X and not X' (For example, 'I am the same person and I am not the same person'.)
- 2) A conflict or tension between experience and understanding (For example, 'I understand time to be constant but my experience is that it fluctuates depending on whether I am asleep or awake, for example.')., which leads to 1, an apparent contradiction: 'time is constant and time is not constant'.

You could express most – if not all – the key controversies in this book in the form of an apparent contradiction, '*in a way* a thought is somewhere and *in a way* a thought is nowhere' (see Here's a thought page 4); '*in a way* opposites are different and *in a way* opposites are not different' (see Poles apart on page 15); '*in a way* I know lots and *in a way* I know nothing' (see Know cards page 8) and so on. So, *in a way*, philosophy is about unpacking the 'in a way's in these apparent contradictions, either in order to unmask the contradiction as an imposter or to relinquish a formerly held belief *because* it leads to a contradiction. I have expressed the controversies in each Thought Adventure in the form

of some key questions designed to bring out the apparent contradiction for the teacher. A good part of your preparation for a session would be to see if you are able to express the controversy as an apparent contradiction: 'In a way X and in a way not X' as in my examples.

Possible misconception

Philosophy sessions are a great way to identify and address common misconceptions that children have in and around subjects and topics. For example, that 'for something not to exist' means 'not being able to see it' (a misconception that may well feed into how children fail to understand a curriculum topic such as *dissolving* or *evaporation*). But I'd like to offer two words of warning about diagnosing misconceptions. First of all, children do not always mean exactly what they say and they do not always say exactly what they mean (see a discussion of this in 'Humpty-Dumptying' on page 139) so, a misconception is not necessarily the same as a misuse of language, or referring term or when someone is mis-informed or un-informed. Your questioning should involve a great deal of eliciting (see 'Opening up' on page 53) in order to avoid *misinterpreting* children's words. Secondly, teachers can have misconceptions too, so, be on the look out for *your own* misconceptions, either of the issue or with regard to what the children are trying to say. The philosophy sessions are also good for you - the teacher - to improve your understanding of yourself, your pupils and the issues and topics the philosophy sessions should engage *you all* with.

I have included common possible misconceptions in those sessions where I have been able to identify their re-occurrence when running that particular session. However, I should underline that they are only *possible* misconceptions, there may also be others and they may not be shared by all.

Key concepts and vocabulary

I have tried to identify the key concepts behind each session so that you can use the session to help do three things:

- 1) to *observe* your class in action manipulating concepts
- 2) to *diagnose* the class's grasp of key, relevant concepts before being taught the relevant module
- 3) to *assess* the class's application of the key concepts once the module has been taught or during its being taught.

These sessions, therefore, can be used before, during and/or after a teaching module. For instance, if you are about to teach a module on *dissolving* then 'The incredible shrinking machine' (on page 101) could be run in order to see how the children approach thinking about the microcosm. Do they think that something that can't be seen still exists or not? Which children think what? Do those that recognise that 'not being able to see something doesn't mean that it doesn't exist' make a convincing case to the others? Who has relevant knowledge and vocabulary (atoms, evaporation etc.)? By keeping a record of the answers to these and similar questions the philosophy sessions can help you plan your teaching of the module and can help deal with such things as differentiation and peer-to-peer support in the class.

Key facilitation tool

I have tried to find a context for most of the Key facilitation tools that are described in this and my other books. Here, it tells you which facilitation tool will be of special importance in this particular session and the page reference will be given for where the full description can be found.

Extension activities

These are not necessary parts of the main session, but can be pulled upon for a variety of reasons. Either because something relevant to a particular extension activity came up during the discussion, or because the curriculum aims and objectives call for a particular focus, or just to keep the pace of the lesson up. For example, running an entire hour-long session on the question 'Is there a thought on this piece of paper?' (see 'Here's a thought' on page 4) for some classes would be trying, for others not. For those that struggle, the extension activity 'telepathy trick' is an excellent way to keep them interested and to do something a little different. The extension activities also make excellent, sometimes more advanced, related follow-up sessions to the main session. Where they are more advanced I've said so. In some cases, such as with 'The Hodja's first day teaching' on page 45, I've managed to squeeze more than one Thought Adventure into one session. There's value for money!

Question types

- **Start question:** on page 116 I make a distinction between a 'surface level question' and a 'deeper level question'. Start questions are surface level questions that have no philosophical value in and of themselves but that are necessary steps to get things started. Example: 'What's going to happen next?'
- **Task question:** this will be the main question around which a philosophical enquiry (PhiE) will revolve. When anchoring (see page 7) these will be the questions you anchor to in order to help develop the formulation of arguments in the children's thinking and expression. These should be asked explicitly and written up on the board. Example: 'Is there a thought in this question?'
- **Hermeneutic question:** this is a question to do with the interpretation of something. Before you can critically engage (Example: 'Do you agree with X?' or 'Do you think X is right?') with someone or something you sometimes need, first of all, to think about what might be meant by the question or text (Example: 'What do you think X means by...?'); in other words, it may need 'unpacking'.
- **Nested question:** these are the further, implicit questions that lie behind the more explicit *start*, *task* or *hermeneutic* question. For example, if I ask the task question, 'Is there a thought in this question?' then there are a series of further questions we must, at some point, consider, such as, 'What is a thought?', 'Where are thoughts?', 'What is a question?', 'How are thoughts and questions (or language) related?' and so on. Looking through – or constructing for yourself – a list of nested questions around an issue or task question is a good way to prepare your view of the 'conceptual landscape'; in other words, to prepare for what's involved, conceptually.
- **What is X?-questions:** (also known as Socratic questions) these are open, abstract, reflective questions that take you to the basic concepts involved in the issue or task question. In most cases, there should be at least one of these in your list of nested questions. Examples: 'What is thought?', 'What is time?', 'What is language?' and so on. When there's more than one, you also have to consider how these basic concepts are related to each other, for example: 'What is light?', 'What is dark?', 'How are they related?'
- **Emergent questions:** these are the questions that are not planned but which emerge from the group naturally and that can be used as task questions with a class. Sometimes someone in the class asks the question explicitly during a discussion, 'Can something be so, so, so, so small that it can't exist?' (8-year-old Alice). Or, someone may say something in the form of a statement that can be reformulated into a question and put to the class as a task question. For example, Alice may have said, 'Some things are so, so, so, so small that they can't exist.' The facilitator may then, legitimately say to the class, 'So, what do you all think about that? Can something be so, so, so, so, small that it can't exist?' The facilitator then writes the question up on the board and gives the class talk time following the procedure for an enquiry around a task question described on page iii. A facilitator should always be on the look out for good emergent questions.

PRACTICALITIES

How should I set the classroom up?

- *Space to think – the ‘talk circle’:* Clear the tables away and arrange the chairs into a horseshoe shape so that the children can see each other’s faces, the board (if necessary) and you. I call this the ‘talk circle’ and many practitioners of philosophy with children consistently find that this is the format most conducive to conversation-based lessons, as the participants can clearly see each other. It also provides space within the circle for props, drama, games and activities – what you might call ‘space to think’.
- *A quick ‘talk circle’:* You may want to incorporate a session plan into a lesson of your own, where it may be necessary for the pupils to stay at their desks to do writing or note-taking. Try to have a ‘quick talk circle’ procedure planned and rehearsed with your class: each student should have a place they go to with their chair (reasonably close to their normal place). If you say, ‘Let’s do the quick talk circle!’ then they go to that place, probably at the edge of the classroom so they can more or less see each other. This can also work in classrooms where there just isn’t space to move tables around.
- *The ‘talk ball’:* I always have a soft – but not too bouncy – ‘talk ball’ with me. I find it an indispensable piece of kit for helping manage discussions, especially with large numbers of people, children or adults. ‘The ball rule’ (see below) is a helpfully visual way for the children to keep themselves in order throughout an enquiry. (See also ‘How do I run an enquiry?’ on page ii for more on this).
- *Rules:* These are my ‘five rules of philosophy’ that I establish clearly in the first session and quickly remind children of at the start of each session if necessary:
 - *The ball rule* – that one ‘may only speak when holding the talk ball’.
 - *The listening rule* – that one ‘does their best to listen to in order to understand whoever it is that has the ball’.
 - *The hands up/hands down rule* – ‘hands up if you want to say something, but hands down again when someone has the ball and is talking or thinking’.
 - *The respect rule* – this captures all behaviour expectations, but it can be helpful to remind the class that they ‘may still disagree with each other, as long as they do so respectfully’.
 - *The stop-look-listen rule* – ‘when I hold the ball up in the air this means to stop talking, to look this way and be ready to start a discussion.’

How long should a session take?

I usually run sessions in schools for anywhere between 45 minutes to an hour, depending on age, maturity, and engagement. Having a time slot such as this put aside each week for philosophy where you use the lesson plans you’ll find in this book is a good starting place for doing philosophy. The aim, however, is to incorporate your facilitation and questioning skills into your normal curriculum teaching. You may be doing something on ‘the growth of trees’ and, without any perceptible change, you suddenly allow the class to pursue a line of enquiry around the difference between *building* and *growing* for instance, you may make a few mental notes such as who knows what, how they understand *growth* and *building* to be related, who thinks they are the same, who thinks they’re different and who that they’re similar and so on. It was only five minutes of enquiry but it was just what you needed to see how to proceed with your teaching of the growth of trees. So, in the end, and in the hands of a good teacher, an enquiry is as long as it needs to be.

How do I run an enquiry?

Here's a quick answer:

- 1 Set up the talk circle (see page xii).
- 2 Establish or remind the class of the rules (see 'Rules' on page xii).
- 3 Present the stimulus (e.g. read or tell the story or poem, perform the trick and so on).
- 4 Ask the task-question (e.g. 'Is talking good?') or run the desired procedure (e.g. PaRDeS, Concept Box and so on).
- 5 If asking a task-question then clearly write it up on the board.
- 6 Allow a minute or two of talk time where they should all talk to each other in pairs or small groups.
- 7 Show the sign for the 'stop-look-listen-rule' (see 'Rules' on page xii).
- 8 Ask the task-question again.
- 9 Conduct your whole-class enquiry (See Appendix 1: 'Facilitating idea-diversity' and 'Key facilitation tools' in each session for specific facilitation tools and skills) around the session plan you have chosen.
- 10 Periodically, allow more talk times, then return to the whole-class enquiry (see step 9), introducing new questions when appropriate and/or returning to the main question when appropriate.
- 11 Run any extension activities as required, complete with whole-group enquiries (see step 9).
- 12 (Optional) Round off by asking meta-cognitive questions, such as:
'Has anyone come to any conclusions about the main question? Would you like to say anything about what you think now?'
'Did anyone change their mind during the discussion? Why?'
'Did anyone hear an idea they particularly liked? What was it and why?'
- 13 (Optional) It is advisable to finish with a game. There are plenty of games available for free for members of *The Philosophy Foundation* website: www.philosophy-foundation.org/members (it's free to become a member!) and there are some good games in Robert Fisher's book *Games For Thinking*.

Remember: this is not a PhiE (philosophical enquiry); this is the procedural structure in which you hope a PhiE will occur. The PhiE, one hopes, happens in steps 9 and 10 when, and if, the discussion is well-focused and well-facilitated. Look for the Four Rs happening (see 'What is philosophy?' on page vii). And that leads you to the long answer: good questioning and facilitation (see especially 'Appendix 1: Facilitating idea diversity' and 'Key facilitation skills' throughout this book for more on the long answer).

Community of enquiry

Most, if not all, of these Thought Adventures will also work with the well-known 'Community of Inquiry/Enquiry' (CoI) P4C procedure. The basic procedure, though there are many variations of this, is as follows:

- 1 The stimulus is presented (story read, object displayed etc.)
- 2 Think time is given.
- 3 Questions are formulated by the children in response to the stimulus.
- 4 Questions are gathered on the board and sorted into categories such as philosophical questions, factual questions etc. (see Philip Cam's 'Question Quadrant' in 20 Thinking Tools).
- 5 The relevant questions (after sorting) are put to a classroom vote.
- 6 The question that is voted for by the class is then used as the start of an enquiry.
- 7 The children enter into a facilitated discussion around the chosen question.

If using a Thought Adventure for a Col then simply use the stimulus (story, poem, activity and so on) and then follow the procedure above (or whichever variation on this you wish to use) to conduct your Col.

Age ranges

These sessions have been devised for UK Key Stage 2 (7-11-years-old) and most of the lesson plans will work with all these age ranges with a little adaptation in some cases; many will work with Key Stage 3 (12-years-old) and above with a little adaptation in some cases. Some sessions will work less well with younger children; they are listed here with suggested starting ages:

Know cards	9 years and up
Vouchers	10 years and up
The glass of water	10 years and up
If a rock tumbles...	9 years and up
The maybe cat	9 years and up
A plan	10 years and up
Who's right?	10 years and up
The hypothesis box	10 years and up
When worlds collide	10 years and up
Perspectacles	10 years and up

THE GHOST

Thinking about ghosts, time and poetry

Introduce the children to a ghost, sneak some poetry up on them and acquaint yourself with a method for approaching poetry.

Equipment and preparation needed

- An old-looking wooden box
- The two poems from the lesson written on to two pieces of paper, folded up and placed in the box (number them 1 and 2, so that you take them out in the right order)

Subject links

Literacy
Poetry
RE

Key controversies

What is a ghost? Do ghosts exist?
Is a poem by a deceased poet the voice of a ghost?

Key concepts and vocabulary

Books	Metaphor
Communication	Tense
Death	Time

Possible misconception

Understanding metaphors literally

Key facilitation tool

Approaching poetry (see page 2)

Do: Begin by reading the following second-person scenario.

Say: One day you are told to help out in the garden, and you are given the job of digging the soil to turn it over. Not your favourite thing, but you kind of have to do it. During your digging, your spade hits something. You think it's just another rock, but it doesn't feel like the rocks your spade has already hit. You put your hand into the soil under your spade and feel around. Your fingers touch a pointed corner. There's something there that's no ordinary rock or root! So you take your spade and start to dig around the object, whatever it is. After a while you remove a box from the ground that looks very old. It must have been there for a long time, you think. The box is closed, so will you open it? You find that it opens easily. Do you look inside? You must decide. You do open it. Inside the box you find two pieces of old parchment, one with the number '1' written on it, and the other with the number '2'. They are yellowed with age and cracked at the edges. You take out the one labelled '1'. You have to be very careful with it, as it is so old it begins to crumble at your touch. However, you can just read what's written on it. It appears to be a poem. It says ...

“ Lines written by someone now dead

*You can't quite see me but you know I'm there
Can't hear me, but you could swear
That someone's talking, reaching out for you
Through the white of this paper, from out of the blue.*

*A ghost of words on a ghost-coloured page,
The ghost of the poet behind a black-and-white cage,
An echo of thought, once had, now dead
That shimmers through time when these words are read.* ”

Do: Follow the key facilitation tool for approaching poetry.

KEY FACILITATION TOOL

Approaching poetry

The following is a procedure adapted from *Thoughtings* (see Links) for approaching poetry with primary-age children (ages 7–11):

1. Read the poem.
2. Allow the children a few seconds of silence to 'take it in'.
3. Read the poem again, but leave out a few key words (usually rhyming ones, but not necessarily) for the class to fill in.
4. Project, or hand the poem out (usually one between two), and allow the children to respond in pairs. At this stage allow them to respond how they like, so no task question (see below).
5. Take responses in the talk-circle as a short enquiry. (Be on the look-out for good emergent enquiry opportunities from this stage. An 'emergent enquiry' is an unplanned enquiry that emerges naturally from the children's contributions.)
6. Ask children to put up their hands if there is a word or phrase that they don't understand for the group to tackle on their behalf.
7. Do a response detector (see Appendix 1) to make sure that the next contribution is connected to contributions made in Step 6.
8. If necessary, ask if there are any other words or phrases that are not understood, until all of the poem has been 'unpacked' as much as the class is able, or until a good enquiry emerges (this will depend on your own aims and objectives).
9. For this particular poem, if necessary, use one of the following questions: Who has written the poem? Are they talking to you? Is he/she a ghost? What colour are ghosts? What is the 'black-and-white cage'?
10. You may decide at some point to read the poem again, or have the children do so. One child could read it, or you could ask different children to read one line of the poem each.

Say: After reading the first piece of parchment, you reach in and take out the second – the one with the number '2' written on it. It reads:

“ **To the finder of these lines**

*Now write your own lines
And place them in the box
Bury it underground
Under soil and rocks.*

*Perhaps, one day
Your lines will be found
So that your silent, buried words
May sound.*



TIME CAPSULE ACTIVITY

Do: Hand out a piece of blank paper to each child.

Say: Following the invitation by the mystery poet, write your own words to put into a box to be read by someone hundreds of years from now. You can write anything you want – it can be a poem, but it doesn't have to be. Whatever you decide to write, make sure that it's something you want someone to read hundreds of years from now when they dig it up from the ground.

Task question: Can a poet live forever through his or her work?

Nested questions

- What would 'living forever' be?
- Is 'live' used literally or figuratively in the task question above?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

One-word Epitaph

Do: Project or hand out the following poem before reading it.

One-word Epitaph

Done? Gone?

Won? John.

Tripped? Slipped?

Lied. Tried?

What one word would you decide

To leave to say how you lived and died? _____.

Nested questions (the task question is in the poem)

- Can you sum up your entire life with just one word?
- What one word would you use to recommend to someone how to live?
- What values does your word signify?
- Can your life be put into words?
- If there were a book with every detail of your life described, would the whole of your life have been described?
- What do the words listed say about the person/each of the people who left them?

Links

Once Upon an If: pages 25–26; 28; 79–82

The If Machine: The Little Old Shop of Curiosities

The If Odyssey: The Concealer (The Island of Kalypso); Epilogue, page 155

The Philosophy Shop: Philosophical Poetry; Much Ado About Nothing; The Time Diet; The Pill of Life
Thoughtings: Love, Goodness and Happiness; Archaeology; Anthology of Unwritten Poems – for more on the Key facilitation tool: Approaching poetry

HERE'S A THOUGHT

THOUGHT
ADVENTURE

2

Thinking about thought

Philosophy is sometimes said to be 'thinking about thinking'; in this session the children are invited to 'think about thoughts', and you get to perform telepathy to the class. This is one of those sessions where the children get to see the magic of the real world.

Equipment and preparation needed

- A piece of A4 paper to write on

Subject links

Literacy
Poetry

Key controversies

Though it may be easy to locate the causes of a thought, where exactly is a thought itself?

Possible misconception

That a thought is the same as the word 'thought'

Key concepts and vocabulary

Aboutness
Brain
Intention

Mind
Thought
Writing

Key facilitation tool

Provoke (see page 6)

Do: Write the following question on a piece of paper:

Is there a thought on this piece of paper?

Nested questions

- What is a thought?
- Where are thoughts?
- How are thoughts created?
- Where do thoughts that aren't being thought about go?
- Where are thoughts located?

AN EXERCISE IN TELEPATHY?

Do: Ask the class if they know what 'telepathy' is? Take ideas, then explain that it is 'when one transfers thoughts from one's own mind into the mind of another simply with the power of thought'.

Say: I will now transfer a thought from my mind into your minds without speaking.

