

Teaching Epistemology Lesson Plan (real vs. not real)

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Total Time: ~35 minutes

Ages: 4-5

Materials

- *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak
- Paper
- Coloring materials
- Cards with “pretend to...” actions
- Rubber duck

Goal

To engage students in a discussion of knowledge by examining reality versus falsity. How do we distinguish between what is real and what is not real? How do we distinguish between waking and sleeping? Discuss the reality of dreams.

Introduction (5-10 mins)

1. Introduce names with gestures (pretend gestures or own gestures)- MODEL
HIGH ENERGY GESTURES
2. Introduce philosophy + Introduce epistemology
 - a. Emphasize reasoning
 - b. Use “because” language
 - c. Difference between something that is real and something that is not real
 - i. Your shirt is real, an apple is real
 - ii. Are feelings real?
3. Draw pictures (draw something real/ imaginary)
4. Take volunteers to discuss drawings

Book and discussion (10-15 mins)

- Read *Where the Wild Things Are*
 - Max is wearing a monster suit
 - Is Max a monster or a boy?
 - Max’s room grows into a forest
 - Is the forest real?
 - Is Max’s room real?
 - Is Max still in his room? Or is he in an actual forest?
 - How do you know?
 - How can a forest grow in a room?
 - How long has Max been in the forest? Are you sure?
 - He looks the same.
 - Are the monsters real?

- The monsters look like Max but big. Are the monsters big kids?
 - Are the monsters in Max's room?
- How does Max tame the monsters?
 - Is Max's magic real?
- How does it feel to be lonely?
- How do you know someone loves you?
- Where is the smell of the food coming from? How do you know?
- If Max had been sailing for days and weeks and years, how did he end up on the same night in his room?
- Where did the forest go?
- What do you think really happened?

Movement- be a monster! Roar and jump! (~3 minutes)

Wrap-Up Discussion (5 mins)

(use rubber duck to regulate discussion)

- Is the duck real or fake?
- Do you dream? How often?
- Do you ever wake up and think your dream really happened?
- Do you know when you are dreaming?
- Can you tell that you're not dreaming now?
- Is this classroom real?

~ALTERNATIVES~

If Where the Wild Things Are is too scary but not too scary, wrap up (~5 minutes)

- Why was it scary?
- How does it feel to be scared?
- Were the creatures in the book real?
 - If they were not real, how can they be scary?

If Where the Wild Things Are is too scary (10-15 minutes)

- Read *Harold and the Purple Crayon*
 - Do you think the moon is actually shining? Or is Harold making it up?
 - How do you know?
 - Is the apple tree real?
 - How do you know it is an apple tree?
 - Do you know it or do you believe it?
 - How does Harold know the apples are red if (in the book) they are purple?
 - Is the dragon real?
 - How do you know?
 - If not, how was it able to scare Harold?

- Is there something special about the purple crayon?
 - Can you draw a moon in the sky with a crayon?
 - Is the crayon real?
- How does the moon follow Harold the whole time?
- How does Harold know that he did not draw his building or his window?
- Is Harold in his house?
 - Is the house real or fake?
 - How do you know?

(Continue with dream discussion)