

Week 1 Class Outline (Political Philosophy: Fairness/Equality)

Breathing: To begin class, sit in a circle with the children and have everyone introduce themselves. Then, move into a breathing exercise.

- One breathing exercise can be a bunny breath. Have the kids inhale quickly and exhale a few times, making the breathes short and fast)
- (Optionally: give the children a choice between an animal breath and or a regular one)

Rules: Next, go over the class rules. They are:

- Only one person can speak at a time
- Listen when others are speaking
- Think before you speak
- Give reasons for your answers

Try to emphasize giving reasons for your answers. Ensure the children that it's okay to disagree, as long as you give a reason why. Also, explain that it's okay for the children to say that they don't know the answer. Give examples of things you don't know (I don't know how fish can breathe underwater!) and then have them share. Conclude saying this class helps us talk through things together, even if we aren't sure sometimes. If the children seem up to it, ask them any rules they would like to add. Ask them why these rules are important to them.

The Teddy Bears' Picnic Activity: For an activity, begin with the teddy bears' picnic story. This activity encourages kids to think about and discuss what is fair or equal. Is it more important that everyone gets the same things, or that everyone gets their needs met?

First, set the scene saying there are two teddy bears having a picnic. Once they find a nice place to sit down, they decide to share a cake. Ask, how should these teddy bears split the cake? Make sure the kids are giving reasons for their answers. Encourage them to think of examples in their life when they had to share and if this was fair.

Next, mention that another bigger teddy bear walks by and asks to join in on the picnic. The other teddy bears are happy to have another friend, so they accept. The bigger teddy bear says he should get more cake because he's bigger and hungrier. Is it fair if the bigger teddy bear has more cake?

If the kids say it is fair, ask follow up questions. For example, I had a boy say it was fair. When asked why, he revealed that it's like that at home with his parents and sister. He gets more than his sister because he's older and bigger, while his parents get more than him. Ask for other examples and if people always get what they need in the world.

If the kids don't think it is fair, also try to provide further examples and counter arguments. Point out the difference in size of the teddy bears and how this is important. Ask if it's okay for the bigger teddy bear to remain hungry.

For another example, use two twin sisters splitting pasta. Their taller friend shows up and says she's hungry too. Now, how should they split the pasta? Some kids get caught up in the fact that cake isn't a nutritional necessity, so this different context can help.

What is philosophy?: Next, explore the question of what philosophy is. First, ask the children what they think it is, and if they have heard of the word before. Two kids told me they heard it and it reminded them of offices but couldn't exactly place it. Come to a general consensus that it means the love of wisdom. Ask them if they know what wisdom means. Define it as being more than just smart, but something that comes with experience. Can the children give an example of someone who is wise? Why do they think that person is wise? Also, explain how we all have philosophers inside of us. Everyone can think and ask questions to learn things, and that's what we're doing right now!

Allegory of the Cave: After this, explain Plato's Allegory of the Cave. This story continues to help illustrate how we will use philosophy, and the importance of philosophy. First, explain the word allegory as simply a story with a lesson. The kids can listen to discover what the lesson is.

Have the children sit, and pretend their hands are glued to the ground while they listen to the story. Tell them, this story takes place in a dark cave where there are prisoners who can't move, just like them. There is a fire behind the prisoners where different shadow puppets are held up. These can be things like birds, ships, and trees but the prisoners can only see the shadow of the object, not the real thing. One day, one of the prisoners, Socrates, fights hard and makes it out of the cave. The sun is so bright it hurts his eyes when he first escapes. However, after adjusting, Socrates sees the beauty of the real world, not the shadows that have been projected to him. Go into detail about the birds and ships that he can now see. When Socrates tries to go back and tell the other prisoners about what he saw they don't want to leave the cave. They don't like the sun hurting them, and want to stay comfortable looking at shadows in the cave.

After explaining Allegory of the Cave. Ask the children what they think the lesson of the story is. Discuss together. What parts stood out to them and why? Try to explain that Plato is trying to show the importance of philosophy. Without it, we are the ones in the cave, not thinking deeply. However, once we have it, we are like Socrates, who's brave enough to go into the real world and see its beauty. In other words, this story tells us to wake our brains up. A comparison can be our mind as lightbulbs that are really dusty. Clear thinking wipes away the dust and allows us to see the bright light and think clearly. Philosophy allows us to focus and explore the world of ideas. Can they think of another story that reminds them of this? Or, an example of who might be a master of the shadow puppets, tricking the prisoners. A dad gave them the good example of Professor Umbridge from *Harry Potter*. She tried to make everyone believe they were safe when

they weren't. This gives another context of why people might want to stay in the dark, it's easier and more comfortable.

Drawing philosophy: Based on our discussion, ask the kids to draw what they think philosophy is without using any people or words in the drawing. If they think this is hard, it's because it is! Encourage them to draw whatever comes to mind, even words and shapes that remind them of the word. Then, have all the children share what they drew and why they decided to draw it.

A question to ask the children while drawing is the difference between ideas and physical things. In other words, ideas are things we can't touch. Things that are real we can often use our senses to feel. Relate this to the shadows in the story, how can we tell they aren't a real bird?

Plato and Socrates: Next, briefly show the children the image of Plato and Socrates. Explain that they lived a long time ago, in Ancient Greece, but they serve as our philosophical friends. Socrates was a teacher for Plato who liked to go around and have conversations with people to explore philosophy, just like we are now. Explain how Plato wrote down all of Socrates' ideas, because Socrates never wrote himself. Plato was focused on uncovering the single truth that is true for everyone. Explain that our journey will not be like that, but it is focused on each of us having our ideas and discussing them together.

Concluding: Finally, give the children their evaluation sheet. Have them respond with a smile, frown, or medium face for each question and prompt them to write a response for the last question.