

Ella Gillespie and Essex Gall

Metaphysics Lesson Plan

Total Time: 45 mins

Ages:

Materials: “The Very Hungry Caterpillar,” play-doh, markers, pad of paper, baby photos

Goals:

We want to first introduce philosophy as a way to discuss and analyze certain kinds of questions. This includes agreeing on guidelines and demonstrating the kinds of questions we want to ask versus empirical questions, like “what did you eat for breakfast.”

The broader goal for this metaphysics module is to introduce the concept of identity over time. This discussion should touch on first principles if there are any, and what implications come from the acceptance/rejection of these properties. “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” and an activity with play-doh will guide this discussion.

Introduction (10-15 mins):

Introduce ourselves, our names, and our pronouns.

Kids go around in a circle and say their names, their pronouns, their favorite thing to do after school, and why

- Discuss both the answers and the reasons they give
- Note that the reasons they give are important especially in philosophical discussions (we want model how the reasons behind our beliefs in discussions like this are important)

Ask students if they know what philosophy is.

- Break down the word philosophy (philo - love, sophism - wisdom = love of wisdom)
- Stage a mock conversation between Essex and Ella demonstrating a “good” philosophical conversation and “good” philosophical questions versus “bad” ones we want to avoid, like empirical questions.

Introduce that today’s topic will be identity over time

- We’ll be looking at change over time and how much something can change and still be the same thing
- Show the kids photos of us as children to explain the topic

Create ground rules before the discussion

- The rules should be suggested by the kids, not by us

Book: The Very Hungry Caterpillar (10-15 mins)

Questions:

- What happened in this story? (Basic plot)
- Is the caterpillar the same as the butterfly?
- What makes the caterpillar the same as the butterfly and what makes it different?
  - Is it important for you to know whether they are the same or different?

- When does the caterpillar become a butterfly? Does the change occur gradually as he's getting fatter or all at once when he's in the cocoon?
- How much can something change and remain the same thing/original?
- If you woke up in a different body would you still be you?

#### Transition Activity:

Kids stand up and "shake it out" or dance however they want

#### Activity: Play-doh (10-15 mins)

We pass around a big chunk of play doh and everyone takes a small piece of it to create something of their choice.

- It's important that everyone's play doh comes from the same original chunk of play doh.
- Before the students begin their creations, we ask them what shape their play doh is in right now. Is it a circle? Is it a square? Is it a big blob?
- All the students are then allowed to begin their creations (5 mins)
- Once they're finished, we ask them to go around in a circle and say what they have made.
  - How is what they made different from the original chunk of play doh?
  - How is what they made so different from what their friends made?
  - How can it be so different when it's made out of the exact same thing?
  - Is it really different from the original blob of play doh? If so, why?

#### Discussion: Theseus's Ship (10-15 mins) - if we have time leftover

- Explain Theseus's Ship by drawing it on the board and telling the story
- Questions:
  - Is the ship the same at the beginning and the end
  - At what point does the ship stop being the same ship?

#### Conclusion

- Did you disagree with someone at any point in the discussion? How did it feel to disagree?
  - Disagreement is valuable/good
- Did you change your mind at any point throughout the discussion? How did it feel to change your mind?
  - It's okay to change your mind! In fact, it can be great!
- Note that we have had a valuable discussion even if we haven't come to a definite conclusion