



Philosophical Enquiry for KS3

What a Mess: A Paradox

One crisp packet alone is not a mess, so how we got in this state, is anybody's guess!

<p>Philosophical Content</p>	<p>Possible Concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ETHICS: Caring for the environment, conservation, responsibility, justice, consequences, duties, hope, despair • LOGIC: Sorites Paradox, 'Little by little' arguments, possibility • METAPHYSICS: Existence, (coming into / going out of), indeterminacy, vagueness • LANGUAGE: Words and when they apply, indeterminacy of meaning, vagueness of words <p>Example Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When does something become a mess? • Does 3 pieces of litter constitute a mess? Does 30? Does 300? • If you drop a single piece of litter have you made a mess? • If you pick up a single piece of litter have you cleared up a mess? • Can dropping (or picking up) one piece of litter, ever make the difference between 'not a mess' and 'a mess'? • What is a mess? • Does the word 'mess' have a specific meaning? • Can we really understand it, if it doesn't? • What – if anything – is wrong with mess? • This this (a picture of plastic polluted ocean) a mess? • If we took one piece of litter away would it still be a mess? • If we continued to take litter away, piece by piece, most people would agree that at some point, the ocean stops being a mess? When might that be? • If one piece of litter doesn't make a difference how is clearing up a mess possible? • Should we care for the environment? Is so, why? • Does the environment have any value besides its usefulness to humans? • Can one person make a difference when it comes to caring for the environment? • Is it rational to try and do something about pollution? • Should we try to clear up the classroom or the planet?
<p>Philosophical Method</p>	<p>Thinking Moves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarising, Question-forming, Question-sorting by applying criteria <p>Facilitation Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Captioning, Question-selection with criteria

Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circle of chairs • Paper, pens • Pom-pom, • Flash cards • Image of plastic polluted oceans e.g. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Marine_debris#/media/File:Beach_in_Sharm_el-Naga03.jpg • Pieces of litter e.g. crisp packets, bottles, wastepaper etc.
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PREPARATION		15 min
Introductions	Introduce each other, if meeting for the first time.	5 min
Ethos	If necessary, briefly establish or reiterate your class expectations	
Warm Up	<p>Share the image of the plastic polluted ocean. Invite children to give the image a caption.</p> <p>Model first, if necessary. E.g. <i>'Habitat, Ruined'</i>, <i>'Natural Disaster'</i> <i>'What a mess'</i> <i>'Spoilt Seas'</i> etc.</p>	
STIMULUS		5 min
Presentation of Stimulus	<p>Using the concept of 'mess' (or any other suitable indeterminate concept which emerges during the discussion e.g. 'ruined'; 'spoilt'; 'polluted'; 'untidy' etc.) present the following:</p> <p>"There's an interesting puzzle here. You see if I drop one piece of litter in our classroom you probably wouldn't say the classroom is 'a mess'. One piece of litter probably doesn't make the difference between no mess and a mess."</p> <p>Who agrees? (Show thumbs)</p> <p>"So, if one piece of litter doesn't make a difference then if I drop another piece of litter we probably don't have a mess either. We have two pieces of litter on the floor but probably not a mess?"</p> <p>Who agrees? (Show thumbs)</p> <p>[Dropping litter all over the carpet]</p> <p>"So, if one piece of litter cannot make the difference between no mess and a mess then I can drop this, and this, and this, and this and this? I only dropped <i>one</i> piece of litter each time."</p> <p>What do you think? Have I made a mess? (Show thumbs)</p>	
Thinking Time	A minute in silence	
Sharing Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If necessary, you may need to remind children that they can disagree with the claims made when presenting the stimulus. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students then share initial reflections with a partner. • Invite one or two pairs to feedback. 	
QUESTIONS		10 min
Composing Questions	In threes, ask the children to develop one question.	
Sharing Questions	Each group shares their question, explaining the connection between their question and the stimulus. Questions are written up on white board.	
Sharpening Questions	Encourage the group to identify themes, duplication and ambiguity. Redraft if necessary.	
Selecting Questions	<p>Remind students of some of the features of a promising philosophical question. Use vocabulary that you have already developed in class. E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual – about rich ideas, what they mean and how they are related • Contestable – concerned with matters that are not settled (about which there is reasonable disagreement) • Connected – related (or relevant to) our own lives and learning • Considerable – about interesting and important issues that are worthy of our time and effort <p>Now vote.</p>	
DIALOGUE		25 min
First Thoughts	Invite the students who proposed the question to start.	
Collecting Ideas	Facilitate a wider discussion, gathering a range of responses.	
Getting Focused	Help the group to identify and explore key emergent idea(s) e.g. pollution, conservation, responsibility, hope	
Digging Deeper	<p>Initiate a paired break-out discussion on particularly challenging aspects of emerging ideas(s). Possible sub questions that may be useful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a mess? (Or 'untidy'; 'polluted'; 'spoilt' etc.) • When does something become a mess? • Can dropping one piece of litter, ever make the difference between 'not a mess' and 'a mess'? • If one piece of litter doesn't make a difference how is clearing up a mess possible? • Should we try to clear up the classroom or the planet? 	
Final Push	Return to the original question, or to an appropriate reformulation of the original question, pressing for revised answer(s).	
Last thoughts	If there's time, moving round the whole circle, invite everyone to share their final thoughts on the discussion. If time is tight, invite several volunteers (ideally those who haven't contributed	

	as much in the main discussion) to summarise their response to the question or highlight an issue that needs further thought.	
5. REFLECTION		5 min
Reflection on the Content:	Ask volunteers to contribute using the sentence starter: <i>"Something interesting I heard"</i>	
Reflection on the Method	Ask new volunteers to contribute using the sentence starter: <i>"Something helpful I did"</i>	
FURTHER READING		60 min
Concept Exercise	Read more about the Sorites Paradox here: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sorites-paradox/ For more environmental ethics resources see here: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/bioethics/ethics-education-programme/activities/educational-resources/	

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