

Week 5 Outline (Philosophy of Mind: Pretending)

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 lion breath. Breathe in for five seconds and then let out a roar like a lion!
- (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

The kids should all know these as well, but go over them as much as they are interested.

What does it mean to pretend?: Start class by asking the kids what it means to pretend. Write the question on the board and invite the kids to share their theories. Is it faking? When do you pretend?

Giants Activity: For this activity, the kids will discuss whether pretending means you have to believe you are that thing. First, discuss with the children what they think giants are. Talk about what they look like, how they talk, and how they move. Then have the children move around, pretending they are giants.

Once the children are done and sitting in a circle again. Say that they were all pretending to be giants, but ask if they also believed they were giants. When we believe something we think it's true, so did you really believe you were giants?

If the children say they did believe they were giants because it was fun, ask if just because something is fun, does that make it true? If they say they had to believe to pretend, ask if it's possible they can just imagine the thing without believing it. Also, provide a counterexample: ask them to pretend they are a bird in the sky. If they were really that star, then how are they still here and not in the sky?

If the kids don't believe they are giants, ask them to give reasons and evidence. This can range from observations that they are still a normal size, to saying that giants are not real, so they aren't a giant.

Then, ask the kids to name a real animal to pretend to be. Do they think they are that animal? Can you pretend to be something that's real too?

Friedrich Nietzsche: Next, for a discussion of a philosopher that talked about pretending, introduce the kids to Friedrich Nietzsche. Have them all repeat his name, Nietzsche (NEE+CHUH) to make sure they know how to say it. Explain that Nietzsche is a very famous German philosopher that was alive in the 1800s. He is known for his complex and sometimes funny writing in both nonfiction and fiction. Some people say that he helped shape what modern philosophy is with his writing.

Tell them that Nietzsche spoke a lot about masks. What is a mask? How do masks relate to pretending?

When asked about the ideal man, tell them that Nietzsche said that, “If he cannot lead, he goes alone... He knows he is incommunicable: he finds it tasteless to be familiar... When not speaking to himself, he wears a mask..” Ask the kids what words are confusing. Explain that incommunicable means not able to communicate or talk to others. Why might a leader not want to talk to others?

Summarize that Nietzsche is saying that to him, the ideal man or leader, does not like being similar to others. He does not let others see his true self, he wears a mask and pretends. Why would a leader wear a mask? Some answers to this question may include: to be scary, to protect himself, to project a certain image. Ask if they disagree or agree with Nietzsche about the use of masks.

Another thing that Nietzsche detested was herd mentality. What is herd mentality? What does it mean to follow the herd? This can be summarized as acting like everyone else, not being different or unique, going with the flow. Why might this be bad?

Color in masks: Next, ask the kids for examples in their life when they think others may have been using a mask. Hand them out mask cutouts to color and decorate. Prompt them to fill them in with things that people may use to hide who they really are. Share what and why they drew what they did.

Conclusion: 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.