

Year 12 Philosophy Bridging Work 2023

A-level Philosophy is a popular subject which requires you to test your reasons for beliefs and attitudes through open debate and written argument. You will learn to reason in a logical, precise and coherent way. As most Y12 students have not studied the subject at GCSE, we have devised three tasks to help you gain a better understanding of the requirements of the course. In year 12 you will study Moral Philosophy and epistemology.

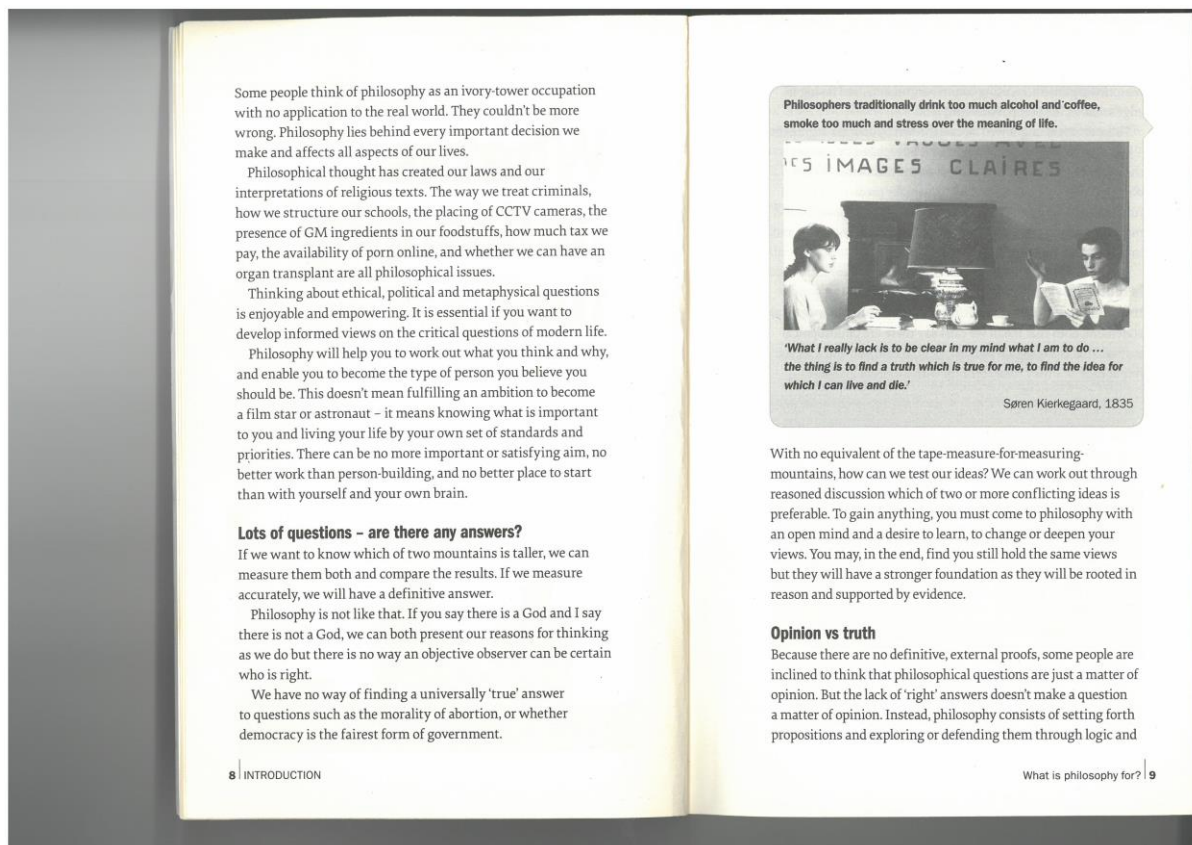
1. Read Sophie's World by J Gaarder. This is a great introduction into Philosophy in the form of a novel and complete the following questions.
 - A. *What is the author trying to get you as a reader to think about?*
 - B. *Pick one of the questions which the teacher asks Sophie (the one which most interests you). Why does it interest you and have a go at answering it.*
 - C. *Pick one of the philosophers mentioned in the novel and explain briefly what their contribution to philosophy was.*
2. Find ONE article from the broadsheet newspapers or use their websites which raise interesting philosophical questions.
3. Write down your response to this philosophical question; "Suppose Bill is a healthy man without family or loved ones. Would it be ok to painlessly kill him if his organs would save five people, one of whom needs a heart, another a kidney, and so on? If not, why not?"
4. Use the link below and listen to the following BBC Radio 4 podcast 'In our time.'
 - Utilitarianism
 - Empiricism

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05xhwqf>

Read The short extract below from the book 'Think like a philosopher.' By Anne Rooney

Complete the following questions

1. Why is Philosophy important?
2. How does Philosophy try to answer questions?
3. How may Philosophy help us to answer the question 'Killing people is wrong?'



reasoned argument, refuting counter-arguments, and trying to edge towards the best possible answers.

These answers might well be overthrown by another argument – just as a theory in physics might later be replaced by a better theory. In physics, a preferred theory is one that better fits the observed phenomena and enables us to make predictions which turn out to be accurate. For an idea to be sound in philosophy, it must be consistent, without internal contradiction, inclusive, and, in many cases, universally applicable.

Is it ever true?

If we can't conclusively demonstrate the truth of a philosophical statement, does that mean we can't say there are philosophical truths? This is a question philosophers have asked, and – as you might expect – they have come up with different answers.



Few philosophers would argue that the murder of innocent civilians in times of war can ever be justified. Viewed from a modern perspective, the Austro-Hungarian army's summary execution of Serbs during World War I was clearly a war crime.

The question is not limited to philosophy: it is also asked of other disciplines, including physics. Are our discoveries in physics really discoveries of an objective truth, or are they just a convenient way of representing our observations of the world? It is possible that the truth is 'out there', but we can't be sure.

'Killing people is wrong'

Like science, philosophy tries to approach the truth. If we take the statement 'killing people is wrong', we can quickly come up with cases in which some people might not think it wrong – when a terminally ill person in pain asks for release, for example. This makes the proposition not universally applicable,

ANGER – PHILOSOPHERS AT WORK

The Ancient Greek philosopher Socrates wandered around Athens, teaching philosophy. His frequent debates with the aristocratic youth annoyed the city elders, who saw him making young people more troublesome and argumentative than they needed to be. He was eventually put on trial for corrupting the young and offending the gods. Offered the chance of a reprieve if he would give up philosophy, Socrates refused, further antagonizing the court. He was sentenced to death and took his own life under duress in 399BC by drinking hemlock, surrounded by his friends. He is considered the originator of Western philosophy.

Persecution is a perennial danger for philosophers. Totalitarian regimes often turn against the intellectuals in their midst. Mao's China, Pol Pot's Cambodia and Stalin's USSR all imprisoned and abused intellectuals because of their dangerous potential to encourage the populace to challenge the authorities. The same accusation had been levelled at Socrates 2,500 years previously. People who don't think are easy to govern and easy to oppress. Philosophers are the intellectual equivalent of arms dealers in the eyes of an unenlightened state.