

Philosophy park: A beginner's guide to great philosophers and their ideas (including *Teacher Resource*) by Philip Cam (2013). Australian Council for Educational Research: Camberwell, VIC. ISBN 978-1-74286-191-3 / 978-1-74286-192-0.

Those with at least in passing interest in Philosophy for Children will be aware of the work of Philip Cam. Cam's corpus of texts have provided educators with countless insights, activities and resources for developing philosophical investigations and thinking with young people. *Philosophy park: A beginner's guide to great philosophers and their ideas* is a significant addition to this body of work. Tackling the complex ideas of leading philosophers in the Western tradition, Cam has achieved something that is often rather rare—the ability to convey complex ideas in an accessible and engaging way. The main tool employed is the use of stories, each of which draws out a central idea within the thought of the philosopher or school of philosophers at hand.

The book comprises ten chapters. Commencing each of the chapters is a short preface that serves to introduce the core principle that is at play in the story that follows. The prefaces work well, and will be of especial help to readers not immediately familiar with the ideas and themes under discussion. In chapter one, we are introduced to the thought of the Ionian Philosophers through a story entitled 'Earth, air, fire and water'. Chapter Two, 'The dawn chorus' introduces Socratic notions of the good, ignorance and knowledge. Entitled, 'Scruffy, Mutt and the ideal dog', Chapter Three focuses on Plato, while Chapter Four draws out Aristotle's principle of 'The golden mean'. In Chapter Five readers engage with the thought of the Stoics and Epicureans through a narrative called 'The cats' conundrum'. Chapter Six, 'Pipe dreams' handles Cartesian rationalism, while Chapter Seven, 'Scottie and John Bull' is based on the thought of the British Empiricists. Immanuel Kant's deontology is the focus of 'Immanuel's idea' in Chapter Eight, with the remaining two chapters—'Rats should be happy too' and 'Tree talk'—connects readers to the thought of The Utilitarians and Ludwig Wittgenstein respectively. The main text is supported by a Teacher's Resource that contains various structured activities to support engagement with the ideas.

The chapter on Aristotle's Golden Mean provides a handy illustration of the way in which the stories are conducted. After the preface—a few paragraphs providing key information about the philosopher/s and their ideas—the remainder of each chapter takes the form of a short story. Centring on the Golden Mean, the story involves two characters, Bob and his friend Larry, who meet on a bench to talk. The conversation develops around a story Bob is reading in a newspaper about a couple who have won the lottery, sparking discussion about the meanings of happiness, fulfilment, human potential and the use of reason in relation to living virtuously (using one's judgement). The discussion develops into a consideration of the Golden Mean as being a preferable position between the two vices of excess and deficiency. The Teacher's Resource contains a list of prompt discussion questions on the topics that are central to the story – the nature of happiness, what it is that makes us human,

the idea of virtue as a golden mean, and the use of reason. In addition, there are activities that seek to develop the clarification of concepts. These include looking at the meaning of close synonyms and the structure of logical arguments (for example by exploring the difference between a premise and a conclusion).

Overall, *Philosophy park* provides a useful and valuable resource for educators looking to develop philosophical thinking and exploration with their students. The simplicity and accessibility of the text will be a key benefit to those wishing to use this text in their practice. The main strength of *Philosophy park*, and one which should not be missed by educators, lies in its taking up ideas that matter today *through the lens* of great thinkers of the past. It does so in a way that is practical and meaningful. I can highly recommend it.

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