

WHAT IS A PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION?

Try this quiz!

- 1) Which major river flows through Paris?
- 2) When was the Battle of Hastings?
- 3) Which type of Christianity is led by the Pope?
- 4) Are words 'real'?
- 5) What makes something 'wet'?
- 6) What makes something 'beautiful'?
- 7) A £10000 car is discounted by 25%. What does it cost?
- 8) When should people get married?
- 9) What is the fruit of the third behind?
- 10) Why does water 'bubble' when it is boiling?
- 11) Who are known as the 'Gunners'?
- 12) Is it ever good to lie?

Now answer these questions:

- a) Are all of these questions good 'quiz questions'?
- b) Which ones can be answered with a single, correct answer?
- c) Which ones might be a matter of opinion?
- d) Were there any that were not really questions at all?

About philosophy...

'Philosophy' means 'love of wisdom' in Greek. If you are being philosophical, you are wondering about thoughtful questions, and trying to understand them better. One philosophical question might be, for example, "What is wisdom exactly?". It's philosophical because people might have different opinions about it. There's no single answer; it needs to be discussed or 'enquired about'. (What would your answer be?!).

- e) Which ones, do you think, were *philosophical* questions?
- f) Now, can you try and say what philosophical questions have in common in your own words?
- g) Think up two philosophical questions of your own. Do others agree that they are philosophical? (Perhaps you need to philosophise about them?!)

Famous Philosophers: Socrates (469-399 BCE)

- 1) The 'Godfather' of philosophy. He lived in Ancient Greece, and was famous for being brilliant in discussion. He was also famous for being very ugly!
- 2) Socrates never wrote any books. He believed that it was through reasoning and questioning with others that you could arrive at a better understanding of the world and life. He saw himself as a 'midwife' to truth.
- 3) He was tough. He was a brave soldier in his early life, enjoyed his alcohol, and would walk in bare feet even if it was snowing. He died at the age of seventy; his second child was only a few years old at the time.
- 4) Socrates firmly believed in searching for the truth, even if it meant changing your views or losing an argument. He wanted people to say what they really thought rather than pretend to hold a view they didn't believe in.
- 5) Socrates never charged for his teaching. He was a famous, but very modest man. Here are three quotes by him:

"I know that I do not know."

"A book can answer no questions."

"An unexamined life is not worth living."

- 6) Socrates had a student who went on to be very important in philosophy; Plato. Plato went on to teach Aristotle, another key figure in philosophy.
- 7) Socrates had out-witted many big politicians and public figures in Athens, and he encouraged people to think for themselves. This annoyed the Athenian rulers. He was charged with 'corrupting the youth of Athens'.
- 8) During his trial, Socrates made his own impressive defence. However, he would not back down from what he believed in; the open and free search for truth.
- 9) His sentence was death, and he was ordered to drink a deadly poison called 'hemlock'. His friends and family gathered round. He drank it bravely, asking them not to worry or be upset. His last words were "We owe a cockerel to Aesculapius. Do not forget to repay the debt."