

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple 6th Form



Year 11 into 12 transition task

Subject: Philosophy

SMRT 6th Form gives students the chance to study new subjects that they have not experienced at GCSE. We want to ensure that everybody who has chosen such a subject has a good understanding of it involves so that they don't find themselves having to swap within the first few weeks or stuck with something that turns out not to be what they expected.

We have therefore set you a simple task to complete, which you should bring with you to your first lesson. It shouldn't take you too long, but there are more resources suggested that you could look at if you want to get deeper in to the subject before you start.

To get you started with the subject:

Crash Course Philosophy is a series of snappy introductions to philosophical topics

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNgK6MZucdYldNkMybYIHKR>

Start by watching video #1 in this series titled 'What Is Philosophy'

1. From this video note down what is meant by the four areas of philosophy titled Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics and Aesthetics
2. Explain the two-step method of assessing a philosophical position using the principle of charity and the tools of critical evaluation

Follow up with video #2 on 'Philosophical Reasoning'

1. Think of an argument that you have got into with a friend or family member about something important to one of you where you can see now that you were a bit **irrational** in your opinions or argument. Why do you think you took this view or argued in this way rather than being totally rational?
2. Plato thought that the soul had three elements – the rational (logical), spirited (emotional) and appetitive (physical desires). He thought that the best humans were always governed by the rational part of their soul. Do you agree?
3. Explain what is meant by 'Deductive reasoning' and what is meant by a 'Premise'

There are lots more of these videos that would be interesting if you want to go for more.

CORE TASK: Before the start of term you should:

Read the article downloadable from the SMRT website on whether dolphins should be considered as persons. Use this to answer four questions. This can be in the form of mind-maps or bullet-points rather than a formal piece of writing.

1. What qualities do philosophers associate with the idea of something being a 'person'?
2. What arguments and evidence does the writer offer for his view that dolphins should be considered as persons?
3. What would be the moral and practical consequences of his view?
4. What would convince you that a robot or computer should be counted as a person and have the same moral rights as you and me?

Follow this up by watching the Crash Course philosophy video number 21 on 'Personhood' and practice taking some notes on the important points.

If you want to be really stretched by something very challenging that suggests that maybe non-human animals have some degree of free-will then try this:

<https://www.philosophersmag.com/essays/38-do-animals-have-free-will>

To get more into what this subject is about at a higher level :

If you fancy buying a book you could consider –

Mark Rowlands – The Philosopher at the End of the Universe

Julian Baggini – The Pig That Wants to be Eaten

Nigel Warburton – Philosophy: The Basics

Other media:

The best and most fun way in to some philosophy at the moment, if you have access to Netflix, is to watch ‘**The Good Place**’ – short episodes with some seriously kick-ass philosopher doing the advice on what they should include. You have to keep watching. It just gets better.

For a little sample try this: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWb_svTrcOg

These series of video lectures on **Justice** and morality by Michael Sandel at Harvard University are quite awesome. Well worth watching the first one or two for a glimpse of some real philosophical debate –

<http://www.justiceharvard.org/category/watch/>

The Philosophers Arms podcast is basically arguments in a pub about fun topics. Have a stab at the Robot Daughter and the Experience Machine. Play them in the car on your summer holiday – I promise your parents will find them interesting –

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/philarms>

The **Philosophy Bites** site is a series of short 15 minute interviews with philosophers on a massive range of topics that are also very accessible for the novice philosopher. There are interviews on Persons and Animals, Artificial Intelligence, Personal Identity and the Sense of Self which link to the task above.

A topical index is here if you want to stream it straight from a computer -

<http://philosophybites.com/links-to-past-e.html>

You can download MP3 files with or without iTunes from these two links -

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/philosophy-bites/id257042117?mt=2>

<http://www.philosophybites.libsyn.com/rss>

A fun site with lots of interactive philosophy games and thought-experiments can be found at ‘The Philosophers Magazine’ site here:

<https://www.philosophersmag.com/games>

If you want to go further into researching philosophy on the web then these sites are good places to look :

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04bwydw> - The BBC History of Ideas site - featuring great audioclips, cartoons and fun quizzes on really relevant and interesting topics

If you want some fiction then try:

Jostein Gaarder, Sophie’s World [1991]

(the history of philosophy embedded in a story)

Voltaire, Candide [1759]

(a short but perfect exposition of the problem of evil)

Robert Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance [1974] *(converted me to philosophy)*

Philip Dick, Do Android’s Dream of Electric Sheep [1968] *(the book behind Bladerunner)*

And there are tons of great films that explore philosophical themes:

- The Matrix
- Gattacca
- Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind
- ExistenZ
- Eye in the sky
- Minority report
- My sister’s keeper
- Avengers Infinity War
- Force Majeure
- The Truman show
- The diving bell & the butterfly
- I love Huckabees
- Alive
- Inception
- The 6th Day
- Memento
- Bladerunner
- Contact