

Week 6 Outline (Metaphysics: What is real?)

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 snake breath. Breathe in for five seconds and then make a hissing sound when exhaling.
- (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.

Angus the Cat Activity: To start the class discussion about metaphysics, complete the Angus the Cat activity. First, tell the story of Angus the Cat with the corresponding images on the Week 6: Metaphysics slideshow.

The story:

Slide 4: Angus the Cat is running down the sidewalk looking for his friends, Jake and Jack the rabbits. When he sees Jake and Jack leaving their house, Angus shouts, "Want to play soccer?" "Yes," Jake and Jack reply.

Slide 5: They continue down the sidewalk and play soccer together. Eventually Jake says, "I'm tired and need something to eat." Angus agrees and says, "Let's go to my house."

Slide 6: When they get back to his house, Angus's mom has just made chocolate chip cookies. "Would you like one of these cookies?" his mom asks. "Yes, please!" they all yell. "Be very careful, they are still hot from the oven," Angus's mom warns. Angus, Jake, and Jack sit around the table eating cookies until they are full.

After reading the story, ask the kids if they think the animals in the story are real animals.

If the kids think that the animals are real, ask them why. If it's because they look real, say that a puppet of a cat can look real but not be a real cat. If it's because the animals are acting like real animals, ask if they think real animals can play soccer and talk.

If they think the animals are not real because they are in a story, say that you can write a real story about your dog. If they think that it's because they are a drawing, say that you can make a drawing of a real cat.

Draw a fake or real animal: Now, ask the kids to draw an animal that is not real. Have the other kids say why the animal in the drawing is not real.

Metaphysics: Explain that what we have been talking about today falls under the philosophical branch of metaphysics. This deals with the principle of first things or the fundamental nature of reality. Ask the kids what they think about this and why they think this is a whole branch of philosophy. Explain that this has been a fundamental question for humans: what is real?

3 Views of How the World Began: Next, introduce 3 different Ancient Greek philosophers' ideas of how the world began. First, explain the word *arkē* as the originating source or principle. Each of these philosophers explores a different *arkē*.

First, Thales, who believed that water is the source of everything. Ask them why they think this is? Explain how important water was. It's still important today, it's how we stay alive. It also served as a source for transportation of goods, protection of land during battle, etc. What do the kids think of this origin?

Next, Anaximander who believed the source of everything was *apeiron*. This is a very vague response, as *apeiron* was an unlimited, indeterminate state. In other words, it is always changing. To Anaximander, change was the only thing that was certain. What do the kids think of this source?

Third is Anaximenes. He believed that *aēr* was the source of everything. *Aēr* is roughly translated as a dense mist. He thought it was indefinite enough to change into different things. His response leaves room for things changing, but is more specific than Anaximander. What do the kids think of this source?

Which explanation is the kids favorite?

What is your *arkē*: Now, have the kids write or draw their own *arkē* that they would use to explain the origin of the universe to someone. This can be one thing, like it was for Thales, Anaximenes, and Anaximander, or it can be many things. Share with everyone.

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.