

Notebook of philosophical exercises

111 exercises to practice thinking

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Institute of Philosophical Practices

NOTEBOOK OF 111
PHILOSOPHICAL EXERCICES

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EASY

1 – HUMANS AND ANIMALS

CONCEPTS: SIMILAR - DIFFERENT – HUMANS – ANIMALS

Teacher

One action can have a reality or a different meaning, according to circumstances, the intention, the person who does it, etc. In order to give meaning to an action, various parameters must be taken into account. To work this problematic relation, we will do this exercise by examining different criteria by which humans and animals are similar or different on diverse levels.

The students will have to answer the question by « yes », « no » or « yes and no » and justify their answer. In the case of “yes and no”, the students will have to give two arguments. We could ask them if it is more “yes” or more “no”, so as not to use the double answer as a dodge, often very tempting. In order for a more accurate explanation, we will recommend to the students to name precise species of animals in every case, and to compare them.

Student

Do humans and animals look alike when they are...?

Eating.
Speaking.
Moving.
Walking.
Climbing up a tree.
Flying.
Playing.
Experiencing freedom.
Working.
Swimming.
Living.
Living with family.
Living in a society.
Dying.
Loving.
Thinking.
Changing.

2 – WHO DECIDES?

CONCEPTS: VOLUNTARY – INVOLUNTARY – CONSCIOUS – UNCONSCIOUS

Teacher

Every day, we act more or less voluntarily, more or less consciously, therefore more or less freely. So, it seems important to us to invite the students to deepen this problem by wondering about several gestures or actions of everyday life and asking them to determine whether or not they are voluntary acts. Of course, as it happens most of the time in that domain, freedom and determinism interweave with each other: this ambiguity will emerge, but it will as well be helpful to come to a decision. Key questions for the teacher are: "Could you have done it differently?" and "Were you obliged to act in that way?"

The focus of this activity will be about rigorously supporting the creation of criteria which help students understand whether these actions depend or do not depend on our will. For example, for the first question: it depends on me because I was not obliged to get angry, but it does not depend on me because I am choleric, or because Celine provoked me. Despite the dilemma, it will be about making a decision.

Student

Is it you who decide?

I got angry because Celine called me an idiot.
I go to school.
I cannot remember my lesson.
I dreamed of my favorite movie.
I like the same singer as my school maids.
I made the decision of working in class.
I fought with Peter.
I watch children's programs on television.
I play football.
I take the bus 18 and it drives me to the park.
I sneeze when there is a draught.
I speak too fast.
I do not dare to speak in front of the class.
I eat too much at dinner.
I am inattentive in class.
I make noise with my mouth when I eat.

3 – TO INVENT AND DISCOVER

CONCEPTS: INVENTION – DISCOVERING

Teacher

Even words that seem similar sometimes they hide significant issues. For example, the difference between inventing and discovering is important, in so far as it is about knowing if the reality is already there, already made, and we discover it step by step, or if we invent it, partially or entirely. This distinction remains however complex and deserves reflection.

To realize the exercise, the adequate verb (to discover or to invent) must be placed in the sentence, followed by the explanation of the choice. It can be the one, the other, or both, and if it is both, analyze the difference of meaning or determine if one is more appropriate than the other. One can either invite the students to explain the two terms before beginning the exercise individually, or invite them to clarify the terms by discussing the exercise.

Student

To invent or to discover...

Mary has ... that two plus two make four.
Christopher Columbus has ... America.
Melanie has ... a new recipe.
Joseph has finally ... that George is kind.
Mary has... that this book is interesting.
Michael has ... a way to solve this problem.
John has ... that Martians are green.
Luke has ... a new card game.
Miriam has ... a new idea not to be bored when she is alone.
Peter has... that Santa exists.
One has ... some day the idea of the earth being round.
Miriam is very creative, she ... plenty of things.
Joseph has ... his love for Mathilda.
Juliette has... who she really is.
Maeve has ... a new way to solve the problem.

4 – GOOD AND BAD

CONCEPTS: GOOD – BAD

Teacher

In everyday life, good and bad are permanently fighting each other. Nevertheless, it is sometimes difficult to split radically these two contradictory terms, contrary to the principles in use. This does not prohibit, however, from determining the moral value of a speech or an action.

Different situations are proposed to the students, which they will have to contextualize by themselves so as to give them meaning and problematize them. It is through the articulation of different examples that they will be able to determine the extent to which each of these actions is legitimate or not. The point will be undoubtedly for the Teacher to support this work either by soliciting these examples or by suggesting examples raising problems. For example, if the class maintains the idea that « to kill is bad », ask « don't you eat any meat? »

Student

When is it good? When is it bad?

To fight.
To cheat on others.
To avenge oneself.
To kill.
Not to do anything.
Not to tell anything.
To disobey.
To hit a child.
To steal.
To protect oneself.
To play a trick on others.

To hide oneself.
To tell stupid things.
Not to know.
To be the first.
To remain alone.
To speak.
To listen.

5 - SIMILAR AND DIFFERENT

CONCEPTS: SIMILAR - DIFFERENT

Teacher

Comparison is an important tool for thinking; Plato calls it dialectic of the same and the other. For example, humans at the same time look like and do not look like animals; they are and they are not animals. To work on this connection of resemblance, do the exercise by examining several criteria, implying certain family likeness between couples of entities, making them look similar and different in different perspectives. Doing this work, the student tries de facto to analyze the nature of what exists.

Create two columns on an individual paper or a board in the classroom in order to oppose similar and different. Every couple contains at the same time similarities and differences: no matter by which common qualities, which common nature, common functions, etc. As well as producing as many criteria as possible a hierarchy could be created by comparing the criteria.

Student

What is similar and different?

Between a man and an animal.
Between a book and a notebook.
Between a car and a horse.
Between an idea and a pebble.
Between a story and an explanation.
Between an adult and a child.
Between a Teacher and a student.
Between a house and a tent.
Between a hen and a lion.
Between an assertion and an order.
Between a question and an answer.
Between a stick and a rubber band.
Between a rocket and a plane.
Between a ball and a balloon.
Between an armchair and a chair.

6 – ANALOGIES

CONCEPTS: SYMBOL - ANALOGY - METAPHOR - IMAGE

Teacher

We often think by analogy or metaphor: for example, by using objects or beings to represent an abstract entity, or animals used to represent various human characteristics. Through their being, they embody in such an enduring way an abstract reality that is made so concrete and more vivid. This exercise is meant to make one think about the connection between the animal and the idea it represents.

The students will have to name an animal for every adjective and justify their answers. They will be sometimes tempted to choose the animal we usually name in that case, but they will have to justify their choice. This will precisely make them take into account the limits of the speech and its automatisms, but also envisage the world as inspiration for thinking.

Student

What is the appropriate animal here?

Quick like...
Clever like...
Courageous like...
Tall like...
Beautiful like...
Mean like...
Stupid like...
Gentle like...
Cunning like...
Solitary like...
Strong like...
Fearful like...
Ugly like...
Generous like...
Serious like...
Faithful like...
Cowardly like...

7 – HUMAN BEINGS

CONCEPTS: SAME - OTHER - HUMAN - FUNCTION

Teacher

Things distinguish from each other by numerous criteria, more or less apparent, more or less significant. So, for the human beings, one can wonder if this or that characteristic, such as sex, age, or function, comes within the essence of human being, if it is only superficial, or again if it is modified according to the internal or external circumstances.

In the course of this exercise, examining two people, the point will be to deepen as many characteristics in common as those differing, so as to not stay at the superficial and obvious level. So, in the case of the police officer and the firefighter, one could say that they are opposite because the first fights against crime and prevents bad caused by persons, though the second fights against fire they prevent bad caused by physical phenomena. Their common characteristic is to be at the service of society and to protect the individual property.

Student

What is similar? What is different? Where possible, try to find several criteria for each answer.

A police officer and a firefighter.
A poor person and a rich person.
A blind person and a sighted person.
A merchant and a thief.
A child and an adult.
A boy and a girl.
A man and a woman.
A farmer and a worker.
A scholar and a gardener.
A married man and a single man.
A white woman and black woman.
A priest and a sorcerer.
A Teacher and a student.
A banker and a tramp.
A soldier and a medical assistant.
A king and a president.

8 – AUTONOMY AND DEPENDENCY

CONCEPTS: FREEDOM - AUTONOMY - DEPENDENCY

Teacher

Freedom and determinism are often interwoven, as we understand it in the present text, because rights and duties are closely linked. Initiation to the life in society is among other learnings, the one of the articulation between dependency and independency.

We present different situations and the student must find one or several reasons why he is free or autonomous and one or several reasons why he depends on another. The basic postulate is that for each of them, we are at the same time autonomous and dependent. The role of the Teacher will be to assure the emergence of the two facets of every activity, and clarification of the issues for each of them. For example, concerning "to obey the master", one can obey in an autonomous way in respect for the adult or for the sake of learning, but one can also obey dependently so as to not be punished or in order to have good marks.

Student

Are you or dependent in the following activities?

To go to school.
To play.
To do what you want.
To obey your parents.
To read a book.
To obey the master.

To eat.
To have fun.
To work.
To practice a sport.
To think.
To go for a walk.
To travel.
To watch television.
To do your homework.
To help your family.

9 – TO STEAL

CONCEPTS: ROBBERY - RIGHT - PROPERTY - FORBIDDEN

Teacher

To steal is to take something that belongs to someone else. However, the connections to the possessed thing can be of very different natures. From this point of view we can problematize possession, and therefore theft, by proposing various reasons of taking something from the other, and by evaluating the legitimacy of the gesture.

Ask the students to determine which is the least serious of their gestures, or the most allowed, then ask them to order the list from what we have more of a right to do, to what we have less, with an argument for each choice.

Student

Do I have the right to take something from another? Range these arguments in order: from the best to the worst. Explain your choices.

Because I am the strongest.
Because it belongs to me and he took it to me.
Because anyway he will not say anything.
Because he gave it to me.
Because he is an idiot.
Because it is my sister.
Because it is no good.
Because I have been wanted it for a long time.
Because he will not even know it.
Because I need it more than him.
Because he does not use it.
Because he should give it to me.
Because he has too much of it.
Because he is mean.
Because I will give it back to him.
Because we must share everything.

10 – TO EXPRESS HIS BEING

CONCEPTS: SELF - IDENTITY - EXPRESSION

Teacher

We all try more or less to know and to tell who we are. A great number of parameters are at stake in the discovering of oneself: of course, the connection to others, to the environment, but also the complexity of the being, in its multiple dimensions and aspects. We try here to list a certain number of criteria that will then be separated out.

The criteria are presented by two, coupled because they are more or less of the same order. The exercise involves choosing one term or another, then justifying this choice. Through this method, the students will be able to analyze the connections they entertain with these different criteria, even if some of them seem surprising.

Student

Which of these criteria expresses more accurately who you are?

Your family name or your first name.
Your family or your friends.
Your body or your mind.
Your origin or your nationality.
Your clothes or your hairstyle.
Your sex or your age.
Your strength or your intelligence.
Your knowledge or your know-how.
Your past or your future.
Your actions or your speech.
Your games or your work.
Your dreams or your thoughts.
Your friends or your enemies.
Your mouth or your eyes.
Your ideas or your character.

11 – OBEDIENCE

CONCEPTS: OBEDIENCE - OBLIGATION – TO CHOOSE - JUDGMENT

Teacher

Children are often asked to obey. But they hesitate sometimes because they feel divided, for example between, on one side the formal authority of the adult and sense of duty, and on the other side the impulse of their desires and their thirst for freedom. Of course, children are taught how to obey and how not to only listen to their impulses, but they also have to know how to make a judgment and learn how to disobey in appropriate circumstances.

Different authorities are presented, plus some circumstances that compel obedience and the student must determine if it is necessary to obey or not. During this work, we will list the different reasons why to obey or not. The student could compare the various arguments and determine those that seem to be the most acceptable.

Student

Must you always obey...

What the Teacher says?
What your parents says?
Your impulse?
Your younger brother?
Your reason?
The policeman who asks you to follow him?
A stranger?
A stranger who tells you not to cross the street when the light is red?
What the television host says?
The prescription of the doctor?
What the neighbor says?
Your neighbor who asks your help?
The law?
The morals' rules?
The instructions of the exercise book?
Your will?

12 – To CONCEPTUALIZE

CONCEPTS: UNITY - MULTIPLICITY - CONCEPT

Teacher

A concept is a term – or an expression – that allows to capture a multiple reality through an unique expression. Some concepts gather some empirical realities, which we can perceive, others some drifted realities, in other words some connections. The activity of conceptualization consists of producing a concept to solve the problem of multiplicity, or of recognizing this concept if already given. It serves to create links and build thinking.

Various « triads » are proposed, multiplicities having however a visible community of reality. The student, here, has to produce a concept allowing to gather them under the same category or to join them up to a common reality. The point will be then to compare the propositions. Two obstacles must be avoided: broad categories or those too partial or too specific. Thus « orange, lemon, plum»: « vegetable » can be considered too broad regarding « fruit », and « jam » too specific. As always, the nature of the arguments and their comparison will be the determining factor.

Student

Find the most precise term to join the three following three words.

Zucchini, carrot, celery.
Zucchini, carrot, lemon.
Zucchini, carrot, entrecote.
Zucchini, carrot, fork.
Zucchini, carrot, car.
Zucchini, carrot, cashier.
Zucchini, carrot, chameleon.
Zucchini, carrot, vegetable.
Zucchini, carrot, curiosity.

Freedom, equality, fraternity.
Height, width, length.
Red, brown, orange.
Good, bad, unfair.
Practical, quick, easy.
Student, Teacher, notebook.
Thingamajig, whatsit, thingummy.

13 – TO QUARREL

CONCEPTS: REASONS - LEGITIMATE – UNJUSTIFIABLE

Teacher

We debate and quarrel for numerous reasons, using more or less acceptable or legitimate arguments. It is those reasons and the context that will give meaning or not to the quarrel, that will qualify it. Of course, it is not forbidden, and even advisable to find an agreement. But the point is all the same to examine the nature of the disagreement and to evaluate the given arguments.

Different reasons or explanations are given to account for a quarrel. It is about analyzing these various propositions of justification, so as to evaluate and make a judgment about appropriateness of the quarrel in its connection to an idea or another. The three most acceptable and the three least are wanted, which will have to be compared. According to the available time, less may be asked, the most important being the provided argumentation.

Student

Choose in this list the three most justified reasons to quarrel, as well as the three least ones, providing an argument every time.

To quarrel

To defend oneself.

To get something.

By jealousy.

By anger.

To bother somebody.

To defend the truth.

To be right.

Because one does not like somebody.

Because one is in a bad mood.

To protect a friend.

Because one has not any argument.

By fear.

By anxiety.

To frighten somebody.

To provoke a fight.

Because one hates injustice.

14 – ANIMAL SYMBOLS

CONCEPTS: SYMBOL - ANALOGY - METAPHOR

Teacher

Nature attracts attention among others for its diversity, for the abundance of its multiplicity. And yet, one can think that everything being engendered has a signification and that all of what exists can produce some sense. Thus animals are often used as symbols, as well as for qualifying a person – by analogy or metaphor -, so as to compliment, criticize or even insult him or her.

In this exercise, the student is invited to conceptualize the mentioned animal, by proposing one or several adjectives taken to replace it, when they are used to qualify a person. Then, it will be about justifying these interpretations whatever they are, of a current use or invented for the occasion.

Student

What does this animal mean if we use it to qualify somebody or to compare it to a person? Find an adjective and justify your choice. Do not use twice the same concept.

Monkey.
Fox.
Pig.
Rhinoceros.
Spider.
Mouse.
Gazelle.
Hare.
Fly.
Elephant.
Duckbill.
Beaver.
Squirrel.
Giraffe.
Mosquito.
Snake.
Ostrich.
Sparrow.

15 – MEANING OF LIFE

CONCEPTS: EXISTENCE - VALUES - CHOICE

Teacher

When we observe people around us, we are sometimes surprised by their motivation, by what guides them in life. This could drive us to wonder what constitutes our most important value, which could be our primary values, what could form a principle or a fundamental purpose in our own life.

To realize this exercise, students must establish a hierarchy of values. It will be difficult to give an argument for each choice, therefore they only need to justify two or three extreme choices: the first one and the last. In order to prepare for the class discussion students will be given the instruction of criticizing in writing the hierarchy of their neighbors, who will answer in writing.

Student

Examine these different possible purposes of life and classify them, starting by these which seem the most interesting, to those which seem the less interesting. Justify your first three choices and your last ones.

To become a champion.
To be famous.
To become rich.
To have no worries.
To be happy.
To be erudite.
To have many children.
To be loved.
To love.
To do everything one wants.
To be the strongest.
To write many books.
To be a cinema star.
To harm nobody.
To get what one deserves.
To be fair.
To fight for a good cause.
To be the president of the Republic.
To be etched in memories.

16 – REASONS FOR ACTION

CONCEPTS: ARGUMENTS - REASONS FOR ACTION - MOTIVATION

Teacher

From our individual point of view, certain people behave oddly, even shockingly. Later their behavior is justified, according to the context or their particular situation. It is not easy to evaluate the justifications of an act or of a choice: they are related to personal decisions, which at least have to be clarified. In order to evaluate it, it is necessary to become conscious of our own presuppositions and criteria.

Different reasons of action are proposed in the following list. Students must determine for each proposition if the argument is acceptable or not, and if it meets the case, and what is the condition for its validity. Finally compare the different choices and justifications of the students.

Student

Find a reason to decide if the reason for acting is good or bad, or at what condition it is good or bad.

I acted in that way because I wanted it.
I acted in that way because I have decided this.
I acted in that way because it was good.
I acted in that way because my friend had asked me it.
I acted in that way because the law requires it.
I acted in that way because my mother had asked me it.
I acted in that way because the Teacher had ordered it.
I acted in that way because it was Monday.
I acted in that way because I had time.
I acted in that way because so.
I acted in that way because it was raining.
I acted in that way because my brother was crying.
I acted in that way because the house is of stone.
I acted in that way because Mickey is a mouse.
I acted in that way because Maeva is a girl.
I acted in that way because I wanted to pee.

17 – AT SCHOOL

CONCEPTS: SUBJECT – TO LEARN - OBLIGATION – INTEREST - UTILITY - COMPETENCIES

Teacher

Children are obliged to go to school to do Mathematics, English and Geography because it is like this: usually, we don't think why it is like this. At the point that it can strain the learning itself.

A list is presented below. Find three reasons why each activity should, or should not, be practiced at school. The students will examine their personal or the group connection to each activity, as well as its reason to be included in school.

Student

For each of these activities, find three different reasons to do them and three reasons not to do them.

Mathematics.
Writing.
Reading.
English.
Sciences.
Foreign languages.
Geography.
History.
Physical education
To discuss.
Staff meeting.
Playtime.
Music.
Dance.

Civics.
To go to library.
Drawing.
To get into line.
To be silent.
To learn how to obey.
Philosophy.

18 – TO EXEMPLIFY FEELINGS

CONCEPTS: FEELINGS – TO FEEL

Teacher

When we speak, we express various feelings, since each of us permanently experiences a lot of feelings. Sometimes mixed or contradictory, they affect our thinking and our behavior, without letting us being aware of it.

A list of feelings is presented below. The students are asked if each experience is familiar to them or not. They will choose three of these feelings, to create an example of them – invented or extracted from everyday life – and to check then collectively if the given example matches with the given feeling. The feelings can be shared among the class so as to deal with all the feelings.

Student

Have you already felt these different feelings? Say yes or no for each of them. Choose three of these feelings, then write for each of them a short lived example or an invented one. After, examine with your schoolmates if your example really corresponds to the named feeling.

Injustice.
Solitude.
Incomprehension.
Warmth.
Mystery.
Astonishment.
Impatience.
Hope.
Cruelty.
Susceptibility.
Despair.
Fright.
Sadness.
Calm.
Tragedy.
Impotence.
Fatality.
Joy.
Seriousness.
Anxiety.
Absurdity.

Pleasure.

19 – THE SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS

CONCEPTS: SOCIETY - OBLIGATION - RULE – ETHICS

Teacher

In life, we are periodically obliged to behave following another's expectations, in spite of what we think and feel. It is the common experience of the social pressure that clashes with our freedom and our desire to be who we are. It is important to be aware of it in order to realize that we are not the only ones to bear it and sometimes to suffer from it.

This exercise suggests a certain number of actions, of ways of being or behaviors to which society obliges us to conform, situations that the student would or would not have experienced. In this exercise, students are asked to identify the three social obligations, which seem to them the most restrictive or the most painful, and explain why. Additionally each student will have to choose three, which do not look like a problem. Students will compare their choices.

Student

What are the three social obligations that seem the most restrictive or the most painful to you?

What are the three social obligations that seem not to pose any problem?

To work.
To be kind.
To be obedient.
To be good at school.
To be bad a school.
To play with others.
To agree with others.
To obey.
To pretend.
To defend us.
To follow rules.
To be savant.
To be smart.
To be stupid.
To have the same tastes than others.
To be strong.
To be like everyone.
To isolate oneself.
To share with others.
To accept assistance from others.
To be equal.

20 - VISIONS OF THE WORLD

CONCEPTS: PHILOSOPHY - EXISTENCE - WORLD

Teacher

Visions of the world are different following the cultures, individuals and other parameters. Often these "philosophies" in miniature are contained in small sentences that we repeat periodically, without identifying their content and the carried implications.

Several little more or less current sentences are reported, which declare something important about the world, life, happiness, people, etc. It is about determining if we agree or not with each of them, and why.

Student

For each sentence, determine if you agree or not, and justify your judgment.

In effect, nothing ever changes.

All the opinions are the same.

Life is not worth the trouble.

People are not kind.

Act following morality.

To follow through what we do.

Every new day is marvelous.

The universe is mysterious.

Love is most important.

Always think before you act.

Take things the way they are.

Everybody wants to be happy.

Do not try to trust anybody.

Children say the truth more often than adults.

The truth always must be said.

You've got what you deserve.

To get the best, do it yourself.

What happens to someone happens to the whole humanity.

Everyone's business.

21 – To EVALUATE THE QUESTIONS

CONCEPTS: QUESTION - ANSWER - PURPOSE

TEACHER

In front of a question, we think more often about the answer than about the question itself. And yet, questions also deserve to be analyzed, for what they are and what they can produce, for their nature and their efficiency, for their potential of problematization.

A series of general questions is made. The point is to evaluate these different questions to determine those that seem to be the most interesting and those which are the less interesting. Then, the students will compare the various interpretations of these questions.

Student

Choose the three most important questions and the three least ones, and justify your judgment.

Who are you?
Where do you come from?
Where do you go?
How are you doing?
What are you doing?
How are you?
What are you?
Where are you?
When are you coming?
How old are you?
When are you leaving?
Why are you there?
Whom are you with?
What do you want?
What will you do?
What are you waiting for?
What do you know?
What are you afraid of?

22 – TO BELIEVE

CONCEPTS: TO BELIEVE – TO DOUBT – TO PROVE – TO ACCEPT – VALIDITY

Teacher

A great number of indications are given to us, which we repeat confidently, just because we trust the source of information. We could not avoid believing because we cannot require proofs for all of what we hear, and even if some proofs were provided, we could not always evaluate them. However, as we do not believe nevertheless all of what we hear, it can be interesting to think about the different reasons to believe or not.

Several different reasons to believe are presented. The students will have to analyze the list of reasons to believe, determine, then justify for each of them if it is acceptable or not.

Student

Answer with an argument so as to determine the validity of every « reason » to believe.

Is it a good reason to believe something?

Because my parents told me.
Because it is written.
Because I carefully thought about it.
Because I know it in my heart.
Because I saw it.
Because some scholars proved it.
Because law requires it.
Because great men asserted it.
Because everyone believes it.
Because no one proved the opposite.
Because it is necessary to believe in something.
Because the Teacher told me.
Because it is necessary to trust in general.

Because I like it.
Because I believe what I want.
Because no reason is needed to believe in something.
Because I do not want to make somebody upset.
Because it has always been believed.
Because my friend swore it to me.

23 - IDEAL OF LIFE

CONCEPTS: CHOICE - VALUE - EXISTENCE - PURPOSE - HIERARCHY

Teacher

Human beings live, but also try to give sense to their lives. That is why they seem always to desire something else: a kind of ideal. But at different steps of existence, we put a value forward more than another one, we transform our axiology. However it is not always easy to know what pushes us, and we do not take time to do it.

In this exercise, a certain number of existential values or striven-for ideals are proposed. Students are asked to determine the most desirable value for themselves, and the least desirable one. Ask them to identify one or many, and in the latter case, list them in order of their importance. Finally compare their single choice with the others.

Student

Choose the value that seems the most important to you in life, and the least one. Explain why.

Wealth.
Happiness.
Do a service.
To be in charge.
To learn.
To take risks.
To have fun.
To love.
To get what one wants.
To be successful.
To become famous.
To improve oneself.
To be different.
To make peace.
To adapt.
To run a family.

24 - TO GROW UP

CONCEPTS: TO GROW UP - PROBLEM - POLYSEMY

Teacher

The path from childhood to teenage and adulthood does not happen without any pain and difficulty. To grow up poses problem in the relation to oneself, to others. But we take the phenomenon as a sort of evidence, without thinking about the various and sometimes dramatic stakes created by this physical and psychological growing.

In this exercise there are proposed a number of typical problems related to growing up. It is asked of the students to become aware of these problems, by making them find which ones seem to be the most meaningful or the most problematic, on account of their own experience. They could give examples, explaining them, or answering them in a general way. The students will choose one or several propositions in the list.

Student

**What is mostly a problem for you in growing up?
Choose three ideas and explain how they create a problem.**

To be free.
To fall in love.
To manage on one's own.
To earn a living.
To take responsibility.
To command others.
To choose a job.
To have got children.
To feel lonely.
To get married.
To get old.
To work.
To change.
To become wise.
To die.
To loose his parents.

25 – MOTIVE AND MOTIVATION

CONCEPTS: EXAMPLE - IDEA - MOTIVE - MOTIVATION - PURPOSE

Teacher

When we have to act, sometimes we are motivated, sometimes we are not. We can find various reasons why we feel like or not to go through an activity or to accomplish a task. So many reasons that sometimes converge and sometimes conflict.

Every day we act without always knowing why we do it. A list of reasons of action is presented. For each of them, students must give a specific example so as to make the meaning work and to show they understand the differences between these multiple situations.

Student

Describe a situation where you do things:

Because you like to do it.
In order to learn.
In order to help others.
In order to surpass yourself.
Because of a boredom.
Because of loving a person.
In order to change.
Because of a mistake done.
In order to be better than others.
In order to please someone.
With no reason.
With curiosity.
In order not to be forgotten.
In order to accomplish something.
By challenge.
In order to be successful in life.
In order to have fun.

26 - TO EXPRESS FEELINGS

CONCEPTS: FEELINGS – TO EXPRESS – TO FEEL – TO EXPLAIN

Teacher

The feelings that animate us are not often easy to express in front of people, and we have trouble admitting them. We often entertain contradictory relationship towards our feelings: we need to express them and we try to hide them, from others or for whatever the reason.

In this list of feelings, the student must choose some of them that seem to be difficult to express and some others that do not, explaining why at each time.

Student

In the list of feelings below, choose three of them that appear to be difficult to express and three that look the easiest to express. Explain why.

Anger.
Love.
Friendship.
Jealousy.
Frustration.
Solitude.
Vacuum.
Impotence.
Generosity.
Fear.
Admiration.
Shyness.
Hatred.
Tenderness.
Rancor.

Ambition.
Pique.
Lack.
Sadness.
Laziness.
Courage.
Joy.
Anxiety.
Deception.
Astonishment.
Shame.
Impatience.

27 – MISTAKE

CONCEPTS: MISTAKE - REASON

Teacher

We commit so many mistakes, at work and in life. But we do not always identify them, and we are not sure that we know what is the nature or the root of these various mistakes. However this understanding would modify our judgment about these mistakes, our relation to mistakes, and our own functioning.

A list of the source of mistakes is proposed, to make the students give examples extracted from their experiences, to deepen and problematize the concept of mistakes, making them create their understanding of its multiplicity. It is also a way to play down the significance of the concept of mistake by understanding its meaning.

Student

Give an example for each of these reasons of committing a mistake:

Forgetting.
Unconsciousness.
Ignorance.
Joke.
Absent-mindedness.
Laziness.
Carefreeness.
Confusion.
Provocation.
Inversion.
Haste.
Excitement.
Anxiety.
Negligence.
Indifference.
Fear.
Will.

28 – TO PROBLEMATIZE IMPERATIVES

CONCEPTS: OBLIGATION - EXCEPTION - OBJECTION – TO OBEY – TO DISOBEY

Teacher

When we are very young, we are implanted with all sorts of principles: of moral, of politeness, of utility, etc. Nevertheless, we realize that these principles are not universally applied. Perhaps, there are reasons for that, which it is good to know, to understand or imagine.

Various common rules or laws are listed which the student must analyze. For each of them, they will have to determine why they should obey, why it would not be necessary to obey, even suggested to disobey.

Student

What would be the reasons to obey or to disobey the following rules?

Be polite.
Be kind.
Obey the rules of life.
Obey the master.
Obey your parents.
Do not fight.
Cross the street when the light is green.
Think about your future.
Work.
Do not listen to your desires.
Do not be egoistic.
Respect your school friends.
Do not copy.
Do not shout.
You must be on time.
You must stand in line.

29 - CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTIONS

CONCEPTS: CONCEPTS - DISTINCTION - OPPOSITION

Teacher

It is not easy to define precisely the differences between the various media, except descriptively. However, there are some qualitative differences, for example from the point of view of temporality, or the one of content. The point is to learn how to produce such conceptual distinctions, sometimes by utilizing abstract terms.

A list is proposed, composed of some coupled terms having a connection together. So, the student has to determine what is common between the two terms, and what is different, if possible by producing only two or three concepts, or thanks to an antinomy. It is suggested not to use "the most" and "the least" as means of distinction.

Student

What is the similitude and the difference between?

A square and a cube.
An activity and a job.
A human and an animal.
A car and a bus.
An insult and a criticism.
A friend and a school friend.
To go somewhere and to leave.
To see and look.
To hear and to listen.
To go out and to go into.
An adult and a child.
A boy and a girl.
I and the other.
A novel and a dictionary.
A pebble and a brick.
A pencil and a pen.
To drink and eat.
To play and work.

30 - CATEGORIES

CONCEPTS: CONCEPT - CATEGORY

Teacher

The reasons we can evoke to defend our convictions are incalculable. However, they generally can be grouped together into some determined categories, which prevent us from the vagueness of the indeterminate list, or allows to avoid repetition, since many scenarios arise, identical but under different appearances. For that, it is useful to propose general categories, in other words: to conceptualize.

Some series of three terms are proposed, which entertain a common connection. For each series, it is asked to produce a concept that they could merge into: either because it contains the three terms, or because it is common to the three. Of course, in case of several possibilities, it will be better to choose the most precise concept, the least general.

Student

Produce a term that is common to each of these series of three terms.

To play, work and walk;
Stone, pebble, knee;
Pen, coin, glove;
Candy, fruit, bread;
Sausage, chop, escalope;
Cinema, book, painting;
Square, cube, triangle;
Slap, kick, trip;
Man, plant, iguana;
Car, bus, boat;

Hat, shoe, scarf;
Shelf, armchair, carpet;
Tomato, kiwi, pineapple;
Glass, bottle, pot;
Spiderman, Superman, Tarzan;
Ernestine, Zubida, Becassine;
Cloud, ice, water;
Plastic, iron, paper.

31 – TO LAUGH AND NOT TO LAUGH

CONCEPTS: JUDGMENT - CONDITION - LIMIT – TO LAUGH

Teacher

We like to laugh and it makes us feel good. But sometimes, someone criticizes us for laughing, as well as that, we stop ourselves from laughing. Do we want to control laughing with reason, criticize it morally or by other criteria? Let us examine which are the moral limits of laughing.

Several reasons, not to laugh or to prevent oneself from laughing are listed. It is about examining them one by one in order to determine their degree of validity. Through this exercise, we will examine the limits of laughing.

Student

Let us examine these different reasons not to laugh, to decide if they make sense or not, and in which context they are meaningful.

Is it fair not to laugh?

With anyone.
At any time.
About anything.
Anywhere.
Anyhow.
For any reason.
With any aim.
In any event.
Every time.
Never.
Too much.
Too strongly.
With no reason.
Wrongly.
Yellow.
Stupidly.
Spitefully.

32 – CATEGORIES

CONCEPTS: CATEGORY - CONCEPT - DOMAIN - OBJECT – TO BE

Teacher

The nature of a thing can be defined among others by the domain that this thing belongs to, that is to say what it is. But this domain could be articulated in different ways. Since this thing can be understood in the various domains it belongs to, by the categories that define what it is. Note that these domains or categories can fit or come close to different orders.

For each term below, it will be about two or three different categories which could be linked to what it represents. For example for the word 'cow', one could say: animal, living being, producer, consumer product, trade object, female, mammal, symbol (moral insensitivity).

Student

For each of these terms below, find a category or several categories which the given object belongs to:

Cow.
Pen.
Table.
Trousers.
Car.
Cup.
Brussels
Teacher.
Mean.
Game.
Tree.
Angel.
Love.
Dictionary.
Computer.
Stomach.
Watch.
Oxygen.
River.
Dropping.

INTERMEDIATE

33 – RESPONSIBILITY

CONCEPTS: RESPONSIBLE - VICTIM - FAIR - UNFAIR

Teacher

During events of everyday life, it is not always easy to understand the role of everyone in the issue of responsibility and justice. To deal with that, it is necessary to make a judgment that implies an exigency of reflection at the intellectual and moral levels.

The exercise will be done by asking the students to answer, for each proposed case, the following questions: Who is the victim? Who is responsible? Is it fair? Ask the students to give a justifying sentence.

It will be sometimes possible to name several characters as an answer, or even the same character could be considered victim or guilty at the same time.

Student

Who is the victim? Who is responsible? Is it fair?

- 1 – The mother forbids to Robert to play with her knife. Robert plays with it and cut himself.
- 2 – A woman leaves her handbag on a bench. She forgets her bag and when she comes back to get it, it has disappeared.
- 3 – A man does not work anymore. To feed his children, he steals meat in a supermarket. He is sent to jail.
- 4 - Sylvia does not like Julia, since Julia is always the best of the class. The other day, when Julia talked to Sylvia in the class, Sylvia got angry and shouted « I do not want to talk to you. You get on my nerves! », and the Teacher punished Sylvia for having shouted.
- 5 – Two cars come to a crossroad and collide because the brakes of the first car do not work well. The two drivers are all right, but the passenger of the first car, who is the owner of it, was hurt and must be taken to the hospital.
- 6 – Jeanne’s mother does not help her daughter to do her homework. Jeanne does not do it, and she must repeat the year.
- 7 - Some older students in gangs regularly blackmail other students after school. Stephen goes past them, and these students take his walkman he received as a Christmas present.
- 8 – Madeleine has a problem: she must not eat any candies, otherwise she gets sick. Myriam offers her caramels, and Madeleine accepts them since she loves them. She does not go to school for a week because she is not well.
- 9 – The boys play football in the schoolyard. Paul bumps into Natalie who hits a tree and her head hurts a lot: she must be taken to the sick room. Paul feels very guilty and cries.
- 10 – John-Michael finds a comic lying along the wall in the schoolyard. He takes it and goes and sits down on the bench to read it. Pascal who had put the book in that place to go and play with his friends, no longer finds it. And when he goes home in the evening, his father blames him for having lost the comic.

34 – WHAT IS IT?

CONCEPTS: DEFINITION - UTILITY - IDENTITY

Teacher

It is not always easy to know what a thing is. All of what exists is complex: every entity is a multifaceted being. In order to know something, to define it, we must seize its complexity: its appearance, its utility, its connections to other things, etc.

For each object, it is about saying what it is and defining its utility. There may be several different answers to these questions: one will take nevertheless the most probable and the most complete.

Student

What is it? What is it used for?

A child.
A Teacher.
An apple.
A book.
A classroom.
A house.
A car.
A pen.
A store.
A pebble.
A student.
A friend.
A balloon.
A chair.
A tree.
A television.
A computer.
Trousers.

35 – PROVERBS

CONCEPTS: MORAL - PROVERB

Teacher

Traditionally, popular morals are articulated in maxims, sometimes extracted from fables stories that are used as tales of wisdom. These little sentences close those narrations and constitute the moral, which has to be interpreted since they are expressed by means of metaphor.

For each proverb, it is about first understanding the allusive dimension of the moral, in order to examine the content in a critical way. This work will be done with a request of

agreement or disagreement, which will have to be justified. The Teacher could explain somewhat the principle of a proverb before starting, especially if students must work in writing. If the class meets difficulties with the comprehension of a given proverb, they will be invited to propose various hypotheses, while keeping on thinking through some questions.

Student

Do you agree with this proverb?

When the cat is away, the mice will play.
Out of sight, out of mind.
The enemies of my enemies are my friends.
Love is blind.
He that mischief hatches, mischief catches.
Spare the rod and spoil the child.
Who loves to roam, may lose his home.
You must like people, not for yourself, but for themselves.
If you want something done right, do it yourself.
Let us live happy, let us live hidden.
A mouse may be of service to a lion.
Ill got, ill spent.
Might makes right.
Money cannot buy happiness.
The freedom of the ones stops where that of the others starts.
Soon or later, truth is always known.
Better to live a day like a lion than one hundred years like a sheep.
God helps those who help themselves.

36 – IDENTITY

CONCEPTS: IDENTITY - PERMANENCE - CHANGE

Teacher

It is difficult to determine what the identity of everyone is based on. Since, as time goes by, we change, concerning appearance, tastes, ideas, etc. Nevertheless, some aspects of our being are closer to our heart than others, they seem to us more fundamental, they endure a longer time.

In this exercise, we shall wonder in which extent we would remain ourselves if we were changing this or that characteristic of our being. The students will have to answer by "yes" or "no", or "yes and no", and justify their answers. The various answers of the class will be compared. In particular, the point will be to verify that any assertion of permanence is based on a certain specific characteristic, which justifies this affirmation, in the same way than any assertion of change should be articulated by an explanation or an example. It will be interesting to establish a hierarchical board of what constitutes identity: from the most important to the least.

The Teacher will facilitate the counter-argumentation via critical questions if all the students think the same.

Student

Are you always the same?

If you change clothes.
If you change character.
If you change nationality.
If you change age.
If you change ideas.
If you change house.
If you change first name.
If you change family.
If you change sex.
If you change identity.
If you change job.
If you change birth place.
If you change tastes.
If you change hairstyle.
If you change name.
If you change culture.

37 – TO LIKE

CONCEPTS: TO LIKE - LOVE - FRIENDSHIP

Teacher

The word « to like » covers various relationships, towards people, concerning objects, activities, etc. It happens to designate extremely different realities. We will help students comprehend these differences by proposing a list of elements, beings, objects or other things, about which this term sometimes is indiscriminately used. This list will have to be analyzed.

Every student will have to find specific explanatory elements – concrete or abstract – in order to define these various acceptations of the word. It will be preferable to distinguish these two forms of deepening, example or generality, through the different formulations of the students. During the discussion collect explanations of the same nature. And if the students decide not to like this or that thing, they will have nevertheless to specify the nature of this « do not like ».

Student

How do you like?

Your parents.
Your best friend.
Your sister or your brother.
Your neighbor.
Your Teacher.
Your grand-parents.
Your favorite animal.
Chocolate.
A movie.

Human beings.
Sport.
Yourself.
Your image.
Your name.
Your idea.
To eat.
To play.
Your favorite mate at school.
Your country.

38 - VALUES

CONCEPTS: QUALITY- DEFECT - HIERARCHY

Teacher

Individuals and societies organize each other through various hierarchies, wrongly or rightly. Thus, each of us bases our own judgments on an axiology that gives value to certain qualities more than others. In general, adults, parents or Teachers, transmit more or less consciously their own system of values without questioning it too much or even being aware of it. The idea of this exercise is to make students think about different ways of being, evaluate them by comparison and to justify their choices.

For every couple of terms, the students will have to choose first only one of the two elements and not to take the two, that will be tempting: human beings naturally want everything at the same time. It is about experimenting with choice and limitation. It will sometimes be required to explain that this is only an exercise, so as to establish a detachment that is necessary to distinguish freely the sense of the terms and think about their own preferences. By justifying choices and comparing them, everyone will deepen their comprehension of the issues at stake.

Student

What do you prefer...

To be savant or intelligent?
To be famous or kind?
To be rich or generous?
To be strong or wise?
To be obedient or clever?
To understand or to have good marks?
To be pretentious or ignorant?
To be loved or admired?
To be shy or scary?
To be like others or different?
To be strong or courageous?
To be ingenious or strong?
To be beautiful or intelligent?
To be loved or to love?
To be free or responsible?
To be happy or fair?

39 – SHAME

CONCEPTS: SHAME - CONSCIENCE

Teacher

Other's opinions weigh heavily on us. It makes us become aware of ourselves, and often makes us ashamed of ourselves, creating uncertainty within us. This exercise invites students to think about different situations that are likely to provoke a feeling of moral discomfort while asking them to analyze this feeling and evaluate its legitimacy. Some children will have difficulties with this « double » level: the fact in itself, and the analysis of it. The evaluation will shift between « normality » and « legitimacy ». It will however be important to invite the students to a critical perspective, which will sometimes be a difficult work. Take for example the fear of ghosts, explaining that we can be afraid but think that we are not right to be afraid, though faced with a lion, one would be right to be scared.

The explanations of shame will return to different «shortcomings» which will have to be analyzed: to be stupid, to be small, to be poor, etc. Of course, another demand raising a difficulty in this present exercise lies in the capacity of thinking hypothetically, in so far that certain cases will not have any sense in relation to the student's experience.

Student

Is it right that you feel ashamed?

- When you got a bad mark?
- When you are not right?
- When your mother kisses you in front of everybody at school?
- When one hears that your father does not work?
- When you are less strong than others?
- When you do not look like others?
- When you got caught telling lies?
- When you are badly clothed in the street?
- When you must speak in front of the class?
- When you are not doing the same thing as others?
- When you think about your defects?
- When you hurt someone?
- When someone tells others that you are in love?
- When you have to speak in front of everybody?
- When you smell bad?
- When your hair is untidy?

40 – TO BE AND TO BECOME

CONCEPTS: CHANGE - PERMANENCE – TO BE – TO BECOME

Teacher

Things change: they have an origin, they turn into what they are not, and stay themselves, changing a lot sometimes. It is not so easy to seize the permanence of things. This exercise deals with thinking about change, at the same time in the past and in the future, what

changes and how it changes: what the entities are and what they become. Children were embryos before being born. They then become adults, growing up physically and morally because they become educated, but they remain human and keep their body. Likewise a tree was a seed before growing. It can become a piece of furniture if it is manufactured, but it is always wood, even if it is burnt and is not of wood anymore but transformed into smoke. It will not be necessary to wait for « absolute » arguments but make students think by seeking analysis and various explanations. And it will be preferable to admit that one does not know.

Student

Where does it come from? What does it change? How does it change? What does it always remain?

A child.
A caterpillar.
An apple.
The sea.
A sheep.
A tree.
A friend.
A bean.
An idea.
The Earth.
A balloon.
A chair.
A flower.
A star.
A book.
An egg.

41 – CHILDREN AND ADULTS

CONCEPTS: TO COMPARE - CHILD - ADULT

Teacher

The child rarely looks at his relationship between himself and the adult with the latter's eye: he endures the adult more than something else. Thus, we ask him to compare "objectively" the child and the adult on the basis of different qualities or activities. It is also interesting to see through a comparison how an idea fits and can be altered somehow.

For each of these terms, it will not only take saying that it is more appropriate for the child or the adult: it will be necessary to say why, and also to examine in which extent the term could fit the two, in a different way. Thus, if the adult is responsible for earning his living and keeping his family, the child is all the same responsible for his learning and taking care of his body.

Student

Compare children and adults on the basis of these different words:

To play.
Responsibility.
Friendship.
To know.
To talk.
Honesty.
To learn.
Courage.
Force.
Generosity.
To reason.
Love.
Freedom.
Authority.
Envy.
To work.
To lie.
Anxiety.

42 - SELFISHNESS

CONCEPTS: SELFISHNESS - AUTONOMY - DEPENDENCY

Teacher

Should we always care about others? It is not easy to put things in perspective between what we owe ourselves and what we owe others. Various practical, psychological and moral implications, come into picture and modify the deal, and we cannot ignore them.

Asking the question « Is this selfish or not? », we invite to evaluate the moral legitimacy of an action, judgment that must articulate itself in a relation to necessity, need, desire, etc. In other words, how to determine in which perspective to put things between us and others? For each situation, the students makes a judgment about it, and if they want to evoke different cases for the same answer, they will have to carefully structure circumstances and not to make do with a vague "it depends".

Student

Is this selfish?

When you refuse to share your sandwich?
When you want to sleep by yourself in your bed?
When you want to play by yourself with your ball?
When you want to read a book quietly?
When you do not want to help your mother because you want to do your homework?
When your grandmother demands that you stay with her to talk?
When you do not answer your grandmother who wants to talk with you?
When your friend does not want to give you the one dollar note you inquire of?
When your older brother does not want to let you use the computer?
When your school friend does not want to let you cheat on him in an exam?
When you do not give anything to a beggar?
When you study only to do what you like?
When you want to be loved?

When you are shy?
When your mother wants you to obey?
When you want to be alone?

43 – TO CHEAT

CONCEPTS: PURPOSE - REASON - JUSTIFICATION

Teacher

We sometimes cheat on others. Why? By need, to have fun... Is this action justified or not? To answer requires to evaluate the action in its relation to a finality, an intention, in its nature and its consequences. Different reasons to cheat on others are enounced, which have to be evaluated. So as to avoid ready-made and repetitive answers, ask the student straightaway to answer systematically « yes » then « no » to the question, by providing an argument every time. Then compare the various arguments. Finally ask the students to place these reasons in descending order or the reverse, justifying this hierarchy by a number of arguments.

Student

Is it good to cheat on someone?

To have fun.
To teach them a lesson.
To make them laugh.
To get a reward.
To avenge oneself.
To play.
To make people laugh.
To while away the time.
To wake them up.
To joke.
For nothing.
Because it is a friend.
To show them how strong I am.
Because they take them seriously.
Because a friend asked it to me.
Because they are annoying.

44 – REASON AND FEELINGS

CONCEPTS: FEELING - REASON – OPPOSITION

Teacher

We are expected to be reasonable, but we would like to listen to our feelings. This situation is one of the most classical dilemmas of the human mind. In order to better deal with it, it is necessary to make it conscious by articulating it. By putting words on these situations, we learn how to not simply bear this tension, but to understand it and better handle it.

Several common situations are presented, in which the student should be able to imagine and describe the dilemma as well as the tension between reason and feelings. It is about formalizing this duality by rediscovering in one's experience or inventing some explanations illustrating the opposition as it can happen to everyone.

Student

In each of those situations, you feel torn between reason and feelings. Explain how this could be the case by inventing various reasons.

You want your parents to buy you a toy.
You see a younger one whom older ones are bothering.
You have homework to do.
You want to help a friend.
You see a tramp in the street.
Your gets on your nerves.
You are angry against your brother.
You are jealous of your sister.
Your best friend does not want to talk to you anymore.
Your mother asks you to help at home.
You want to watch television.
You do not feel like going to bed.
You know who stole the Teacher's calculator.
You are not in a good mood.
You would like the last piece of cake.
Your best friend is accused of a stupid thing you did.

45 – FEAR

CONCEPTS: FEAR - CONFIDENCE - FEELING - REASON

At various degrees, we are afraid of others, in many aspects, no matter who they are, simply because they are not us. But beyond the generality of difference, our fears will take different forms, will show different reasons of being. And we shall find different arguments to counter this fear or to reason ourselves. It is therefore about becoming aware of this dilemma, by analyzing the stakes of fear.

Different people or categories of people are presented, all of them being likely to scare us or induce at the very least a feeling of apprehension. During the exercise, it will be about analyzing the nature or the reasons of the fear and producing different arguments, specific every time, with which one could reason oneself so as not to be afraid by this person anymore.

Student

Why should we be afraid of this person? Why shouldn't we be afraid of this person?

Give a least one reason at each time.

A physical handicapped
A mental handicapped.
A foreigner.

An outsider.
A policeman.
A person of the other sex.
Your Teacher.
Your parents.
A schoolmate.
Your class.
A tramp.
A corpse.
A very ill person.
Your doctor.
Your neighbors.
Yourself.

46 - TO PROBLEMATIZE

CONCEPTS: CRITICISM - UNIVERSAL - PROBLEM - OBJECTION

To think in a critical way, it is to analyze what is said to us so as to verify if a wording is valid, and to envisage in which extent it is conditioned, false or devoid of meaning. It is about producing objections which could be put forwards against assertions previously heard. This is called problematizing, since these objections pose problems regarding what was said. Though we could problematize by asking questions.

Various expressions or current opinions are enounced. For each of them, we must evaluate the universality of them by showing which objections we could put against them. The basic postulate of such an exercise is that, a priori, no formulated proposition can be absolutely true. Nevertheless, it is not helpful to tell this to the students: it is more effective if they experience it through the exercise. One could also compare the interest and the reach of the various objections.

Student

Find a problem or an objection for each of the following sentences.

We must not trust people we do not know.
Who steals an egg, steals a cow.
Goods poorly gotten never profit.
Don't put all your eggs in one basket.
Everyone is entitled to his opinion.
It is necessary to work in class.
You must obey your parents.
No one knows what could happen.
It is always possible to do better.
s know what they say.
Children have rights.
To get a good job is necessary to be a good student.
There is a right to have fun.
Girls and boys are different.
Children are not responsible.
Everyone has an opinion.
Judging is not right.
It is forbidden to laugh at others

47 – TO INTERPRET

CONCEPTS: REFORMULATION - CONNOTATION - INTENTION

Understanding is necessarily interpreting, translating what we understand by means of our own words. But, sometimes, by modifying the terms of a speech, the meaning is distinct enough to make the implications different, to make the connotation change. However, reformulating is important to compare two ways of understanding and two speeches saying the same thing.

Various reformulations are proposed by pairs that have to be interpreted so as to let us appreciate the distinctions of nuances and innuendoes. It will be necessary to carefully synthesize the description of issues between the formulations, so as to make them as clear as possible. The ideal would be to, if possible, produce simple antinomies, as « personal and general », « generous and selfish », etc. The students will also observe some differences of form: it will be about examining if these formal distinctions have an incidence on the content.

Student

In every couple of expression of close meaning, explain the principal difference between these two formulations.

This painting is beautiful – I like this painting.
You did a stupid thing – You are stupid.
We share in pairs – Take only the half of it
You do not listen to me – You do not do what I told you.
He loves me – He likes me.
You told me you would do it – You promised me you would do it.
It is very well – It is too well.
I do not agree with you – I am sorry to contradict you.
This work must be well done – This work must be perfect.
She asked me to come – She forced me to come.
He gets on my nerves – I do not find him nice.
I am not obliged to eat – You cannot force me to eat.
Please bring your notebooks tomorrow – Bring your notebooks tomorrow.
I consider that it is very good – I think it is very good.
You can have any opinion you want – You are wrong.
What you say surprises me – What you say is odd.
He came to my home – He turned up at my place.
What do you do? – What are you doing?

48 – GIFT

CONCEPTS: GIFT - EXCHANGE - ETHIC - OTHER - INTENTION

To give seems to be always a good thing to do, at the least because generosity is an important quality, towards oneself and society. Giving a gift is a crucial aspect of the

functioning of society, but it is also a complex business, which implies at the same time the motivation of the gift, the nature of the gift, the needs and wishes of the recipient of the gift, and so many other characteristics that modify the nature and the value of this gift. It is about becoming familiar with some of the characteristics and analyzing them.

A list of reasons for giving is established. Nevertheless, every form of gift is open to criticism from a certain point of view, therefore must we find a reason to criticize the various reasons to give, written below, so as to find their limits. But, before formulating the criticism, the student will have to invent an example, a situation that shows the problem. Finally on the basis of this draw a list of the reasons not to give.

Student

**For each of the reasons given below, invent an example or a situation showing what could be open to criticism, then analyze it.
From the various examples, establish a list of reasons not to give.**

I offered a present to a person:

Because it is Christmas.
Because it is her birthday.
Because it pleases me.
Because it pleases her.
Because she needs it.
Because it is good to give.
Because we must give to others.
Because I know this person.
Because she asked me it.
Because I do not need this thing anymore.
Because my mother told me.
Because I do not like this thing anymore.
Because I do not want to be selfish.
Because her brother gave me the idea.
Because next she will offer me a present.
Because she offered me a present last week.
Because I am generous.
Because I want to be kind.

49 – WILL

CONCEPTS: TO WANT - DESIRE - REFUSAL - HYPOTHESIS - REASON

The reasons of a desire or a will are at least as important as the desire or the will themselves. Nevertheless, we ignore why we want things, or we prefer not to know or in any case not to admit it.

A list of evaluations or activities is presented, that we can want or not want, yearn or yearn for, like or not like. It is about giving several hypotheses about the different connections, inner feeling, obligation or reasoning, which we can entertain with each of those cases. For that the students must escape from their own convictions and envisage other possibilities than their own.

Student

Find three reasons why we could want and three ones why we could not want:

To sleep.
To eat.
To go to school.
To obey.
To be alone.
To play music.
To do sport.
To have our birthday.
To be different from others.
To have new clothes.
To be on holidays.
To get good marks.
To get bad marks.
To be admired by others.
To change parents.
To change school.
To read.
To watch television.
To think.
To dream.

50 – To DEFINE

CONCEPTS: CONCEPT - DEFINITION - POSSIBLE - GENERAL - IMPOSSIBLE

We know intuitively the sense of the words, since it is by a repetitive practice that we learn how to speak and to know the meaning of the terms. But when comes the moment to verify this one, we have recourse to the dictionary since we need a precise definition. But we can learn how to define, to conceptualize.

Several terms are given, with a definition. In every case, it is about evaluating this definition, justifying this choice. Is it, for example, a much too restrictive definition of the word, a too large definition, an acceptable but specific definition, or an unacceptable definition?

Student

Does this definition of the word seem a good one to you?

Plane: aerial navigational device, lighter than air.
Baguette: thin bread of a long form, done with starch, water and salt.
Balloon: round object, inflated with air, and is used to play.
Banana: frontal part of man hairstyle.
Pig: mammal who lives in farms, whose we eat flesh.
Guitar: six string music instrument, that works with electricity.
Human: animal without hairs, feathers or scales.
Lion: big mammal who lives in a zoo.
Book: gathering of bound sheets, that are used to write.

Mother: person of female gender who takes care of children.
Orange: edible fruit with an acid taste.
Page: every of the two sides of a sheet of paper.
Bread: food that we cook, that takes different forms.
Pair: so called of a number divisible by two.
Fish: vertebrate animal that lays eggs and lives in water.
Apple: edible fruit with pips, eventually being used as a projectile.
Quadrilateral: flat form with four equal sides.
Toilette: ensemble of cares of cleanliness of the body.
Train: transport means on rails, constituted of wagons and a traction unit.
Car: transport vehicle, equipped with a wheeled and motorized frame.

51 - DEFECTS

CONCEPTS: GOOD - BAD – TO JUSTIFY – TO DECIDE

Morals are the rules that determine a behavior to be good or bad. It is usually said "this is good" or "this is bad". But existence also leads us, for various reasons, not to do what is « good » or what looks like « good ». For bad reasons, but sometimes for some legitimate reasons too.

A certain number of qualifiers with a rather negative connotation are presented, they are asked to be defined, then problematized, so as to examine if sometimes they have not all the same some legitimacy. For every "defect" – or determinate number – the student must produce a definition, then problematize it in only one sentence.

Student

Define every qualifier in the enclosed list.

Then indicate if it is possible to have sometimes some good reasons to behave in that way.

Authoritative.
Disobedient.
Selfish.
Coarse.
Hypocritical.
Idiot.
Ignorant.
Unfair.
Insensitive.
Jealous.
Cowardly.
Mean.
Liar.
Disdainful.
Lazy.
Snitch.
Boaster.
Violent.

52 – FAIR AND UNFAIR

CONCEPTS: FAIR - UNFAIR - REASON – EXPLANATION

Sometimes the world seems to be unfair, especially with us. Nothing goes like we would like. Even if we do not deserve it, things go wrong. It is an experience that we all know, at different levels.

Several imposed situations are presented. Let us try first to see how each of them can be considered unfair. Then, in another perspective, let us examine how they can either entertain no connection with the problem of injustice, or be justified.

Student

**Explain how each of these situations can be considered unfair.
Then explain why it can be fair.**

The does not need to raise her hand to talk.
My father goes more often than me to restaurant.
I never watch the Fame Academy.
My mother does not want me to do the dishes.
My brother does not want to give me his pajamas.
I do not have the right to go out by myself.
My sister laughs at me.
My school friend's parents do not get angry when she gets a bad mark.
I must clean my room even though I have homework.
I have a physical handicap.
My dog does not go to school.
I do not have the right to dream when I want.
At home, nobody prevents me from doing what I want.
I am a boy.
We do not all have the same color skin.
I am a child.
I am a human being.
My parents do not have work.
I exist without having asked to exist.
I have a big nose.
We will all die one day.
My parents do what they want contrary to my wishes.

53 – EQUALITY AND INEQUALITY

CONCEPTS: EQUALITY - INEQUALITY

There is evidence to show that women and men have the right to be equal but in fact are unequal. Inequalities vary in intensity and in shape regarding places and circumstances. But there are other types of inequality as well as gender: between children and adults, rich people and poor people, etc. A list of differences is presented below, in pairs of contraries.

The question is to know if these differences present or not some forms of inequality, no matter the nature or the consequences. It is about determining then if this inequality is important or not in society.

Student

**In each of these couples of terms, do you think there is equality or inequality?
If there is inequality, is it important in society?
Justify your judgment.**

Children and adults.
Rich people and poor people.
Bad students and good students.
The government and citizen.
Ignorants and scholars.
Europeans and Africans.
Weak people and strong people.
Beautiful people and ugly people.
Disabled people and people with no disabilities.
Indigenous and immigrants.
Boys and girls.
Wives and husbands.
Students and s.
Cops and robbers.
People and animals.
People from the country and people from the city.
Believers and atheists.
Fat people and thin people.

54 – VIOLENCE

CONCEPTS: VIOLENCE – TO FIGHT – LEGITIMATE – MOTIVATION – REASON

Violence is everywhere in the history of humanity. Different possible explanations can be given to this phenomenon. Nevertheless, originally, a desire of competition, of protection or aggression seems to lie up in the core of the human functioning. And yet, one can wonder about the reasons of this recurring violence and ask oneself in which extend the reasons of it are legitimate, since the human being has recourse to it so easily.

Some reasons to fight are presented. The students must examine them to determine which ones are the most acceptable and which ones are the least, then to compare with the work of their school friends. Some students will claim perhaps that every reason is bad, and they could then propose to reformulate « most acceptable » as « least bad ». Nevertheless, one of the goals of the exercise is to realize that we have many « good reasons » to fight.

Student

**Classify these different reasons to fight from the most legitimate to the least one.
Give some reasons for the three most legitimate and the three least legitimate.
Justify your choice.
Compare your answers with your neighbor's answers.**

You would fight rather:

To defend your territory.
To defend your life.
To defend your fellow citizen's life.
To defend your reputation.
To fight against injustice.
To become rich.
To have fun.
To avenge yourself.
To become powerful.
For nothing.
To revenge your family.
To defend your country.
To learn.
Because you were given the order.
To give sense to your life.
To prevent anyone from attacking you.
Because the other started it.
Because you like violence.

55 - THE DEATH

CONCEPTS: LIFE - DEATH - SENSE - SUBJECTIVE

Death seems to us sometimes an obvious phenomenon: the cessation of life as a physical process. Nevertheless, death, like life, has a diversity of meanings: its signification is a part of the close connection to subjectivity, its reality is interlinked in the cultural and social context. And the meaning given to it changes radically its nature.

A certain number of classical schemes of relation to the death are presented. The students must put into hierarchy these different propositions, from the most valid to the least valid, from their point of view. They must then make an objection to the three principal ideas they chose as being the best ones and justify positively the three ones they liked the least. This second part could be done individually, in team or with the whole class.

Student

Classify these different ideas from the best one to the worst.
Try to criticize the three ideas you chose as being the best ones.
Try to justify positively the three ideas you chose as being the worst.

Death has no meaning.
Death is the end of life.
Death gives interest to life.
Death is only a path to something else.
Death is what we have to fight all our life.
Death is what we have to learn how to accept.
Death is nothing.
Death is a test.
Death is a big pain.
Death is what scares us the most.
We do not know what is death.

Death is a happy event.
Death is the most important moment of life.
Death is the moment when to give room to others.
Death is the return to origins.
Death is uninteresting.
We do not need to think about death.

56 – TO NOT TELL EVERYTHING

CONCEPTS: SUBJECTIVE - OBJECTIVE – TO KNOW – TO REVEAL – CENSURE

Media are periodically known for hiding truth totally or partially, or inventing it. But it is neither always easy nor advisable to tell the whole truth, and it is sometimes impossible, for various reasons. So the point is to think about these reasons to better understand the phenomenon of partiality, lying by omission or subjectivity.

Several topics supposed to be reported by media are named. For each of them, it is about finding a reason to assert that everything must be said, and a reason for which, on the contrary, not everything has to be said. Perhaps some of these situations will be worthy of being clarified before doing the exercise, or will be eliminated if they are known enough by students. An important rule will be not to use twice the same argument. A synthesis of the reasons why not telling everything could be established finally, individually or collectively.

Student

**For each topic of the list, find a reason why you must tell everything you know and a reason why you do not have to tell everything.
You must try not to use twice the same argument.
Draw finally a list of the reasons not to tell everything.**

The President of the Republic.
A secret.
What happens to us.
What happens to others.
A war.
A crime.
A trial.
A decision made by the government.
A terrorist attack.
A kidnapping.
The illness of a person.
An election.
A police investigation.
A book.
Statements of a person.
An article in a newspaper.
An argument.

57 – ANTONYMS: ADJECTIVES

CONCEPTS: CONCEPT - ANTONYM - CONTRARY - ANTINOMY – TO DEFINE

Contraries structure the world and our understanding of the world. They order not only the physical universe by defining it: space (up and down), time (before and after), the material (hard and soft), but also the thinking itself (subjective and objective). But it is not always easy to determine opposite attributes, even if it clarifies our understanding of reality.

In this exercise, it is about producing antinomy: first to complete a couple of opposed concepts, in order to define then in what they are opposed to each other. It is also possible to find several antonyms for the same adjective, by explaining the difference of meaning. It is also important to avoid antonyms that need many explanations. The group will have to determine those he accepts and those he refuses.

Student

Produce one or several antonyms for every adjective of the list, and explain how the terms are opposite:

Good.
Fearful.
Choleric.
Impossible.
Hardworking.
Solitary.
Miserable.
Domineering.
Fair.
Stranger.
Strange.
Difficult.
Lost.
Vague.
Complicated.
Charming.

58 – WRONG AND RIGHT

CONCEPTS: RIGHT - WRONG - CIRCUMSTANCES - PURPOSE - CONTRADICTORY

Sometimes we criticize some people, some words or some gestures. However, we can realize our mistake afterwards. Sometimes, we would like to criticize and praise a same action or a same person. Circumstances can make us say that a person is right or wrong. But we still have to understand how and why our judgments change in that circumstance.

In this exercise, a certain number of current gestures are posed. For each of them, we will declare « this is good » or « this is not good », and we will recommend « to do it » or « not to do it ». We ask the students to problematize these injunctions by determining, for each of those propositions, why or how, in which circumstances or with which aim, it would be recommended to accomplish this gesture and when it would be better to avoid it.

Student

Explain why one would be wrong, then why one would be right to:

Tell what he thinks.
Fight.
Shout.
Hurry.
Argue.
Justify himself.
Accuse.
Congratulate.
Obey.
Think.
Listen to others.
Invent.
Leave.
Read.
Judge.
Answer.

59 – LOVE'S OBSTACLES

CONCEPT : GOOD - BAD - FEELING - REASON - PASSION

Love relationship is a phenomenon that is sometimes amazing. Like in fairy tales, it is possible to idealize this type of relationship, but it is also interesting to confront the idea we have of it with various human defects or vices.

Every element of the list proposes a defect that can be an obstacle to the fact of loving somebody. The point is to determine if this defect is insurmountable or not, by arguing the judgment made.

Student

Can one love somebody?

Who is stupid.
Who is mean.
Who is lazy.
Who does not love us.
Who loves nobody.
Who changes his mind all the time.
Who refuses to talk to us.
Who talks badly about us.
Who is hypocritical.
Who is crazy.
Who is a liar.
Who picks a fight with somebody.
Who is disobedient.
Who is doing stupid things all the time.
Who is rude.
Who puts us to shame.

60 – POLITICAL VALUES

CONCEPTS: CONCEPT - IDEAL - VALUE - SOCIETY - STATE

Through the clashes of history, one can perceive political, existential and moral stakes, which articulate themselves around primacy of certain values towards others. Some of these values seem universal to us, they have sense and seem positive to our eyes, other ones much less or not at all. The question is to know which values must prevail over others.

Among these multiple political values, founding society, the students choose the ones (for example three) that seems to them the most necessary or the most fundamental, then some others (for example three) that contrarily appear as secondary, useless and even harmful. They must justify their choices.

Student

Which are the values that seem the most useful and essential to build a society?

Equality.
Fraternity.
Justice.
Truth.
Democracy.
Authority.
Progress.
Freedom.
Wealth.
Happiness.
Cooperation.
Tolerance.
Legality.
Change.
Education.
Courage.
Sacrifice.
Work.
Citizenship.
Humility.

61 - FEELINGS

CONCEPTS: FEELINGS – TO QUALIFY - CONCEPT

We are permanently driven on by very different feelings, without being always conscious of them or identifying them. These feelings seem to impose themselves to us and modify our moods, in particular when we do not know how to identify these feelings or even name them.

A list of desires or inner feelings is proposed. For each of these descriptions, students name the feeling evoked in such a way. Even if those are rather familiar situations, the students will undoubtedly often have difficulty in naming them. They could produce several terms so as to compare them and choose.

Student

What is the feeling that animates somebody?

Who dares not speak in public.
Who gets cross for nothing.
Who wants to bother people.
Who wants a successful life.
Who wants to show off.
Who always complains.
Who does trust others.
Who stays alone in their corner.
Who hurries every time.
Who misses the past.
Who does not listen to others.
Who only pays attention to their own desires.
Who does not want things to change.
Who absolutely does not want to be late.
Who worries about their appearance.
Who argues very often.
Who always wants to do like others.
Who does never want to do like others.

62 - INTENTION

CONCEPTS: REASON - INTENTION - JUSTIFICATION - FOUNDATION – TO INTERPRET

It is not without any reason that we talk, it is not without any reason that we act, it is not without any reason that we abstain. We are pushed by desires, convictions, needs, fears, etc. But motivations are not always visible right at the moment of the actions they provoke. So it is about training ourselves to create hypotheses in order to interpret them.

Several actions are proposed, which can be provoked by various motivations. For each of them, it is about finding one or several reasons of such an action and one or several reasons of abstaining acting so. One could examine the different reasons so as to see if they have sense and legitimacy, in order to avoid false arguments.

Student

For which reasons one could pose or not pose the following actions?

To interrupt somebody.
To obey the law.
To go to school.
To cut down a tree.
To use a car.

To have children.
To read.
To watch television.
To have fun.
To hit somebody.
To eat.
To work.
To argue.
To talk.
To ask a question.
To have a friend.
To be jealous.
To pretend.

63 – HAPPINESS AND UNHAPPINESS

CONCEPTS: HAPPINESS - UNHAPPINESS - MORAL - GOOD - BAD

We personally know happiness and unhappiness, successively or simultaneously, like anyone. Whatever is the relationship with others or oneself. But too much often, we bear these states of mind, because we have not identified their cause.

A list of action and situations is proposed, and for each of them, the student will have to write or explain how one can find in it happiness and unhappiness at the same time, in general or with examples.

Student

Explain how these different actions can evoke or express happiness or/and unhappiness.

To learn.
To love somebody.
To play football.
To be alone.
To admire somebody.
To have money.
To read newspaper.
To get up on the morning.
To win a contest.
To go to the store.
To be scolded.
To get complimented.
To cry.
To lie.
To receive a present.
To make an effort.

64 - CHARACTERS

CONCEPTS: ABSTRACT - CONCRETE - REPRESENTATION - PARTICULAR - UNIVERSAL

As children or adults, we read or listen to number of tales and fables of tradition. Some characters of these stories are very present in collective memory: they always talk to us, because they represent aspects of ourself, something that is universal, human archetypes.

Various characters of different origins and natures, literary heroes, are presented. The student must try to analyze them in order to make the character of what they represent. The difficulty will be to go from "narrative" to "metanarrative", or from particular to universal, which means to address what the characters are and represent, and not to say merely what they do.

Student

What does each of the following characters represent (quality, defect or something else)?

Odysseus.
Ugly duckling.
Hercules.
White Snow.
The witch.
Harry Potter.
Tintin.
Thomson and Thompson.
Captain Haddock.
Astérix.
Obelix.
Gaston Lagaffe.
Titeuf.
Luke Skywalker.
Darth Vader.
Princess Leia.
Little Thumbling.
Spiderman.
Barbie.
Action Man.

65 – THE REASONS FOR LYING

CONCEPTS: LIE - TRUTH - PERTINENCE - PURPOSE

The problem of lying and telling the truth is sometimes difficult to comprehend, as we discover it when we are very young. These two concepts are multiform; they escape from evidence, contrary to what we believe. Moreover, it is interesting to take into account the motive of lying to make a suitable judgment on the moral value of the act.

Different reasons for not telling the truth are proposed. For each of them, the students must on one side decide if the reason of action is good or bad, legitimate or not, or else, or at which condition it is good or bad. On the other side, they have to determine if it is a lie or something else that they will have to name.

Student

Is it a good or a bad reason not to tell the truth? Is this a lie or something else?

Not to hurt.
By ignorance.
To gain time.
To get something.
Because it is not beautiful.
Not to scary.
When we are afraid.
Not to upset somebody.
When we did something stupid.
To keep our illusions.
When we are afraid of not being understood.
When we are sure we are not being understood.
Because it is too hard to be told.
When we want to be loved.
When someone gives you a present.
In respect for one `s interlocutor.
To please.
Because we are ashamed.
Because this concern only me.
To annoy somebody.
Because the other one is too small.
When we are not sure.
Because it is a secret.
Because everything should be explained.
Because it is not the right time.
To protect ourselves.
Because it not the right place.
When the person we talk to is to ill.

66 - POLYSEMY

CONCEPTS: POLYSEMY - EVIDENCE - LITERAL - FIGURATIVE

The terms we meet can have several meanings. Some problems of comprehension come from the difficulty to know this diversity. So it is useful to work on polysemy, so as to be better aware of it.

A list of different common terms is proposed. And yet, each of these words can have at least two meanings. Ask the students to try, if possible, to determine these different meanings, by producing different definitions. The use of a dictionary should be avoided.

Student

Give at least two different meanings to each of the following words:

Responsible
Student

School
Master
Problem
Law
Wise
To listen
To answer
To question
Duty
Lesson
Work
Office
Board
To blow
To copy
To respect

67 - ANIMALS: MORAL DILEMMAS

CONCEPTS: ANIMALS - HUMANS - MORAL - JUDGMENT

Moral problems do not only concern our connection to human being. At different degrees, it concerns our behavior towards every living being and nature in general. Nevertheless, our connection to animals is complex in so far that we all do not have the same vision of the world of animals and we do not entertain the same types of connection with all the animal species. Different situations are described where the connection between human and animal raises a problem. The students must understand the best way they can, the stakes of every situation, then answer what is asked. It will be necessary to check to make sure that their argumentation does not stay at the level of generalities of the type « because it is not good » or « Because we have of a right to ».

Student

Read carefully the situations that are described and answer the question with an argument.

- a – To realize a medical experience allowing healing from a serious illness that has many victims, a scientist must do painful experiments on mice. Must it be allowed?
- b – An old and poor woman lives alone with her dog. She feeds him badly, the dog is emaciated, he has dull hairs, but he seems to be fond of his mistress. Must we take him off her?
- c- Peter has adopted a kitty, he wants her to be happy. The RSCPA recommends an operation to prevent her from having babies. Must he do it?
- d- Francine’s cat likes to walk around the gardens in the neighborhood. It gets on the nerves of neighbors, who tell her to keep her cat at home. One of them says that he will kill the cat if he comes back to pee in his place. Must Francine keep her cat inside?
- e- Amelia has a dog. She must tattoo her dog, in case it became lost. But Amelia does not want to, because she finds it demeaning to have a number on the ear
Is she right?
- f- Kevin sees that his cat caught a bird, who seems to be still alive. Must he free him?
- g- Mary’s Labrador was hit by a car. He survived, but his hindquarters are paralyzed. Mary’s parents want him to be put down. Must she accept it?

h- Gerry was offered a hamster by his parents. But within some months, Gerry does not really take care of him any more, even if he wants to keep him. Must his parents leave him his hamster?

i- Sir Roger really takes care of his lawn, he is proud of it. But, recently, a mole invaded the garden. She digs holes that make some ugly little hillocks appear in it. Is this a sufficient reason to kill the mole?

j - Mrs. Jordan just died, she had no child, she leaves her fortune to her numerous dogs. Her nephews, who have serious financial problems, want to lawsuit this testimony. Are they right ?

k - While building a road, they realize it goes across a pond where a lot of frogs of rare species reproduce. A detour or supplementary building would cost a lot to the community. Do they nevertheless trace the road following what it was planned?

l - Mathilda has a canary in cage. She would like to open the cage so as to let the canary going where he wants. But her mother tells her he will go outside, with the risk of being lost. Must she open the cage?

m- There are few wolves in the mountain. But they attack flocks of sheeps to eat. Sheppards want to have of a right to kill them in order to protect their animals. Do we have to allow them?

n- A man has a dog with ticks. He does not want to treat her dog with pesticide, because he refuses to kill animals. But it makes his dog sick. Must we force him treating his dog?

o - Julia arrives to the circus, but some demonstrators ask the public to boycott the show, not to enter so as not to encourage animals' education. They explain that it is not natural to treat animals in that way, it is demeaning for them. Must Julia enter and watch the show yet?

p- Every day a man gives food to the pigeons in the park. Because of that, there are more and more of them. Many people complain about noise and dirt made so. Must this man be stopped doing it?

q- A dog bit a man who walked on his paw. This last one sues the owner of the dog, who tells him that her dog never bites. Must the judge condemn the owner of the dog?

68 – TRANSVALUATION

CONCEPTS: GOOD - BAD - TO INTERPRET - SENSE

Good and bad are fluent concepts, more than we usually think. They merge, they are mixed and switch round each other quite easily, even if we remain quite peremptory in their utilization. Consequently, it is helpful to remind how from time to time, when we think about things, we go from good to bad and vice-versa, that is called transvaluation.

Every element of the list done for the exercise can be thought in the positive or in the negative way, though in general they are considered in a way rather than another one. Students are supposed to find how these elements can be thought alternatively or simultaneously in the two ways, and to explain about that. That is how this exercise will make emerge the concepts utilized to determine the nature of good and bad.

Student

Find one or several reasons why every element of the following list can be considered « good » or « bad ».

Group used criteria together to justify the answers.

Hammer.

Kindness.
Human being.
Pen.
Food.
Power.
Tree.
Clothes.
Universe.
Religion.
Pain.
School.
Car.
Television.
Book.
Friend.
Family.
Think.
Feeling.
Help.
Medicine.
Pleasure.

69 - INTERPRETATION: AMBIGUITY

CONCEPTS: TO INTERPRET - AMBIGUITY - POSITIVE - NEGATIVE

Interpretation is a crucial aspect of communication: to understand the other, it is necessary to interpret their speech, which is to transpose their speech in our own language. Nevertheless, it is possible to interpret an idea in different ways, sometimes totally opposite. So, it is necessary to become aware of the ambiguous nature of the speech.

A list of simple sentences is presented, each of them can be variously interpreted. It is about finding again two different meanings for every sentence, likely to create an ambiguity in the interpretation. One of the simplest ways to do would be to interpret them one after the other in a positive then a negative way.

Student

Examine attentively each of these sentences and try to give two very different or totally opposed meanings to each of them.

I like you.
I did not mean that.
This food is good.
Peter is a nice guy.
Kasper is a poet.
Silvia is philosophical.
Juliet is a pleasant girl.
Silvester is stubborn.
Leila always has something to tell.
Laura is stange.
Valery is a poor guy.
Noemy is a good girl.

This painting is amazing.
This book is not funny.
It is a funny journey.
It is necessary to discuss about it.
This music sends me to sleep.
Your questions embarrass me.
This course is interesting.
Here we go again.
I think therefore I am.
The heart has its reasons that Reason does not know.
I know that I know nothing.

70 – ANTONYMS

CONCEPTS: ANTONYM - CONTRARY - DIFFERENCE - CRITERIA

Even when they designate objects, words have generally contraries, and even several contraries. There is no more to it than finding an axis around which a couple of contraries can be organized. For example, to "house" it is possible to oppose "tent", by the concept of mobility, or one can oppose « stable » by the concept of « inhabitants », or again « flat », opposing itself by the concept of « architecture ». Finding a contrary always gives sense to the initial term.

Various words of a different nature are posed. For the different enounced concepts, it will be about proposing two or three terms at least to which one could oppose them, these ones giving another sense in the same way.

Student

**Find two or three terms to oppose to the following words.
Then examine the difference produced so for the initial word.**

Man.
Earth
God.
Work.
Wood.
To invent.
To walk.
To stop.
Problem.
Idea.
To think.
French.
To want.
To learn.
To hear.
To take off.
Helpful.
To loose.
Whole.
To break.

Nothing.

71 – THE NATURE OF HUMANS

CONCEPTS: NATURE - NATURAL – HUMANS - ESSENTIAL - SECONDARY

The nature of humans is complex and multifaceted. It is difficult to define it and establish what really belongs to the human being and what depends on every culture or individual. So far that one can come to deny that there is a human nature. Nevertheless it is interesting to examine various aspects of human existence and to wonder in which range it corresponds to human nature or not.

In this exercise, it is about determining if the enounced propositions correspond or not to the nature of humans. It is necessary to determine if we agree or not and say why. One can also think the two answers are acceptable and explain in which way the proposition is true and in which one it is false.

It would be interesting to conclude by putting propositions in hierarchy, from the most essential to the least.

Student

Determine among these propositions about the nature of humans which ones you agree with, which one you disagree with, and justify your decision.

You can also think that the two answers are acceptable: then explain in which way the proposition is true and in which way it is false.

Finally, classify the different propositions, from the most essential to the least.

Is it natural for humans?

To eat.

To be sick.

To be angry.

To work.

To go to school.

To obey the laws.

To obey one's parents.

To act following morals.

To have children.

To think.

To have parents.

To have two arms and two legs.

To die.

To argue.

To be jealous of other people.

To be afraid of something.

To want to create.

To be loved.

To love.

To love each other.

To imitate others.

72 – RESPECT

CONCEPTS: RESPECT - JUDGMENT - RESPONSIBLE

Respect is a term that is used frequently. Especially to require it from the other or to criticize the person for her lack of using it. Due to its familiarity, it has lost its clarity and strength of meaning. So we are using case studies to rethink its significance.

Several situations are presented, where students could think some disrespect has been demonstrated. The students must decide if it is the case or not, and justify their answers. Of course, they must indicate in every situation which character is disrespectful. At the end of the exercise, as a conclusion, they could try to define what is respect.

Student

**Do you see a lack of respect in these various situations?
Justify your answer.**

- Marion criticizes the music Julia listens to.
- Peter calls Antony an idiot because he hit him.
- The history wrongly accuses Mathilda of cheating and she answers « Rubbish! ».
- Without doing it on purpose, Silvia's father walks on her feet very heavily and she shouts « Shit! ».
- Magali misspells a lot in her letter to her grandmother.
- Jules found his neighbor's wallet and does not give it back to him.
- Jules stole the wallet of his neighbor while he was not looking.
- Stephen came to the class with very dirty clothes.
- George did not do his homework for Spanish class because he is not interested in it.
- Lea makes as if she did not hear what Oliver said.
- Mariel accuses her parents of disrespecting her.
- Paul refuses to admit to Carolina his love for her, though she declared her love for him.
- The singing tells all the students of the class that they sing atrociously and that they should make an effort.
- Peter told his mother that she has lied, and for that she must clean the shoes of the whole family.
- Joseph refuses to wish a happy birthday to his sister.
- Sylvester decided to become vegetarian and obliges his mother to cook specific dishes just for him.

73 – RESPECT: CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTIONS

CONCEPTS: DIFFERENCE - CONCEPT - RESPECT

One way to define a concept is to connect it to terms of the same family then try to distinguish it from them. Very often we become confused between terms looking alike but containing significant differences. By making these conceptual differences we will clarify the meaning of the concept we work on.

To show the difference, it is necessary to avoid the « more this » or the « less that », but find a criterion which is present in one of the two concepts but absent from the other.

A list is made of terms, all similar to the concept of respect. For each of them, it is about distinguishing them from the concept of respect, in other words explaining in which they are different.

Student

Find what is similar and different between respect and the following concepts:

Lying.
Politeness.
Kindness.
Mistrust.
Fear.
Hypocrisy.
Manipulation.
Friendship.
Obedience.
Indifference.
Coolness.
To imitate another person.
Shyness.
Sincerity.
Tolerance.
Wisdom.

DIFFICULT

74 – PURPOSE AND MEANS

CONCEPTS: PURPOSE - MEANS - CAUSE

Sometimes we do not know the reason why we act. It is not easy to determine the purpose of our actions, evaluate them and distinguish what is a means and what is an aim. However, this allows understanding oneself and others. Moreover, we sometimes invert means and purpose.

Every sentence presents a connection between purpose and means in different forms. The student must examine each of them and decide on one side if it makes sense, on the other if it contains an aim and a means, and finally if the means and the aim could or should be inverted.

Student

These various sentences present a purpose and a means. It is necessary to determine if every sentence is meaningful. In each of them, identify the purpose and the means. Must or can the sentence be inverted?

I go to school so as to take the bus.
In order to use the fork, I eat.
In order to use the fork, I open the drawer.
I catch the ball to raise my arms.
My mother calls me and I come.
To play, I have friends.
I am kind because I have friends.
When somebody offers a present to his friend, he is happy.
I am going for a walk in order to go outside.
I eat so as not to be sick.
I eat when I feel better.
I want to be loved then I am kind.
I play so as to invite my friends.
I have good marks in order to make my parents glad.
I work because I have good marks.
We go by car in order to go shopping.

75 – To INTERPRET METAPHORS

CONCEPTS: IMAGE - METAPHOR

Interpreting metaphors helps to understand language as an expression of thinking. Finding this hidden meaning is not a skill students have naturally, especially if they already find it

challenging to read. Thus it can be interesting to work on interpreting some short sentences so as to stimulate this sense of decoding, by learning how to transform into direct language, in other words conceptualizing.

First, the will ask everyone to think about the meaning of one sentence and to write a short literal equivalent. Second, different enounced translations will be compared orally, by working on the precision and the concision of the articulation, in order to come to the most adequate formulation.

Student

Explain what these various sentences mean for you:

You are my sweetheart.
Mornings sing in summer.
You would think his buttock was on fire.
My brother thinks he is a policeman.
Her head is like a pebble.
You are the sunshine of my life.
Trees talk to us.
She is barking instead of speaking.
To bring water to the mill of someone.
Not to have cold eyes.
It's the last straw that broke the camel's back.
To have a grudge against somebody.
To put somebody's back up.
To earn a living with the sweat of one's brow.
You cannot see the wood for the trees.
To cry wolf.
To give a hard nut to crack.
To enter the lions' den.
To go straight into the wall.
To kill two birds with one stone.
It is in the bag.

76 – TO BELIEVE OR NOT BELIEVE

CONCEPTS: TO BELIEVE – TO DOUBT – TO KNOW – TO GUESS

The typical scheme in school or with the family does not really encourage the child to critical analysis neither to the personal and argumented expression. The students are not invited to make a constructed judgment, or they are sent back to a mere subjective and unreasoned sensitivity. In which situation must we believe what we are told? The evaluation of others' speech is an over-time elaborated practice. This is what we call "critical analysis", which implies making a judgment on our own words and the words of others.

The achievement of this exercise is based on a comprehension of some enounced words, of their and their limits. Therefore the point will be about not taking them in an immediate way anymore, but evaluating them and arguing this evaluation. It will be interesting in the course of the exercise to identify the reasons to believe or not believe the other.

Student

Must you trust...

Your father who tells you that the dog speaks to him?
Your grandfather who tells you that his favorite team will certainly win next game?
Your mother who tells you that the music you like is not so nice?
Your grandmother who tells you that what you eat is not good for your health?
Your brother who tells you that your does not know how to teach class?
The scientist who tells you that there are elephants living on the moon?
Your who informs you that there won't be any lessons the day after?
Your friend who tells you that you are the best of her friends?
Your aunt who tells you that she is too old to change?
A stranger who tells you that he will drive you to the zoo?
A child who tells you that he will be President when he gets older?
A child who tells you that he will have three children?
Horoscope that tells you what will happen to you tomorrow?
Forecast that tells you which weather will be tomorrow?
A child who is not able to read time when he tells you what time it is?
An adult who tells you that Santa exists?
A salesman who tells you what to buy in his shop?
Someone who pretends to know what you think?
Your mother who tells you that you are cheeky.
The doctor who tells you that you must be operated on?
Newspapers that announce the end of the world?
A movie star who tells you which car is the best?
A movie star who tells you which perfume to use?

77 – TO EVALUATE ARGUMENTS

CONCEPT: ARGUMENT

To make people accept our actions and words, we justify them with a lot of arguments. Nevertheless, if producing arguments is supposed making a speech legitimate, some arguments are not real. Either because they do not make any sense, they are absurd, or because they are in bad faith, they sound false or again because they are not relevant.

In this exercise, the student has to determine the validity of an argument by analyzing the meaning of each sentence that is proposed and by evaluating the content of the given argument. Some of these sentences will find their value through the meaning given by the students after having examined them, their contextualization. For example, in the absolute, it would not be really possible to decide if the sentence « I ate because the bell rang » makes sense or not. But if the bell rings clearly at mealtimes only, the sentence will make sense.

Student

Is it a good argument?

I ate because the friend had some chocolate.
I ate because it was Monday.
I ate because the bell rang.

I ate because I was told to.
I ate not to die.
I ate because pebbles were too hard.
I ate because my mother was there.
I ate because there was no meat.
I ate because I had nothing else to do.
I ate because I was at my grandmother's house.
I ate because I had nothing else to do.
I ate to do like everyone.
I ate because the weather was nice.
I ate because it was good.
I ate because there was no one.
I ate because I was tired.
I ate because I felt like it.

78 – POSSIBLE AND IMPOSSIBLE

CONCEPTS: POSSIBLE - IMPOSSIBLE - CERTAIN - PROBABLE

It is not always easy to distinguish the orders of reality, which we can graduate through four concepts. Impossible: what cannot exist or happen. Possible: what can exist or happen. Certain or necessary: what must exist or happen. Probable: what should exist or happen. The point here is to become aware of these distinctions.

Several situations, assertions, predictions or deductive sequences are presented, and students are asked to evaluate their respective degree of reality. For each of them, the student will make a choice and produce an argument. The value of the conclusion will largely depend on the invoked justification. Since we are interested in that link, more than in an a priori determined answer, even if some choices will seem imposing themselves immediately, for some reasons of common sense or logic.

Student

Is it possible, impossible, certain or probable?

That I am at school tomorrow Thursday during the school year.
That I am at school tomorrow Sunday.
That I am at school when I am doing this work.
That I win the lottery.
That I win the lottery if I do not have any ticket.
That I win the lottery if I have all the tickets.
That I win the lottery if I have most of the tickets.
That I win the lottery if I do not know what it is.
That the square has four equal sides.
That the Martians land on the Earth.
That every child has two parents.
That every person has two arms and two legs.
That it is important to learn mathematics.
That we must breathe to live.
That we must study to get a good job.
That we go to jail if we commit a crime.

79 – TO GROW UP

CONCEPTS: TO GROW UP - PROOF - POLYSEMY – SYNONYMS

Growing up is a problem for a child; it is an act heavy of significations and consequences: the word has different meanings and implications. Growing up signifies at the same time becoming taller, developing skills and psychological maturity, but also discovering new problems and having more responsibilities.

Several proofs showing that we are growing up are proposed. The student must analyze every provided idea and explain the specific sense he gives to the word "grow up". If possible, it would be helpful to find a synonym for this specific sense, under the form of one word, or even an expression, keeping the repetitions down to the minimum.

Student

Explain the difference between these various proofs that you are growing up.

I can catch dishes on the sideboard.
I can open the door of the fridge.
I changed of class.
I take my shower by myself, without no one telling me.
I utilize the computer when I want.
I hardly argue anymore.
I swim across the pool.
I have more homework.
I understand what they say on the news.
I know the job I would like to do later.
I do not sleep with my teddy bear anymore.
I have a boyfriend.
It is my birthday.
I am less often told off.
I am told off more often.
I do not like to look my old tapes.
I help at home more often.
I go to the bakery and buy bread by myself.
I wake up in the dark.

80 – BEING AND APPEARANCE

CONCEPTS: BEING - APPEARANCE - TRUE - FALSE - DOUBT

Appearances are helpful: they are used to reveal what things and beings are in reality. Nevertheless, our experience teaches us that appearances are not always trustworthy. And appearances cheating on us do not all do it for the same causes or in the same way. It is interesting so to establish different explanations of the possible discordances between appearance and reality.

Many questions are asked about reality and appearances. By trying to answer them, it should create various hypotheses that explain the phenomenon of « false appearances ». To do that, the point will be to make sure that the students develop their answers so as to give them a substantial content and to be able to distinguish between different explanations.

Student

Answer with an argument to these questions about truth and appearance.

Can someone look like a stranger and not to be so?
Can one seem to be nice and not to be so?
Can one look like egoistic and not to be so?
Can the look severe and to be so?
Can an object look like something it is not?
Do false things exist?
Can one believe wrongly that someone hold it against him?
Can one think to know something and not to know?
How can one identify a false Santa Claus?
Can one be afraid wrongly?
Can one rely upon wrongly?
Can a thing look good to eat and make us harm?
Can I be mistaken about myself?
Can one believe what one sees?
Can one be taken for somebody else?

81 - LOGIC

CONCEPTS: LOGIC – PROOF

What we say and what we hear day by day is not always logic. We perceive it sometimes intuitively. But catching the logic of a speech is being able to determine which propositions go together, follow from each other, what we call inferences. The art of logic consists principally of checking out mistakes of reasoning in order to reason in a more adequate way.

Some sentences are proposed with a causal connection between two propositions. It is about examining these inferences to check their validity, and explain the problem if there is one. The must not know everything and determine a priori, but must let be driven by the thread of the personal and collective reflection, at the risk of incertitude.

Student

Determine if the different following sentences are logical or not, and explain why, especially if it is not logical.

Dad is not at home, therefore he must be in the garden.
This number is not even, it must be odd.
If two plus two gives five, then four plus four gives ten.
If the day before yesterday I saw a dog, yesterday I saw two dogs, today I saw three dogs, then tomorrow I will see four of them.
If my mother eats cheese, my father eats cake.

If Spiderman is a human being, then it will die one day.
Everything that is not green is yellow.
All the birds have wings, then every animal with wings is a bird.
If a swallow flies and swallow is a bird, all the birds fly.
All the people I know whose name is Paul like ice cream, therefore everyone whose name is Paul likes ice cream.
If the only animals that lay eggs are birds, all the animals that lay eggs are birds.
All the boys like football, then everyone of those who like football is a boy.
The square is green, therefore it is a square.
She is not there, therefore I do not see her.
I do not see her, therefore she is away.
She is not kind with me, then I am not kind with her.
He does not like to work, then he is a bad student.

82 – To IDENTIFY INTENTIONS

CONCEPTS: CAUSE - ORIGINE - EXPLICATION – ASSUMPTION

When we have problems, we ask ourselves questions. But it is not necessary to wait until there is a problem to ask oneself the same questions. At this moment, we should be astonished and ask question about what exists, what happens, or what should happen. A question does not come from anywhere: it is not neutral, it has a reason for being.

Some questions are proposed, quite safe even common. Students must try to imagine three different reasons why such questions could be asked. The point will be making sure that students do not repeat the same reasons under different formulations. Explanations could be evaluated collectively for their plausibility and their originality.

Student

Find three different reasons why someone could ask the following question:

Is it Monday?
What is it in the fridge?
Why people are so mean?
Is going to school obligatory?
Why must we obey?
Why do you say that?
Do you love me?
Are you coming with me?
Where are you going?
How are you doing?
What are you doing?
How do you know that?
Who told you?
Are you satisfied?
How can it be possible?
Do you hate me?

83 – REALITY

CONCEPTS: REAL - APPEARANCE – TO BE – TRUE - FALSE - IMAGINARY

Real is a difficult concept to comprehend. For the empirical vision, so common now, only what is material is real. But what is about symbolical, metaphorical and psychological reality? Imaginary also takes part in its way to real, thus posing a problem nevertheless: what is then reality?

A list of elements is given, made of objects, ideas, speeches, feelings or else, which all contain certain ambivalence in their relation to reality. It is therefore to determine in what they can be declared real and in what they are not so.

Student

Each element of this list can be considered real or not real at the same time. It is interesting to determine how or and why it is the case and how or why it is not so, by giving arguments in one way and in the other way.

A fairy tale.
A bottle of wine full of water.
My identity picture.
My image is in the mirror.
The French republic.
Julius Caesar.
The tory of my life.
A paper plane.
My urge to eat.
Mammals.
A project.
A statue of Louis the XIVth.
A car miniature.
My mother's love.
A piece of chocolate.
Triangle.
A dream.
The plan of a house.
Love.
Anger.
A word.
Future.
An urge.
Logic.
Understand.
Paradise.
The class.
The universe.
An opinion.
A piece of music.
Infinite.
A demonstration.
A drawing.
A deceased person

84 – To SYMBOLIZE

CONCEPTS: SYMBOLS - IMAGE - METAPHOR

Symbols are used to crystallize thinking around some concrete things, which allow it to work on concepts, to identify, utilize, recognize them and even clarify them.

A list of concepts is proposed, and, for every or a part of them, the students must suggest an object that may be used as a symbol, by justifying their choices with various reasons. However, it will be possible to ask only one argument if the task seems to be hard for the first time

Student

Which objects could symbolize these different ideas? Justify your choice by giving one or several arguments.

Glory.
Force.
Intelligence.
Friendship.
Power.
Freedom.
Happiness.
Generosity.
Mistake.
Selfishness.
Death.
Work.
Time.
Fear.
Love.
Good.
Bad.
Life.

85 - CATEGORICAL ASSERTIONS

CONCEPTS: UNIVERSAL - SINGULAR - NECESSARY - EXCEPTION - PROBLEM

Our thinking naturally uses number of universal assertions and decrees in the same way various categorical imperatives, in particular in the field of ethics. These general schemes are helpful for us, even necessary, and must not scare us. At the same time, like every a priori principle, like every law, those assertions represent the danger of a rigid thinking, which does not know any exception or particular case. For that reason, it is crucial to learn how to problematize so as to be aware of excess and use universal in an appropriate way.

Different assertive universal propositions and quite banal or current moral injunctions are presented in a form of list. The students must examine them and determine why or in which

range they can be rejected. In that purpose, they must produce an argument or a proof, or again give an example of an exception to this general rule and get a consequence from it.

Student

Find an objection to the following assertion:

People are kind.
People are mean.
It is necessary to mistrust strangers.
Strangers are not like us.
Girls are different from boys.
Boys are stronger than girls.
Children know less than adults.
It is necessary to follow rules.
It is necessary to work at school.
You must work to earn a living.
Those who double the year are useless.
Home is the best.
It is not good to draw attention on oneself.
It is not good to criticize one's friends.
It is good to be nice.
It is not good to laugh at somebody.
Do not go too far.

86 – TO CREATE MEANING

CONCEPTS: ARGUMENT - REASON - LINK - MEANING

When we speak, we want to convince, that is why we argue and justify our speech. But periodically, each of us hears arguments that have no sense, or which jump from one subject to another without letting us becoming aware of it. Sometimes this lack of link or these logical breaks are visible, sometimes the problem is more difficult to perceive: appearances are deceptive or again one is involved guessing the missing link. Once it is understood, we can give meaning by modifying the context or by adding links.

Different sentences are presented, which provide a reason to explain why "I went out". First, it is helpful to determine the sentences that give a sensible argument to distinguish them from those that are absurd. Then, it is interesting to find a way how to give sense to absurd sentences. In some cases, logical judgment will be blindingly obvious, but sometimes it will especially depend on the more or less plausible explanation the reader will give. It will not be always possible to resolve a priori but only relatively to the given explanations.

Student

Each of these sentences gives a reason as to why I went out.

- 1) Which ones make sense, which ones do not make sense?**
- 2) Create a context where absurd sentences could make sense.**

I went out because it is time.
I went out because I am outside.
I went out because I was inside.
I went out because it is Monday.
I went out because the fox is a mammal.
I went out because the Martians were coming.
I went out because my mother arrived.
I went out because I did not feel like it.
I went out because I went out.
I went out because it was my destiny.
I went out because my friend came to my home.
I went out because television was switched on.
I went out because I was obliged.
I went out because the did not want to.
I went out because I wanted to.
I went out because it is enough.

87 – To BELIEVE AND TO KNOW

CONCEPTS: TO BELIEVE – TO KNOW - GOD – SYNONYMS

Several religions and several kinds of religions exist. Therefore there are several kinds of relationships with God, and different forms of belief. Thus the word « to believe » is used in different senses. To throw light on this polysemy of the concept « to believe », we propose to look for differences in words that could be taken as synonyms.

Some couples of expressions are presented, in each of which the word « believe » is compared with another expression. « believe » and the term « facing it ». This exercise can turn out to be difficult, therefore two procedures are proposed. Either the student starts by working alone and chooses by himself only three or four distinctions that he would explain by himself, or the exercise is done straightaway by group.

Student

For every couple, try to explain the difference between the word « believe » and the expression « facing it » in so far that you think there is a difference.

To believe in God – To know God
To believe that God exists – To know that God exists
To believe in God – To be confident in God
To believe that God exists – To admit that God exists
To believe that God exists – To imagine that God exists
To believe that God exists – To think that God exists
To believe that God exists – To suppose that God exists
To believe in God – To leave it to God
To believe in God – To trust God
To believe that God exists – To be persuaded that God exists
To believe that God exists – To hope that God exists
To believe in God – To trust on God
To believe that God exists – To judge that God exists
To believe that God exists – To consider that God exists

88 - EXISTENTIAL DILEMMA

CONCEPTS: JUDGMENT - DILEMMA - EXISTENTIAL - IMPLICATIONS - CONSÉQUENCES

For humans, to live is to face a large number of dilemmas, numerous choices that engage us: that is called existence. Periodically, these dilemmas take the form of dual and recurring alternatives that we would prefer to avoid. The demand of the decision linked to the necessity of the action forces us to resolve each situation, as it happens every day for each and every one. These decisions makings appear sometimes more dramatic and more clear-cut than others, regarding the implications, consequences and the emergency of the case.

In this exercise, various relatively classical alternatives are presented, some are more customary than others, more directly related to the student's everyday life, others more remote and general. The point will be to resolve and justify the decision. It will be accepted that the student explains how it is difficult to decide, among others because of the absence of the context, but it will be helpful to learn to make a general judgment and to resolve and clarify one's position. This judgment could be presented by the as a provisional judgment, of a temporary and non absolute character, so as to make the task easier.

Student

In the following alternatives, what do you decide in priority?

- To save your own life or somebody else's?
- To obey your parents or decide by yourself?
- To obey the law or decide by yourself?
- To follow moral or desire?
- To act for the good of the group or for you own?
- To accomplish something or to take time to life?
- To fight against death or accept it?
- To kill in defense of yourself or to run away from the fight?
- To fight for the one you love or refuse to fight?
- To change reality or change your desires?
- To accept the world how it is or try to transform it?
- To impose your own ideas or accept others'?
- To risk your life or be careful?
- To betray your love or betray your parents?
- To betray your parents or betray your country?
- To remain yourself or change?
- To risk your life or be quiet?
- To take risks or act when you are sure?

89 - MORAL JUDGMENT

CONCEPTS: MORAL JUDGMENT - RESPONSIBILITY - OBLIGATION - FREEDOM

We are supposed to help each other. It is at the same time a moral injunction and a practical guarantee of reciprocity. This obligation mostly constitutes the cement of every family or social group. However, we do not respect this basic rule, for example because it is impossible to apply without any limit. This exercise tries especially to explore these limits.

Several reasons not to help somebody are listed. The students must decide for themselves if it is valuable or not, explaining the reason for their decision.

Student

Answer by « yes » or by « no » to the following questions:

Must I help a person?

Who does not want me to help her.

Who does not ask me to help her.

Who does not make any effort by herself.

Whom her relatives do not help her.

Who does not help others.

Whom I do not know.

When I do not have any time.

Who looks frightening.

Who is rich.

Who does not know that she has a problem.

Whom I would have difficulty helping.

Who could be upset.

Who is afraid of me.

Who frightens me.

Who did harm to me.

When some others could help her.

When I do not feel like it.

When I am forbidden to.

90 - SYLLOGISM

CONCEPTS: LOGIC - DEDUCTION - SYLLOGISM - VALIDITY

Logic is helpful to us, however it is not always well considered, because it is cold and formal, and seems to deprive us of our freedom. We often prefer our subjectivity to it. Over the centuries, philosophers and mathematicians tried to establish a certain number of great principles regulating logic, but each and every one has an informal intuition to it.

Syllogism is one of the classical forms of logic, already formalized by Aristotle. The principle is to deduce, from two propositions, a third. And yet there are some rules to be respected so as to make this deduction valid. The student is involved examining some syllogisms or simple deductions, and determining if they are correctly done. The temptation for the students will be to make a judgment based on the content and not on the form of the deduction.

If possible, it will be interesting to discover some rules that must be applied to build a syllogism.

Student

Determine if the different following deductions are logical or not, and justify your decision, in particular if you refuse them.

Try to discover some rules of syllogisms.

If all the birds fly and the pelican flies, the pelican is a bird.
If the pelican flies and the pelican is a bird, birds fly.
If all the birds fly and the pelican is a bird, the pelican flies.
If some birds are pelicans, and pelicans fly, some birds fly.
If some birds fly, all the birds fly.
If all the birds fly and the birds have wings, the bat flies.
If all the birds fly and the bat is a mammal, the bat does not fly.
If the bat flies and the birds fly, the bat is not a bird.
If only birds fly and the bat is not a bird, the bat flies.
If birds fly and the bat flies, the bat is not a bird.
If birds fly and the bat flies, the bat is a bird.
If the bat flies and is a mammal, mammals fly.
If the bat flies and is a reptile, some reptiles fly.
If the bat flies and is a mammal, some mammals fly.
If only one bird has wings, all the birds have wings.
If the bird is an animal that lays eggs, all the birds lay eggs.
If pigs fly and ducks laze in mud, it is a cold day in hell.
If chickens have teeth and are angry, they can bite.

91 – WHY DO WE LOVE?

CONCEPTS: TO LOVE - OTHER - CONTRADICTION

When one loves somebody, he does not wonder so much about the reasons for that love. Thus one loves often without knowing why. Besides, is it the pleasure of love or of loving somebody? Is it to love the person's appearance, or what she does? Is it to love what she offers or what one expects from her? Love is full of oppositions that usually make it confusing.

Several normal loving antinomies are presented, which relate friendship and other different forms of human relationships. In view of the suggested choices, the temptation will often be to argue that the pairs go together. But it will be necessary here to choose, risk making a judgment, then make your choice explicit. To facilitate the act of choosing, it is wise to remind students that the choices are comparative, and non absolute.

Student

Answer to every question by choosing one of the two propositions, then explain your choice.

Would you rather like a person...

Because it is so or for some specific reasons?
Because she is present or because you do not see her often?
Because she is very different from you or because you have a lot in common?
Because she helps you or because you can help her?
Because she talks to you or because she listens to you?
Because she loves you or because you love her?
For a physical appearance or for her mentality?
For her conversation or for her work?
Because she speaks well or for her honesty?

For her kindness or for her courage?
Because everyone likes her or because she is independent?
Because she tries to be different from others or because she is not pretentious?
Because she is interested especially in you or because she is getting along with your close ones?
Because you like being with her or because she does all the things you want?
For her generosity or for her seriousness?
Because she is funny or because she is quiet?
To love her or to be loved by her?

92 - MORALS

CONCEPTS: MORAL - PHILOSOPHY

Each Fable of La Fontaine is a vignette used to pass on, justify and illustrate a philosophical message, of an ethical practical or existential nature. A lot of sentences that conclude and summarize them - morals – have been integrated in the current language and constitute what is called a folk wisdom, wrongly or rightly.

Several morals of La Fontaine are reported, original or reformulated in current languages. Ask the students to choose five which seem to them helpful in life, justifying their choices by an example and an analysis. They could then select five others they disagree with.

Student

Choose five morals of La Fontaine that seems helpful in life to you, then justify your choice with an example and an explanation.

Choose five morals with whom you disagree with, then justify your choice with an example and an explanation.

There is no point in rushing, we must start off on the right foot.
Nothing is useless for sensible people.
Working is a treasure.
Often, solving a problem, leads to a bigger one.
Let us associate only with our partners.
One thing immediately is better than two later.
Being rich without freedom is not worthy.
Every flatterer lives off who listens to him.
It is better suffering than dying.
Every cheater must know that he will be cheated one day.
We always regret what we gave to villains.
Do not count your chickens before they have hatched.
Let us be careful even when the battle is over.
It is the biter bit.
Nothing is more dangerous than an ignorant friend: a wise enemy would be better.
Tell beautiful lies to the members of the government, you will be their friend.
People are indifferent to truth; they are found lying.
People want to do everything at the same time: let them have one choice, the good one.
A hungry man is a hungry man.
The wise man is right sometimes to do things without thinking.
Folly is a guide for love.

93 – LOGICAL ANALYSIS

**CONCEPTS: LOGIC - DEDUCTION - CRITICISM - REASONING - EXCEPTION - GENERAL - CERTAIN
- PROBABLE - POSSIBLE**

Truth does not only exist a priori: it also is a construction. That means that true and false are established through the building of a coherent ensemble and its examination. It is important to know if every step follows from the previous or do not, in a legitimate way, so as to constitute a relevant whole.

In that exercise, a classical work of logic, a conclusion called inference is extrapolated from one or several premises. The students must examine the whole and determine if the conclusion is relevant or not, and justify their choice. If several answers are proposed by the class, it will be interesting determining collectively which one is the most appropriate and why. The so does not try to set the validity of the conclusion: there could be some surprises.

Student

Does the conclusion of these propositions look logical to you?

If quite all the apples of the merchant are red, and he gives me one apple by coincidence, it will be red.

If Paul is not at school, he must be at home.

If my mother gave me one euro the day before, two euros yesterday and she gives me four today, she will give me eight tomorrow.

If all the insects fly and the dragonfly is a bird, it flies too.

If more boys than girls steal in stores, I say that boys are more thief than girls.

If people who wear cap are Martian and Brian wears a cap, Brian is a Martian.

If all French people speak French, and Juliette speaks French, then she is French.

If I am told that Lewis has arrived to school before Bashir, I deduce that Bashir is already there.

I am told that children go to school every day, I deduce that they go to school on Sundays.

When the cat is away, the mice dance. Then, when the mice dance, the cat is away.

Peter tells me he is a liar. I do not believe him because he is a liar.

If some birds do not fly and the hen does not fly, it is probably a bird.

If the hen is the only bird that does not fly and the rabbit is not a bird, then the rabbit does not fly.

Everytime Ernest is sick, he goes to school. Today he is absent, I conclude that he is sick.

It is always girls doing stupid things. If Emile does a stupid thing, he is therefore a girl.

In class, it is forbidden to interrupt somebody. The has not of any right to interrupt a student.

94 – MORAL DILEMMAS

CONCEPTS: GOOD - BAD - FAIR - UNFAIR - MORAL – ETHICAL

Good and bad often appear in contradictory or interlaced ways. We all do at the same time good and bad things, they seem to come together, indivisibly. So it is important to

distinguish the different aspects of a situation, analyze a gesture, so as to evaluate its components and various facets, to make an appropriate judgment.

Several situations are described, which have to be analyzed and broken down, so as to understand the different aspects to answer to a specific question that demands making a judgment. The students will have to take a clear position and justify their answers. It will be possible then to compare the various answers.

Student

**In the following situations, what do you decide?
Explain why.**

1 - I saw my worst enemy stealing money from my best friend. I know that he already received warnings, and that if I report what he did, he will be expelled from the school. Should I tell on him?

2 - Roald is in love with Mary. Mary confessed to me that she does not love him, but is taking advantage of the situation so as to make Roald offer her presents. Must I tell Roald?

3 - Someone proposes to sell you a magic trick that will always make you receive good marks in your exams, even if you have not learned or understood. Should you buy it?

4 - Our mother ordered us not to use Internet while she is away. My brother and I disobeyed and used it. She came back from work, noticed that someone used it and accused only my brother. He is punished: a month without Internet. Must I turn myself in as well?

6 - The teacher tells us not to interrupt others, but she often interrupts students. Does she have more of a right to interrupt us?

7 - Someone offers you a ring that makes you invisible. You are in a shop. Do you take advantage of the situation in order to take any products you like?

8 - Three friends, Silas, Paul and Kevin, together in the street, find a 50 dollars banknote. Silas proposes to share the money equally. Paul proposes to give more to Kevin, because he gets no allowance from his parents, unlike the two others who receive some every week. What should Kevin say?

9 - Your father stole an object in a shop and put it in your backpack. A security guard checks you and finds it. He accuses you of stealing in front of everybody and this embarrasses you. Do you implicate your father?

10 - You don't like it at all that your mother kisses you in public. But you know that it pleases her a lot. Will you let her kiss you when she picks you up at school?

95 - OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE

CONCEPTS: OBJECTIVE - SUBJECTIVE - OBSERVATION - JUDGMENT - CONSTATATION

Every day we can make numerous judgments on beings and things. Regarding one and the other, one given qualifier will look like an objective statement or subjective or unfair accusation. The point is to understand how contradictions emerge: do we go by facts or preconceptions to make our judgments?

Different current qualifiers are given to some characters, some judgments are pronounced; we are involved in determining if they are of an objective nature, a possible statement, or if it is necessarily a subjective judgment, a preconception. To evaluate the assertion, perhaps it will be required to picture some circumstances or examples.

Student

Determine for each of these assertions if it is a judgment or a statement:

Emily is lazy.
Emily is always badly dressed.
Emily is a good student.
Emily is show-off.
Emily works well.
The bus 31 is coming on time.
It is Lionel's fault if he has bad marks.
I fell because he pushed me.
Lionel is taller than Julian.
Lionel is wiser than Julian.
Lionel is a better friend than Julian.
Lionel is richer than Julian.
Lionel is more obedient than Julian.
Lionel deserved being punished.
Children make a lot of noise.
The Teacher is severe.

96 - POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

CONCEPTS: NEGATIVE - POSITIVE - QUALITY - DEFECT

Teacher

As we grow up we discover the human beings who live around the world, both happy and unhappy experience. Because all the people who are around us have amazing behaviors, that affect us in different ways. But beyond this personal experience, it is interesting to analyze what is felt, to examine how the presented actions can be alternately qualified positive and negative.

A list of attitudes and actions is proposed, on which it is interesting to make a positive or negative judgment. To do that, it is helpful to analyze the terms, their inward perception and their outward reception, so as to determine how they can be qualified in a way or the other, or as well explain their paradoxical nature, which is usually the case. If the two criteria can be applied, then it will be necessary to justify both of them.

Student

Determine if each of these attitudes or actions is positive, negative, or both, then give an argument to support your choice:

Curiosity.
Risk.
Mockery.
Stillness.
Obedience.
Silence.
Waiting.
Reaction.

Force.
Invention.
Slowness.
Playing.
Simulating.
Joking.
Bearing.
Haste.

97 – CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTION

CONCEPTS: TO DISTINGUISH – TO OPPOSE – TO DEFINE

Teacher

It is not easy to determine the terms that should be used to describe reality. Sometimes they have to be chosen among a few which are close to each other, but to be able to do that implies to determine clearly the difference or the nuances between them.

Several couples of verbs are presented, here the two words are so close that they used in place of each other, taking them as synonyms. Therefore the point is to produce a conceptual distinction in order to distinguish them substantially.

Student

Explain the difference between the two words:

Selfish and egocentric.
Idea and example.
To find out and to invent.
Generous and honest.
Mean and disobedient.
To explain and to argue.
Pleasure and happiness.
To lie and to make a mistake.
To joke and to make fun.
To know and to think.
Silent and taciturn.
To argue and to quarrel.
To love and to respect.
To ask and to require.
To refuse and to contradict.
To act and to move.

98 - RESPONSIBILITY

CONCEPTS: RESPONSIBLE - FREE - OBLIGATION – TO FORCE - FAULT

Teacher

We are at the same time responsible and not responsible for what happens to us. We can successively call together circumstances, morals, psychology, compassion or mercy to understand and determine the reality of our actions. If we carefully examine facts, we will often be uncertain in making a categorical judgment on events. To make the task easier, it is important to learn how to separate the various criteria in order to identify them.

Different situations of everyday life are proposed, which have to be analyzed so as to determine how much responsibility students have in each circumstance. In each case study, it will be necessary to describe how the person is responsible or irresponsible, and to decide if she or he is responsible or irresponsible.

Student

In each of these circumstances, am I responsible for what I do?

I screamed because he hurt me.

I got angry because she insulted my parents.

I haven't eaten because there wasn't time to.

I didn't do the work because I was told nothing.

I haven't helped him because he didn't ask anything.

I left because no one was interested in me.

I stayed because I was told to.

I had some bad marks because no one helped me.

I had some bad marks because I am not good at school.

I had some bad marks because I don't like school.

I badly acted because I have bad acquaintances.

I chose the wrong way since I was badly advised.

I didn't understand since I heard nothing.

I said nothing because others frightened me.

I laughed because my neighbor made a joke.

I laughed because others laughed.

99 – LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE

CONCEPTS: LITERAL - FIGURATIVE - LINK - ABSTRACT - CONCRETE

Teacher

Thinking sometimes expresses itself under a metaphorical or allusive form that has to be interpreted. Therefore it is necessary to learn to identify and distinguish the registers that are used within the utilization of a given term.

A list of verbs is proposed, which have a double meaning, literal and figurative, that create a distinction between the exact meaning and a sliding sense of reality between the physical and psychological. For each of these verbs, the student must explain the two meanings and if possible show the link between these two meanings.

Student

For each of these verbs, give the literal meaning and the figurative meaning, then show the link between the two:

To catch.
To hit.
To manipulate.
To devour.
To speak.
To take.
To see.
To hear.
To feel.
To touch.
To taste.
To go moldy
To knead.
To gaze.
To lose oneself
To roam.
To walk around.
To say.
To savor.
To float.
To anchor
To tickle.

100 – TO INTERPRET SYMBOLS

CONCEPTS: MEANING - REPRESENTATION - SYMBOL

Teacher

Things and beings are more than their physical reality: they also represent something. Sometimes, we come to entertain a certain connection to some things more because of what they represent than because of what they are. To understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to take distance and know how to interpret.

Several things are listed; each can symbolically represent a common idea. For each of them, the point is to say what they represent, one or several ideas, then to give arguments to justify choices made.

Student

If the words below were used as symbols, what would they represent?

A flag.
An eagle.
An apple.
A book.
A clenched fist.
A barbed wire.
A tower.

A child.
A mountain.
An angel.
A car.
A boat.
A magnifying glass
A unicorn.
A house.
A cloud.

101 – ESTHETICAL JUDGMENT

CONCEPTS: ESTHETICAL - BEAUTIFUL - UGLY - CRITERIA

Teacher

When we are younger, through experiencing art and beauty, we encounter the aesthetic experience in a variety of different forms. Through music or literature, we marvel, feel moved or afraid. We meet the strange, we are attracted or fascinated, for many different reasons which we can identify.

The list below contains many criteria of beauty. The students must choose some of them that seem important to them, explaining why, and some others that do not seem important, even non relevant.

Student

Among the criteria below, which ones seem to represent the best criteria of beauty and which ones the least? Explain your choice.

Shiny.
Realistic.
New.
Rare.
Frightening.
Weird
Evocative.
Former.
Colorful.
Sober.
Precise.
Natural.
Sophisticated.
Deep.
Amusing.
Like-looking.
Significant.
Pleasant.
Harmonious.
Famous.
Cute.
Living.
Sad.

Infinite.

102 – TO JUSTIFY AN INJUNCTION

CONCEPTS: ARGUMENT - REASON - JUSTIFICATION - PERTINENCE

Teacher

We argue to get what we want. For example, many parents, to make their child eat, invoke the classical argument of poor children who do not have enough to eat. The question is to know if this argument is relevant or not, or if it is the best possible.

Different reasons to force somebody to eat are proposed. For each of them, the students must determine whether the argument is relevant or not, explaining with an argument. It will perhaps be necessary for them to imagine a context to make such a judgment, but it will be nevertheless interesting to risk themselves with generality.

Student

Is it a good argument to order somebody to eat?

Eat otherwise you will die.
Eat because there are children who haven't enough to eat.
Eat because your mother tells you to eat.
Eat because food contains vitamins.
Eat because food is expensive.
Eat otherwise you will be punished.
Eat to please your dad.
Eat before I get angry.
Eat to be able to grow up.
Eat to gain strength.
Eat because there may be nothing tomorrow.
Eat because appetite comes with eating.
Eat otherwise you won't have any dessert.
Eat otherwise you will be ill.
Eat because others already finished.
Eat and I will give you a present.
Eat because you must be able to force yourself.
Eat, for the tenth time!

103 - CRITICAL ANALYSIS

CONCEPTS: CONTRADICTION - COHERENCE - INCOHERENCE - LEGITIMATE

Teacher

Detecting the internal contradictions of a text or a speech is a problem that sends students back to their ability to practice critical analysis. It is not about disagreeing with the text anymore, but examining its absurdities or its non-senses.

Different propositions are formulated and all contain a potential problem, from different types: contradiction, tautology, irrelevant argument... Students must identify some of these problems and explain what does not work.

Student

Can you see a problem in the following sentences?

I am a liar.

I climb upstairs.

You must do it because it is like that.

I was not the only one to lie, the others did it too.

I do not mind, but it depends.

I go over there because I go over there.

I do not say what I think.

I do not go over there because.

Judging is not good.

You must do it because it has always been done.

You cannot accuse me, you too did stupid things.

Just do like everyone.

Yes, I did my homework, a little bit.

I did it, I tried.

It is his fault: he asked me to do it.

You must never do like others.

She must have been made a mistake, she always does.

I am right, you cannot prove otherwise.

If you do not do your homework, you won't have a job later.

I say what I say.

I think that two plus two makes four.

104 – TO BELIEVE AND TO KNOW

CONCEPTS: TO BELIEVE – TO KNOW – TO THINK - REASON - OPINION

Teacher

The consideration of the religious question poses the problem of the connection between faith and reason. Must we know or believe what religion teaches us? But beyond religion, it raises the problem of knowledge in general, since quite often what we learn aligns to our adherence to an authority or expert.

Several common assertions are proposed. The exercise involves in determining if such an assertion is related to a belief or knowledge, by justifying this decision. It is also possible to specify the circumstances, which would modify this judgment or would put it into perspective.

Student

Is it knowledge or a belief when I say?

That two plus two makes four.
That the Earth is round.
That I will die one day.
That we must work to live.
That the Teacher had to study.
That Paris is the capital of France.
That I am the son of my parents.
That I will go to school tomorrow Tuesday.
That I exist.
That my book of geography says the truth.
That I am loved.
That tomorrow is Wednesday.
That my father is kind.
That Lyon is the capital of France.
That Monday I will go to school.
That God exists.
That Luther is the founder of Protestantism.
That we are all human.

105 – TO IDENTIFY THE QUESTIONS

CONCEPTS: LOVE - QUESTION - PROBLEM

Teacher

More than referring to an object, a being or a phenomenon, concepts are words that allow to deal with a problem, to answer to a question. Problematizing a concept therefore aims at going back to the origin of the word, finding its interest and its thrust.

Several terms linked to love have been established. For each of these terms students must invent, if they can, three questions to which this term could answer. The realization of this exercise should let broaden widely and problematize the field of the concept of « love ».

Student

Here is a list of terms that have a link with love.

For each of them, if the given word is the answer, what could be the question?

Try to find three different questions for each term.

Love.
Friendship.
To share.
To argue.
Sadness.
Marriage.
To give birth.
Moods.
Jealousy.
Pleasure.
Generosity.
To forgive.

Irritation.
Feeling.
Passion.
Happiness.

Examples of questions about the word « love »:

What is the feeling that strongly binds people together?
What makes us sometimes think less about ourself?
What can make us need to beg no-more pardon?
What makes our head spin most?
Which is the feeling that, according to the proverb, makes us blind?

106 - ANIMALS: ARGUMENTATION

CONCEPTS: ANIMAL - HUMAN - NATURE - COMPARISON

Teacher

Animals are a part of everyday life. We make so many assertions about them that are quite questionable. For example children speak about animals « nice » or « nasty», without realizing the anthropomorphic presuppositions, which such a qualification implies.

A list of assertions concerning animals is given. The students must read them, then find for each of them one or two arguments that defend them, then one or two objections. If the task is too difficult, the students could work in pairs. At the end of the work, the students could summarize the most important ideas that they have on animal issues.

Student

Find one or two arguments in favor of each proposition, and one or two arguments against:

Animals are like men.
People are the owner of their pets.
Some animals are damaging.
The tiger is vicious.
Animals think.
Animals have feelings.
Dogs are people's best companions.
Some animals are more worthy than some others.
Animals are at the service of people.
Man is an animal.
Animals cannot lie.
One can love an animal as well as a human being.
We can understand animals.
Animals can understand us.
Animals have a soul.
Animals have rights.

107 – TO KNOW WHAT IS GOOD

CONCEPTS: GOOD - BAD - JUDGMENT - REASON - FEELING - AUTHORITY

Teacher

We say regularly this is good or this is bad. But how do we know? From where do we take it upon ourselves to decree that things are good or bad?

In the list below we can find most of the arguments, means or sources that are used to determine what is good or what is bad. Students here are involved in comparing and establishing a hierarchic order, which they will have to explain. The order could be determined by familiarity, conviction or any other criteria they will have to clarify. This exercise will make emerge at the same time criteria of good and concepts used to elaborate a moral judgment.

Student

Put in order the means of knowing what is good or bad, from the most important to the less. Explain your choice and your reasoning.

We see the consequences of it.
We do what we like.
We know it from the bottom of our heart.
We think about it in our head.
Everybody knows it.
We ask our parents.
We ask erudite persons.
We ask responsible persons.
We read holy texts.
We read texts of the law.
We wait to grow up.
We discuss about it with our friends.
We read all sorts of books.
We are unable to really know.
It is not very important.
It depends on the situations.
We ask concerned people.
We don't know how we know it.

108 – MAXIMS ON LAUGHTER AND HUMOR

CONCEPTS: LAUGHTER - HUMOR - MAXIM

Teacher

We hear or repeat regularly maxims and quotes on different topics, because they are useful for us, or because they make us think. They are supposed to teach us wisdom, but we do not always have to agree with them.

Let us examine various maxims or quotes on humor and laughter, so as to check if we agree with what they say. The point is to produce an argument that does not make do with expressing agreement or disagreement, but brings a new concept to justify the judgment made.

Student

In the list below of maxims or quotes, find five sentences with whom you disagree, and five with whom you agree, and explain why.

Laughter is particular to humans.
Laughing makes us forget.
To be able to laugh, it is necessary to cry.
It is others who make you laugh, though it is with ourselves that we cry.
Sleep and laughter are the best remedies of the world.
Laugh too much makes the heart harder and lower dignity.
We can laugh about anything but not with anybody.
Laughter is a serious thing that is not a laughing matter.
He who laughs last laughs longest.
Follow the advice of the one who makes you cry, not the one who makes you laugh.
Who loves you makes you cry; who hates you makes you laugh.
He who laughs on Friday, on Sunday will cry.
To get a higher level of humor, first stop taking yourself seriously.
Comedians, like wild animals always go by themselves.
I esteem life is a thing too much important to ever speak about it seriously.
Why were we born, except to amuse neighbors and laugh at them afterwards?
Who laughs at another one must fear others laugh at himself too.
A day is considered wasted when we did not take any time to laugh during it.
There is a time to cry and a time to laugh.
The only remedy against vanity is laughter, and the only fault that could be laughable is vanity.
Man suffers so much that he had to invent laughter.
Loud laughter shows vacuum in a mind.
You unhappy, you who laugh now, since you will be in mourning and tears.
Insensible makes himself heard when he laughs; a wise man laughs very quietly.
I hurry up and laugh about everything, for fear of crying about it.

109 – INTERPRETATION: SUBJECTIVITY

CONCEPTS: UNIVERSAL - PARTICULAR - OBJECTIVE - SUBJECTIVE

Teacher

When we talk and think, it is generally from our personal point of view. It is important to be able to direct things from our own perspective. But we can also do it from a general point of view, or from other's one. Whatever it is, it seems to be helpful and healthy to learn how to multiply the angles from which we consider the problems.

A short story is told, from the point of view of an external narrator. Here the students are asked to retell this story from different points of view, in order to re-think the events in their different perspectives.

Student

Read this simple anecdote with attention, then rewrite it according various perspectives, as indicated below.

Peter went to the store to buy a piece of gruyere. He looked carefully on the shelf, but he did not find it. So he chose another piece of cheese. An employee of the store passed by him. Peter asked him if he knew where to find some gruyere. The employee, without stopping or glancing at Peter, answered him that it was not his department. Peter exclaimed « Thanks for your help! », the employee turned around and replied: « you're welcome ». Irritated, Peter threw the piece of cheese he had in his hand on the shelf, and, passing by the cashier, told her that he would never come back to this store again.

REWRITE THIS STORY FROM THE FOLLOWING POINTS OF VIEW:

Peter at the moment it is happening.

Peter at home, half an hour later.

Peter a year later.

The employee.

The cashier.

A camera that observes the store.

The piece of cheese.

Another customer, who observed the scene.

The employee of a concurrent store went to spy.

Peter's mother, who observed the scene.

The bottle of milk which was in front of the cheeses' shelf.

An alien who, observing humans, would see this scene.

The store manager, who observed the scene.

A psychologist, who observed the scene.

A wise man, who observed the scene.

110 – TO DEFINE

CONCEPTS: NATURE - NATURAL - FUNCTION - DÉFINITION

Teacher

To define the nature of something is to affirm what this thing is, but it also is enouncing some propositions concerning what it does, how it is used, in what it attracts attention, etc. The problem is that these assertions do not have any absolute and definitive value. It remains to be seen in which extend they are still acceptable as generalities. So it will be necessary to discern how far what we maintain is really essential or a mere possibility.

Some assertions on the nature of beings or things are listed. The exercise aims at deciding if students agrees or disagree, and saying why. It is possible to decide to agree or not by giving an argument, but it also is possible to explain how the proposition is true or is false.

Student

**Are the following propositions true or false?
Justify your decision.**

Fighting is in the nature of man.
To be useful is in the nature of an object.
To entertain children is in the nature of a game.
Producing milk is in the nature of a cow.
To eat meat is in the nature of a tiger.
To please the eye is the nature of a sculpture.
To reproduce is in the nature of man.
To be in the dictionary is in the nature of a word.
To be full of ink is in the nature of a pen.
An umbrella naturally has to be opened and folded.
To flow is in the nature of a river.
To think is in the nature of man.
To die is in the nature of life.
Winter is naturally a cold season.
To contain information is in the nature of a book.
To learn is in the nature of a student.
To be food is in the nature of a candy.
To grow up is in the nature of nature.
To exist is in the nature of the universe.
It is in the nature of the Earth to shelter humans.

111 – RICH AND POOR PEOPLE: PROVERBS AND QUOTES

CONCEPTS: RICH - POOR - COMPARE - METAPHOR – TO INTERPRET

Teacher

The problem of wealth and poverty is one of the greatest topics of social concern: it represents one of the principal manifestations of injustice and inequity. For that reason, many proverbs and quotes are made about it, as many views of things to more or less agree with.

Among all these sentences, the point is to find five you agree with, and five you disagree with, explaining why. It is nevertheless recommended to explain the chosen sentences before justifying any judgment, since several have metaphorical range.

Student

Choose five sentences with which you agree, and five you disagree with or which you want to criticize, but before justifying your judgment, explain the meaning of each sentence.

The rich person considers the coming year, the poor person thinks about the present day.
The poor person guesses what wealth gives; the rich person does not understand how poverty feels.

The rich person kills time and time kills the poor person.

Rich people have more money, but poor people have more babies.

Law was made for the rich person and punishment for the poor one.

God must love poor people, otherwise he would not have created so many.

Pride fits the poor person like saddle to a cow.

Every time you loan money to a friend, you harm their memory.

Wealth gives the right to speak.

Having friends makes you rich.

It is better to be the slave of a rich person than the son of a poor one.

Do not associate to a person richer than you.

The one who climbs into the chariot of hope often has poverty for companion.

Wealth and poverty are matters of opinion: if you do not believe them, then you do not have them.

True wealth is to not need anything.

Only he who can do without wealth is worthy to enjoy it.

A well-read man has always wealth in him.

Face to happiness, wealth is like the shadow of smoke.

Wealth is only made of science and health.

Only poor people share.

Real wealth of a man in this world is measurable according to the good he did around him.

Real wealth is discreet.

Our wealth is made of our memories.

Wealth in this world is our children.