TRADITION OF SEARCHING

Philosophy – Lesson One - Introduction

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1. Lesson Overview

Subject	Religious Education / The Tradition of Searching
Topic	Philosophy
Suggested level	Senior Cycle
Suggested duration	60 minutes
Learning focus	What philosophy is; its origins; major branches; relevance today; the role of questioning and rational thought
PowerPoint sequence	Introduction → meaning of philosophy → relevance today → origins in Greece → types of philosophy → Big Questions / Socrates → summary → homework

Learning Intentions

- Understand that philosophy comes from the Greek philosophia, meaning 'love of wisdom'.
- Recognise the importance of wonder and questioning in philosophical thinking.
- Explain where and when philosophy began and why early philosophers are called Natural or Pre-Socratic philosophers.
- Identify five areas of philosophy: metaphysics, logic, ethics, anthropology and epistemology.
- Explain why philosophical questions remain relevant to ordinary life today.
- Begin to use rational thought, discussion and argument when exploring 'Big Questions'.

Success Criteria

- I can define philosophy in my own words.
- I can identify the five branches introduced in the lesson and explain each one.
- I can explain the significance of ancient Greece to the development of philosophy.
- I can distinguish between a factual question and a philosophical question.
- I can give a reasoned response to a philosophical statement or question.

Key Vocabulary

Term	Meaning
Philosophy	From the Greek philosophia, meaning 'love of wisdom'.
Wonder	A sense of curiosity that leads us to question and investigate.
Natural philosophers	Early Greek philosophers concerned with the natural world and the origins of the universe.
Pre-Socratic	A term used for philosophers who lived before Socrates.
Metaphysics	The study of being and the universe.
Logic	The study of reasoning.
Ethics	The study of moral behaviour.
Anthropology	The study of human nature.
Epistemology	The study of knowledge.
Rational thought	Using reason and clear thinking when considering questions and ideas.

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2. Suggested Lesson Plan

Stage / Time	Teacher & Student Activity	Resources
Starter – Think, Pair, Share (5–7 mins)	Display the question: 'What do you think the term philosophy means?' Students write their own definition, discuss with a partner, then share ideas. Do not correct definitions immediately; use responses to establish the idea that philosophy involves questioning and searching for wisdom.	PowerPoint: introductory question slide.
Video / Observation Activity (8–10 mins)	Play the video referenced in the PowerPoint: https://youtu.be/mIYdx6lDDhg. Students complete Activity 1 on the worksheet while watching. Pause where useful and invite students to identify questions or ideas that could be philosophical.	Student Worksheet 1.
Teacher Input – What is Philosophy? (8 mins)	Use the presentation to introduce philosophia ('love of wisdom') and Jostein Gaarder's idea that the capacity to wonder is central to being a good philosopher. Emphasise the presentation's description of philosophy as thinking about the world, our actions and thoughts, God, good and evil, and other 'Big Questions'.	PowerPoint slides on definition and purpose.
Activity 2 – Is it Philosophical? (10 mins)	Students sort or classify questions into 'mainly factual', 'mainly philosophical', or 'could be both'. Follow with brief justification. Stress that philosophical questions are often explored and argued rather than having one concrete answer.	Student Worksheet 2.
Teacher Input – Origins and Branches (8–10 mins)	Explain the presentation's account of philosophy beginning in Greece in the 5th and 6th centuries BCE. Introduce the Natural / Pre-Socratic philosophers and the five branches listed in the presentation.	PowerPoint slides on origins and types.
Activity 3 – The Five Branches Challenge (10 mins)	In pairs/groups, students match each branch to a definition and then apply each branch to a sample question. Review answers as a class.	Student Worksheet 3.
Big Question – Socrates (8–10 mins)	Display: 'The unexamined life is not worth living.' Ask students what they think Socrates meant. Groups prepare an explanation and one example from modern life. Connect this to the presentation's emphasis on rational thought and examination of life.	PowerPoint and discussion prompt.
Plenary / Exit Ticket (3–5 mins)	Students complete three sentences: 'Philosophy means…'; 'One question philosophy helps us explore is…'; 'One thing I learned today is…'.	Exit ticket below.

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3. Classroom Activity 1 – What Is Philosophy?

Name: _____ Class: _____

Student instructions

1. Before watching the video, write your own definition of philosophy.
2. Watch the video and listen for ideas about what philosophy involves.
3. Add two new ideas to your definition.
4. Choose one question from the list below that you think a philosopher might explore and explain why.

A. My first definition:

B. After the video – two ideas I would add:

1. 2.

C. Choose one question that you think is philosophical? Why is this question philosophical in your opinion?

☐ Why do people want to be happy?
☐ What time does school finish?
☐ Is it ever right to break a rule?
☐ How many students are in the class?

My explanation:

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4. Classroom Activity 2 – Big Questions: Philosophical or Factual?

Name: _____ Class: _____

Instructions: For each question, tick F (mainly factual), P (mainly philosophical), or B (could involve both). Then give a reason for two of your choices.

Question	F	P	B
What causes rain?	☐	☐	☐
Is stealing ever justified?	☐	☐	☐
What is justice?	☐	☐	☐
When did Socrates live?	☐	☐	☐
Should the death penalty exist?	☐	☐	☐
What makes a person a good person?	☐	☐	☐
How did the universe begin?	☐	☐	☐
Is freedom more important than security?	☐	☐	☐

Challenge: Choose one philosophical question. Write a possible answer and then write one argument that someone might use to disagree with you.

Question:

_____

My answer:

A possible counter-argument:

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5. Classroom Activity 3 – The Five Branches Challenge

Name: _____ Class: _____

Step 1 – Match the branch to its definition.

Branch	Definition letter	Your explanation
Metaphysics	____	
Logic	____	
Ethics	____	
Anthropology	____	
Epistemology	____	

Definitions:

A. The study of moral behaviour.
B. The study of knowledge.
C. The study of being and the universe.
D. The study of human nature.
E. The study of reasoning.

Step 2 – Apply the branches.

Question	Branch
What is real? Does the universe have a beginning?	
What makes an argument logically strong?	
Is it ever right to lie?	
What is human nature?	
How do we know that something is true?	

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6. Reading Comprehension – The Tradition of Searching: Philosophy



Philosophy is a tradition of searching. The word philosophy comes from the Greek word philosophia, which means 'love of wisdom'. Philosophy begins with a willingness to wonder and to ask questions about the world and our lives. Jostein Gaarder, the author of Sophie's World, suggests that the capacity to wonder is important for anyone who wants to be a good philosopher.

The philosopher asks questions that go beyond simply collecting facts. Philosophical thinking can explore why we act in particular ways, why we think as we do, questions about God, and the existence of good and evil. These are sometimes called the 'Big Questions' because they concern important questions about meaning, values and existence.

Philosophy is still relevant today because people continue to face questions about goodness, evil, freedom, justice, love and death. For example, people may ask whether stealing can ever be justified, whether the death penalty is right, or whether violence in entertainment can be justified. Such questions are not always settled by one concrete answer. Instead, they can be explored and argued through careful thinking and reasoning.

Philosophy began in Greece in the fifth and sixth centuries BCE. The early Greek philosophers were particularly interested in the natural world: where it came from and how the universe began. They are therefore known as Natural Philosophers. They are also sometimes called Pre-Socratic philosophers because they lived before Socrates.

Philosophy has several areas of study. Metaphysics is the study of being and the universe. Logic is the study of reasoning. Ethics is the study of moral behaviour. Anthropology is the study of human nature. Epistemology is the study of knowledge. Together, these areas help philosophers investigate different aspects of reality, human life and how we know what we know.

Socrates is one of the most famous philosophers associated with this tradition of questioning. He said, 'The unexamined life is not worth living.' The statement challenges people to think carefully about their lives, their choices and the

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reasons behind what they believe. Philosophy therefore invites us to stop, wonder, question, examine and search for wisdom.

Questions

1. What does the word philosophia mean?

2. According to the passage, what is an important quality for a good philosopher?

3. Give two examples of 'Big Questions' or issues that philosophy can explore.

4. Why can philosophical questions be different from questions that have a concrete answer?

5. Where and when did philosophy begin according to the passage?

6. Why were the early Greek philosophers called Natural Philosophers?

7. Why are they sometimes called Pre-Socratic philosophers?

8. Match each branch to its area of study: Metaphysics, Logic, Ethics, Anthropology, Epistemology.

9. What does Socrates mean by 'The unexamined life is not worth living'?

10. In your own words, explain why philosophy remains relevant today.

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7. Teacher Answer Key

Activity 1

- Expected key ideas: philosophy means ‘love of wisdom’; it involves wonder, questioning, thinking, reasoning and exploring Big Questions.
- Accept a range of justified responses about which questions are philosophical.

Activity 2

Question	Suggested answer
What causes rain?	F – mainly factual/scientific.
Is stealing ever justified?	P – philosophical/ethical.
What is justice?	P – philosophical.
When did Socrates live?	F – mainly factual.
Should the death penalty exist?	P – philosophical/ethical.
What makes a person a good person?	P – philosophical/ethical.
How did the universe begin?	B – can involve scientific evidence and metaphysical questions.
Is freedom more important than security?	P – philosophical/value question.

Activity 3

- Metaphysics → C; Logic → E; Ethics → A; Anthropology → D; Epistemology → B.
- Application questions: Metaphysics; Logic; Ethics; Anthropology; Epistemology respectively.

Reading Comprehension

5. Love of wisdom.
6. The capacity/faculty to wonder.
7. Any two: goodness, evil, freedom, justice, love, death, God, existence, meaning, etc.
8. They are often issues that can be explored and argued rather than settled by one concrete answer.
9. Greece, in the fifth and sixth centuries BCE.
10. They were concerned with the natural world and questions about its origins and the universe.
11. They lived before Socrates.
12. Metaphysics – being and the universe; Logic – reasoning; Ethics – moral behaviour; Anthropology – human nature; Epistemology – knowledge.
13. It encourages people to examine their lives, choices and beliefs rather than simply accepting them without reflection.
14. Answers should explain that philosophical questions about goodness, evil, freedom, justice, love, death, meaning or existence remain part of ordinary human life.

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8. Exit Ticket

1. Philosophy means

2. One 'Big Question' I think philosophy can explore is

3. One thing I learned about the origins of philosophy is

4. The branch of philosophy I find most interesting is:

Because:

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