

# APPENDIX 6:

## BE A PHILOSOPHER

Be a philosopher for UNESCO's World Philosophy Day (or any other day, for that matter!). If you like, put on a beret, but make sure you carry a small notebook and pencil wherever you go and spend the day thinking about one of the questions below. Try to stick to just one of the questions, and think about it deeply all day. To help you think, do the following:

- **Drink 'n' think:** Pour yourself a drink: a cup of tea, a cup of coffee or your favourite soft drink. Sit down somewhere comfortable and drink the drink slowly, thinking only about one chosen question for as long as it takes to finish your drink. Talking to yourself out loud is permitted.
- **Thought 'n' talk:** Find someone (a teacher – if they have time, a friend or family member) who is willing to spend five or more minutes discussing a chosen question with you. Read them the question and then discuss it together.
- **Write 'n' Reason:** Take a piece of paper (or your philosopher's notebook) and write your chosen question at the top of a clean page. Either simply free-write (just write what comes into your head) in answer to the question or, if you prefer, use the following structure.

### Writing process

1. *Read* the question and have a think about it.
2. *Answer* the question. If it is an open question (not answerable with a 'yes' or 'no'), like 'How do you know what is true?', then answer by writing 'I know what is true because ...'. However, if the question is closed (can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no' to start with) such as 'Is there any reason to be good if you can get away with being bad?' then answer by writing 'Yes' or 'No'. It is often best at this point to go with your intuitions (your first thoughts on the issue) – it doesn't matter if you change your mind later.
3. *Justify* your answer (say why!): give any reasons you can think of for whatever you said at step 2 with a sentence beginning 'Because ...' or 'I think this because ...'
4. *Object*: try to think of what someone would say if they disagreed with you, or were to object to what you said at steps 2 and 3. Be as critical as you can with your first idea. Objections usually begin with words like 'But ...' or 'However ...' or 'On the other hand ...'
5. *Reply*: Now think of what you should say in reply to the objection; in other words, how do you deal with it? You may need to do one of the following:
  - *Qualify*: 'If ... then ...'
  - *Clarify*: 'What I mean by X is ...'
  - *Explain*: 'I will say more about X ...'
  - *Revise*: 'Perhaps what I should have said is ...'
  - *Reject*: 'I began thinking X but now I think not X because ...' (or vice versa: 'I began by thinking not X but now I think X because ...')
6. You may want or need to repeat steps 4 and 5 several more times before proceeding to 7.
7. *Consider*: Briefly think through the different points of view. Write a few lines for this part.
8. *Conclude*: Go back to the main question and state whether you still hold to what you wrote in answer to the question at 2 or whether you have changed your mind. A philosopher always looks for the best reasons.

Or, you could try your hand at writing a dialogue. To do this create two characters who disagree with each other. Give them appropriate names, such as 'Tom' and 'Jerry', or simply name them 'Phil' and 'Sophie', 'A' and 'B', 'Pro' and 'Contra', or 'For' and 'Against'.

### **Some big questions!**

Here are some philosophical questions to get you started being a philosopher for the day:

- Is there any reason to be good if you can get away with being bad?
- Should you strive to live a good life?
- Is everything real?
- Are you the same person from one minute to the next?
- How do you know what is true?
- Can someone's opinion ever be wrong?
- Is the mind the same as the brain?
- Should life be fair?
- Is 'saying what you mean' the same as 'meaning what you say'?
- Are we in control of our lives?

This section can be photocopied and handed out to the students for them to read and do on UNESCO's World Philosophy Day (the third Thursday of November).