



Little Island

THE PHILOSOPHY RESISTANCE SQUAD

ROBERT GRANT

How to Create Your Own Philosophy Squad

Part 1

This guide is designed to help teachers and other adults who are interested in doing philosophy with children. The activities suggested here are meant to be used with kids who are reading *The Philosophy Resistance Squad* at home or in class. Dr Robert Grant, who wrote the book, teamed up with Susan Andrews, who teaches in Temple Carrig School in Greystones, County Wicklow, to bring you this resource to accompany the novel.

When you do philosophy, you ask very big, very interesting, but also very difficult questions like these:

- Did the universe have a beginning?
- Are humans really free?
- Is the world fair?
- How can we be sure we know the truth?
- Is it right to eat animals?

These are the kinds of questions that there are no clear answers to. You can't just look up the back of the book, do a search on Google or run an experiment to find the answers. You need to think them through.

And the best way to do that is together with other people. That is what philosophers have been doing for thousands of years. By doing philosophy with other people – kids or adults – you can come to understand the questions better, see things from other points of view and begin to see the world in a new way.

How this guide works

Part 1 of this guide is mainly for adults. It explains how the guide can best be used in the classroom.

Part 2 of the guide consists of suggestions for activities and discussions for use with children as they read their way through *The Philosophy Resistance Squad*. After you've worked your way through the pre-reading discussion at the beginning of part 2, you and your students can read the book a chapter at a time, pausing to take a look at the suggestions for activities that accompany each chapter as you go.

The section for each chapter follows the pattern of CREATE - THINK - WONDER. Following this pattern will help your pupils to be creative and will build their thinking, philosophical and questioning skills.

CREATE

These sections suggest creative activities based on the chapters. The activities can be done by individuals or in pairs and students can use any physical or digital visual materials available to them. For example, you could use colourful post-its for the diamond-ranking-activity or Lego/Minecraft to build their ideal school.

THINK

In these sections, children are asked what they think about the chapter. Collect or record the children's concepts and keep them on a concept tree or in a folder. You can return again and again to these concepts and match them to characters and themes you come across in the book. You can use them to make links and connections between chapters.

WONDER

These sections start to move the children from thinking about the chapter itself into discussing philosophical questions.

In the beginning, pupils will need guidance to create philosophical or 'open' questions and to avoid comprehension questions. A good way to do this is to ask the children to check whether a question is an 'everybody' question: in other words, could the question be discussed by someone who hasn't read the chapter? If so, then it's a real philosophical question, not just a question about the story.

Learning to do this helps kids to create deeper questions that inspire rich classroom discussions or written responses. When discussing such questions, they should give their opinions, but they should support these with reasons and examples.

Facilitating philosophical conversations

Once you've done the activities and exercises associated with a particular chapter, you can then use the concepts and questions that have arisen to run philosophical conversations, with the whole class or in small groups. The emphasis is on getting students to engage in doing philosophy.

1. Students could spend a few minutes airing their concepts and questions in small groups of three or four, having mini-discussions.
2. Each small group could vote on the question they would most like to discuss.
3. If possible, then set up the space for philosophical conversations in a circle and sit everybody around the circle.
4. Students can place their small group's chosen question in the circle.
5. A blind vote with the whole group chooses the question of the day for a whole-class enquiry.
6. Using a soft ball or toy to throw to each speaker is a fun way to encourage taking turns.
7. Then begin to enquire into the chosen question by encouraging students to say what they think.
8. Ask clarification questions such as "What do you mean by that"?, "Can you say more"?, "Are you saying that..."? "What are your reasons for thinking that?"
9. You can also offer counter examples or reflect back what students have said. The idea is not to shut down points that are 'wrong', but to encourage students to think for themselves.
10. Cultivate an environment of deep listening and respect where it is ok to disagree and changing your mind is encouraged.
11. At the end of the session, allow each student to say one exit sentence or write on a post-it or board. A helpful structure for this is "I used to think but now I think"

Part 2

Pre-reading discussion

1. Look at the cover of the book.
2. What information does it provide you as a reader?
3. How does it make you feel?
4. Before turning to the first page of the story, think about the title.
5. What does the word 'Philosophy' mean?
6. What does the word 'Resistance' mean?
7. What do you think the story will be about?

Chapter 1



Create

Imagine you are a Discipod at the Institute. Design your uniform and a crest for your uniform.

Imagine you could rebuild your school to look like the Institute. How would you design it? Would you have classrooms, doors, halls, walls? Create a picture to share your design.



Think

Concepts or ideas are important to how we live our lives and understand the world around us. Write down some concepts you find important in chapter 1. Here are some examples: Education - Family - Learning - Winning - Ranking - Progress - Tradition.



Wonder

Can you invent some philosophical questions based on these concepts, ones that make sense even if you hadn't read the chapter?

Some examples:

- What is an education for?
- Is it possible to learn nothing?
- Is it a teacher's job to create good students or good learners?
- Is it important to win?

Chapter 2



Create

Imagine you are designing a school curriculum. What nine subjects would you include? Create a diamond ranking diagram, placing your first priority subject at the

top, followed by two subjects in second place, three in the third row, a further two and then your least important subject at the bottom.



Think

Write down some concepts you find important in chapter 2. Here are some examples:

Freedom - Friendship - Language - Work - Fate - Success - Trust - Beauty.






Talk about the different ways these words can be used.




Wonder

Create some philosophical questions containing your concepts.


Some examples:

-  What is more important, freedom or happiness?
-  Is it possible to be friends with someone who doesn't like you?
-  Should you respect everyone equally?
-  How much should you sacrifice for success?
-  How do we know who to trust?

Chapter 3

 Create: CSI (Colour, Symbol, Image)

Create a poster. Choose a colour, and sketch an image that best represents the essence of *fairness* for you and explain why you chose it.

 Think: Pair-Think-Share





Imagine an alien came to earth and asked you to explain the concepts of *discipline* and *punishment*.

This is a good exercise for doing in pairs. One student can write a definition of *discipline* and another can write a definition of *punishment*. Share your definitions with other pairs and find the similarities and differences between them.

 Wonder

What sort of questions do you think the alien might have about punishment and discipline? Write down as many questions on these topics which have no settled answers as you can think of.

Some examples:

-  What is punishment in schools for?
-  Is punishment always fair?
-  Can we learn from punishment?
-  Can you be undisciplined *and* a good student?

Chapter 4

Create

Create a tree wordle (you can look this up online if you need to) with some of the big ideas and concepts in philosophy that Ursula mentions (e.g. fairness, knowledge, authority, see pages 40–42).

Think: Think - Pair - Think - Share

Read some of Ursula's philosophical questions (page 41). Choose your favourite one and try to answer it in pairs. Give reasons and examples in your answers.

Wonder

What sort of questions about the world do you have? Questions that you can't find easy answers to. Write them down at the base of your tree wordle to make them look like roots.

Chapter 5

Create




Draw a hologram of yourself or take a selfie. Think about all the things that make you who you are.

Label your hologram with words you would use to describe yourself! What are your likes, dislikes, physical characteristics, personality traits?

Can you find anything on the list that if you took it away, you wouldn't be you any more?






Think: Brain swap

Imagine there are two friends, Katie and Sarah-Louise. Katie is brilliant at sports, and very outgoing, with lots of friends. Sarah-Louise, on the other hand is shy, studious and brilliant at maths. Each girl admires what the other has. So they decide they will go along to a company that specialises in brain swaps and undergo a long operation to exchange their brains.

-  Where is Katie after the operation?
-  Where is Sarah-Louise?
-  Have they achieved what they wanted?

Wonder

Get together in small groups and discuss the following questions.

-  Are you the same person you were five years ago?
-  Or when you were two years old?
-  What part is the same?
-  Are we our brain or our body?
-  Where is the self?

Chapter 6

Create

Create a colourful mind-map. In the middle of a landscape page draw an image of what technology looks like to you and under it write the word *Technology*.

Think

Now, draw lots of colourful branches stemming from your main image of technology, and at the end of each branch write a **keyword** to do with technology.

Draw some secondary branches that contain more specific ideas that build on the prior branch.

And now connect the concepts on your mind map that seem to you to be connected, using arrows or lines.

Wonder

On your connecting lines between your concepts, write a philosophical question that relates to them.

Share your mind maps in your small group and pick one of your questions to discuss with the group or the whole class!

Chapter 7

Create

Draw a picture of Paul Patrick Prendergast after he comes back to class and is acting strange. How can you show he is different or not himself?

Think

Make a list of the things that make us human. What makes us different from objects, and from other animals? Is it how we move? Language? Humour? Music?

Wonder

Create some philosophical questions based on your concepts above. Can you connect two concepts in one question?


Chapter 8

Create: Dramarama!

Act out one of the conversations between Ursula and Milo about **freedom** or **knowledge** (pages 82, 83) in pairs. Where do you think their conversation started? What else do you think they might have said?

Or work in a group of four and play the roles of Ursula, Milo, Sarah-Louise and Katie discussing **animals** (pages 85-89).

Try to play the roles like you imagine the characters in the book.







 Think - Share - Pair

What do you think of Milo's answers about **freedom, knowledge** and **eating animals**? Have you ever thought about these concepts before?

In pairs, take turns to ask these two questions

- 1) Would you rather be a happy pig or an unhappy child?
- 2) How do you know what to believe?

Use the prompts below to push past opinions and initial reasons to make your partner think more philosophically:

-  Can you tell me more?
-  Can you say why?
-  So ... [repeat the question]?
-  Can you give me an example?
-  How do you mean?
-  Why is that important?

 Wonder

What philosophical questions do you still have about **freedom, animals** and **knowledge**?

Choose one concept - take a vote in your group on which one - and write down your questions.

Chapter 9

 Create an acrostic





Write an acrostic based on the word **education**. To do this, you write the word on the vertical:

E
D
U
C
A
T
I
O
N

and then the first word of each line has to begin with the appropriate letter; for example, the first line has to begin with a word that begins with the letter E.





 Think

Here are some questions about school to think about and discuss:

-  What sort of person would you like to be when you leave school?
-  How can school help you get there?
-  Write down your ideas and share with your group.
-  Does anyone have similar ideas to you?

 Wonder

And some more!

-  What is an education for in your opinion?
-  Write a paragraph explaining your ideas and why you think them.
-  Can you give examples or evidence in your answer?
-  Could you try to disagree with yourself?

Chapter 10

This time, let's look at the philosophical quote at the top of the chapter. This is from a very old and famous philosopher named Aristotle.

What do you think the quote means?

Break into groups and discuss it. Then each group can air their ideas to the rest of the class.

Chapter 11

Repeat the same exercise for chapter 11. This time the quote is from an Indian philosopher and poet from the 20th century.

What could it mean to "make your life in harmony with all existence"?

Chapter 12




 Create

Draw a picture of Ursula's garden from page 122 .

What would you add to it? How would you design it?

 Think

Think about Ursula's garden:

-  Read Ursula's description of philosophy on pages 124 and 125 more closely.
-  Write down a **word**, a **phrase** and a **sentence** that seem important to you on a post-it.
-  Post the note on the wall for everyone to see. Take a look at other students' thoughts and see if anyone in the class chose the same as you.

 Wonder

Would you like to live for ever? Read the conversation on pages 126-132. In your group, have the same conversation but with your own ideas. What questions did the thought experiment raise in your case?

Chapter 13



Create a Poster : Choose a colour and sketch an image that best represents the essence of **happiness** for you and explain why you chose it.

Think

In your groups, read and act out the roles of Ursula, Consuelo, Julia, Milo, Liam, Sarah-Louise , Gerry, pages 135-139.

Who do you agree with most and why? Who do you disagree with most and why?

Discuss your thoughts in your groups.

Wonder

Create as many questions as possible around the word *happy* and sort them into closed questions and philosophical questions.

Which philosophical question would you like to discuss in the group? Take a vote!

Chapter 14

Create

Draw a picture of the REDUCON 6000 and show how it attaches to the students.

Think

In your groups, make a list of all the ways we can tell the difference between computer games and reality. Do you think that there could be a computer game made that was so real you couldn't tell the difference between it and reality?

Wonder

In groups, discuss the question: What happens when we dream? How do we know that we are not dreaming right now? Do dreams mean anything, or are they just random thoughts and images?

Chapter 15

Create a headline!

Imagine you were one of the journalists in the audience at the school event in Chapter 15 and you had to write a headline for the scandal. What would your headline be?

Think

Make a connection between something you have read up to now – in this book or another book – and something from your own life or from the world around you.

 Wonder

What do you think should happen to Dr Pummelcrush?

Imagine you had a conversation with him. What juicy question would you like him to try and answer?


After reading the book

 Create

Imagine this book was turned into a movie. Make the poster for it!

Or imagine the author wrote a second book about Milo and his friends.

 What would the sequel be about?

 What would it be called?

 What would the book cover look like? Design your book cover!

 Think

Could this story be true? Write a response explaining your thinking.

Look back at the quotes from philosophers at the start of each chapter. Which one is your favourite? Why did you choose this?

As a follow-up, do a little research on the philosopher whose quote you liked. Find out five things and teach someone in your class about them.

 Wonder

Write a letter to Ursula. Write at least five philosophical questions you would like her to answer. Tell her what you thought of her ideas.