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A Thoughtroduction

by Peter Worley and Andrew Day

Everything in our collection of *Thoughtings* was inspired by the thoughts of children as voiced to us in our daily work, visiting primary school children and running philosophy sessions. We turned their insights, brainwaves and verbal entanglements into puzzles and poems for the young – and when we took them back to the classroom, they went down a storm.

Once teachers saw how engaging these pieces were for their pupils, they started to ask us how to get hold of them. So we've collected them together and expanded their range. They can be read for fun or used as a starting point for discussions. Many of them also get children thinking about language itself.

Children love pondering big, philosophical questions like, 'Does the universe end?', 'Where is my mind?' and 'Can something be true and false at the same time?' These verses capture that impulse in the growing mind, and feed it further.

If you want to know how we use these poems with children turn to Appendix I on page 191. Regularly updated lesson plans that make use of these *Thoughtings* are available if you become a member of The Philosophy Foundation website (www.philosophy-foundation.org). You can find a sample lesson plan in Appendix II on page 195.

Here's to the joy of puzzlement!

Question to class:

What is thinking? But try to answer without saying the word 'thinking' in your answer.

Year 1 (age 5) child:

It's when you're thoughting.



Introduction

Are Things Always What They Seem To Us To Be?

Are things what they seem to us to be?

'The sky is blue,'

Or so say you

But I am not so sure.

The sky *looks* blue

But when it's night

It isn't any more.

I have a chair and it is green

And my friends agree

That it is green

When they've seen

My chair.

But turn off the lights

And the green is gone

Yet can you say to where?



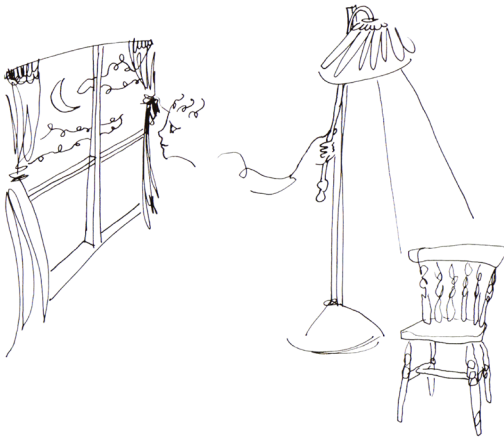
Are things always what they seem to us to be?

Please read on and take the time to think on it for
me ...

Thoughtings

Questions for 'Are Things Are Not Always What They Seem To Us To Be?':

- ❖ What is *colour*?
- ❖ Is the colour of a chair *in* the chair itself?
- ❖ Where is the colour of something?
- ❖ If you put a green chair in a *completely* darkened room what colour is it?
- ❖ If two people disagree about what colour something is, who is right? How would you know who is right?
- ❖ Is how something looks the same as how it is?
- ❖ Is 'looks' the same as 'is'?
- ❖ Are things always as they seem to us to be?



Minds and Brains

The Thought

I had a thought
I kept it in my mind
Where's that?
My mind is in my brain
Which is in my head
Which is under my hat.



Questions for 'The Thought':

- ❖ What is a thought?
- ❖ Where is a thought?
- ❖ What do you need to have a thought?
- ❖ Can you say what a 'thought' is without saying the word thought in your answer?
- ❖ Can you control your thoughts? How?
- ❖ Can you share your thoughts? How?
- ❖ Can you get or know someone else's thoughts? How?



The Thought Fight

A thought fight broke out in my head.
'I'm right', 'No, I'm right!' both thoughts said.
Thought One was the one I first believed,
And it started to cheer, thinking success achieved.

But then Thought Two spoke up, loud and clear,
Starting to win round my inner ear,
When again Thought One took up its case,
And argued its way back into first place.

Thought Two was not a quitter though
And it too had a second go
And proved itself mentally resourceful,
With reasons that were sound and forceful.

They fought as hard as sister and brother,
Interrupting, contradicting each other.
I would have thought both thoughts if I could
Because they both sounded equally good.

Why must I choose?
Make one win and the other lose?
They answered: 'There has to be a victory.
The two of us are contradictory.'

Questions for 'The Thought Fight':

- ❖ Do you agree that one thought has to be the winner?
- ❖ How could one be the winner? How would it win?
- ❖ Do you ever have two contradictory ideas?
- ❖ Could the two thoughts in the poem stop fighting each other?



Ideas

Ideas,
Where do they go?
Without them
What do I know?

Are they tall?
Or thin?
Or thick?
Or round?

Are they something
You need?
Do they have
Any sound?

Ideas,
Where are they from?
What can I think
When I have none?

Are they small?
Or big?
Are they real?
Or not?



And what happens
To ideas
That have been
Forgot?

Ideas,
I want to have more
And more
But can I be sure
No one's had them before?

Questions for 'Ideas':

- ❖ What is an idea? (Can you say what an 'idea' is without saying the word idea in your answer?)
- ❖ Where do ideas come from?
- ❖ Where do they go?
- ❖ What came first: a chair or the *idea* of a chair?
- ❖ What is more real, a chair or the *idea* of a chair?
- ❖ What do ideas do?
- ❖ Is there an idea of an idea?
- ❖ Are ideas a human invention?
- ❖ Are ideas invented or discovered?
- ❖ Are there different kinds of ideas?

Can I Think?

Can I think?
My human friends
Don't think I can

But I think:
I think I can think.

Okay, so I'm just
Nuts and bolts
And made to work
With wires and volts

But I think:
I think I can think.

But if I'm wrong
And really I can't,
I only *think* I think I can think?

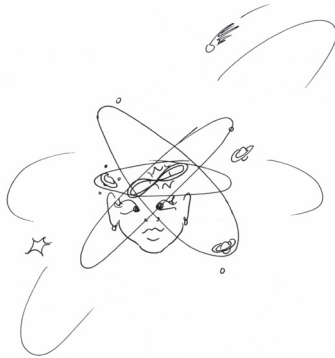
Questions for 'Can I Think?':

- ❖ Can a computer think?
- ❖ What is thinking? (Can you say what 'thinking' is without saying the word thinking in your answer?)
- ❖ Do you think the robot that is thinking this poem can think? Why?
- ❖ What does 'I think: I think I can think' mean? Does it make sense?
- ❖ Do you think robots will be able to think in the future?
- ❖ What does a robot or computer need to have in order to be able to think?
- ❖ If a computer says that it 'thinks that it can think' can the computer be wrong?

Between My Ears

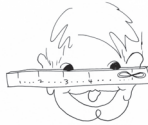
How much space is in my head
That my skull is made to cover?
A smile of intelligence
From one ear to the other.

There's a kind of thing that has no width
That I keep on putting into it.
My brain is only a few inches wide
My mind, however, is infinite.



Questions for 'Between My Ears':

- ❖ What is between your ears?
- ❖ What is a 'smile of intelligence'?
- ❖ What is it that you can keep putting into your head that has no width?
- ❖ If your brain is only a few inches wide, how can your mind be infinite?



- ❖ Is your mind infinite?
- ❖ Is your mind the same thing as your brain, or are they different?
- ❖ What is a mind?
- ❖ Where is your mind?
- ❖ What does your mind do?
- ❖ What would happen if you didn't have (1) a brain or (2) a mind?
- ❖ If you 'change your mind' do you also 'change your brain'?