**Chapter 1, About what is important**

Aims of the chapter:

* With examples, you are able to explain the difference between ordinary questions and important questions
* You understand that a philosophy of life is the sum of all the important questions and their answers
* You are able to explain, in your own words, what philosophy of life is
* You are able to explain the difference between an individual philosophy of life and a shared philosophy of life
* You understand why Socrates’ opinion is that some people don’t want to learn wisdom and why he divided these people in three group
* You understand that philosophizing means that you ask questions about things that seem obvious and from these questions arise new questions
* You are able to explain that you think about your philosophy of life if you philosophize
* With examples, you are able to explain that thinking deeply about important things in life will help you to live better and happier
* You are able to explain, in your own words, the three rules for a good discussion and you are able to put the rules into practice
* You are able to distinguish the I point of view and the you point of view in a discussion.

**Section 1, Introduction**

Philosophy of life is about things that are important to people. Things that can be seen as important: family, friends, health, happiness, games, money, job, medical care, education.

*Symbol = a sign, a shape or an object that is used to represent something else which is seen as important.*

Task 1

1. Draw a symbol and discus.
2. We are going to draw symbols on the blackboard and discuss whether it is or isn’t a symbol.

Symbols can be well known or personal. Things, shapes or objects can be seen a symbol always or can be a symbol only in certain circumstances.

**Section 2, Ordinary questions and important questions**

Task 2

1. Write 10 questions in your notebook. Number the questions 1 till 10. Use the following scheme.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | question | + pol | - pol |
| 1 |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |
| Etc. |  |  |  |

1. Have a closer look at your questions and decide which questions have to do with philosophy of life and which don’t.
2. Discuss your answers which your group members.

*Philosophy of life distinguishes two types of questions:*

1. *Ordinary questions: questions about facts and therefore questions with a straight forward answer.*
2. *Important questions: questions about the fundamentals in life and therefore the answers to these questions are opinions\* and the answers to these questions can change in time\*\*.*

*\* This means that different people will give different answers*

*\*\* This means that your answer at the age of 12 can be different from your answer at the age of 36.*

Action plan:

Step 1: is it a question about a fact or about a fundamental in life?

Step 2: is the answer straight forward or an opinion?

Step 3: is the answer an opinion about a fact or a fundamental in life?

Task 3

1. Think of a question for each picture.
2. Explain for each question whether it is an ordinary question or an important question.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a. | b. |
|  |  |
| c. | d. |

Task 4

1. Read the story below.
2. Finish the story in 2 - 4 sentences.
3. What is the most important part of the story?
4. Which important question can be asked about this story?
5. Which ordinary question can be asked about this story?

Story:

Four-year-old Diego is playing in the pool. His mother, Darlene, is sitting in the sun beside the pool. She is reading a book. At least, she is trying to read a book.  
"Hey Mom! I am swimming!"  
"Yes honey, you are swimming."  
"Mom, are you watching me?"  
"Yes, honey. Of course, I am watching you!"  
Diego is trying to splash water onto her book. She is trying to ignore this.  
"Mom! I am holding my breath under water."  
The book is getting really exciting. The police are solving a crime. Diego’s mother is trying to concentrate.   
"Mom! You are not even watching me!"  
"Yes, Diego! I am watching you and I am reading a book. I am doing both things at the same time."  
"Mom, are you paying attention? I am doing a handstand."  
In the book, the police officer is chasing a suspect. Diego’s mother is hardly breathing.   
Diego is being quiet for once. Too quiet. Suddenly, Diego’s mother is looking around for Diego. She cannot find him. Suddenly, time is standing still. Suddenly, she isn’t breathing at all.  
"Diego! Diego! Are you hiding from me? Diego! You are not being funny!" She is trying not to panic. She is walking around the pool, looking in the water.

**Section 3, Philosophy of life**

*Philosophy of life can be individual or shared.*

*An individual philosophy of life: the sum of all personal answers to important questions.*

*A shared philosophy of life: the sum of all mutual answers of a community or religion to important questions.*

In a shared philosophy of life, most of the answers to important questions will be the same, but in practice individuals within the group can answer some questions differently.

On the other hand, two or more individual philosophies of life can practically the same, because by chance these individuals give more or less the same answers to important questions.

Task 5

1. Have a talk with your neighbour and find out whether the two of you belong to a shared philosophy of life or do you have an individual philosophy of life?
2. Find out what you have in common with your neighbour.
3. Write a paragraph in which you tell what you found out about your neighbour and what you found out about yourself.

Task 6

1. On the next page you find some symbols, pictures and statements. Which combination of letters belong to which numbers?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | a. | A. We don’t believe in God or gods. We believe in the dignity (waardigheid) of human beings. We strive after a society in which freedom gives people their strength. |
| 2. | Afbeeldingsresultaat voor kinderen christendom  b. | B. We believe that suffering and sadness belong to life itself. The best way to deal with this is letting go ‘desire’. This will give you freedom. |
| 3. | c. | C. We believe in the eminence (grootheid) and omnipotence (almacht) of God. We know how to live, because God explained it to our prophet, who told us. |
| 4. | d. | D. We believe in the eminence (grootheid) and omnipotence (almacht) of God. Our history, in which God is important, is written in books, our guidebooks. |
| 5. | e. | E. We believe in the eminence (grootheid) and omnipotence (almacht) of God. We know how to live, because God sent his son, who explained it to us. |
| 6. | f. | F. We believe in many gods. We don’t worship (aanbidden) them all. As a family we chose one of them and we have an altar in our house for the god. |

**Section 4, Socrates**

Socrates

Lived from 470-399 before Christ. He was rather mysterious. Born in Athens. They say he was ugly and small. But inside he was absolutely righteous.

The philosophical movement he belonged to is called sophism. Their point of view was: although we can’t find answers to all the mysteries of nature, we know for sure that we people, we have to be able to live together. Protagoras said: “Of all things, the measure is Man” (De mens is de maat van alle dingen). In the new democracy of Athens, the sophists saw it as their task to teach people, so they were able to participate the democracy. If you participate democracy you have to know what is important to you and your fellow human beings. You have to know how to make democratic decisions.

Socrates wandered on the streets and markets of Athens talking to people. He didn’t want to teach people but he wanted to learn from them. Important for him was to talk to people. While talking to someone, at first, he asked questions. He acted as if he was ignorant. During the dialogue he tried to point out the weak spots in peoples reasoning. The discussion partner got stuck and realised he was wrong.

If Socrates discussed with someone, people gathered around them. So, everyone could see and hear you were wrong. So, everyone was present when Socrates ridiculed someone. Being ridiculed was how people felt it, but it was not Socrates’ intention.

Socrates did this because he saw it as his task to help people to see the light. It was his conviction that if all people would use their brain, they could understand the philosophical truth. If people would use their brain, they could learn wisdom.

Doing as if he was ignorant while discussing to people, Socrates forced people to use their brain. Doing as if you are ignorant is nowadays called: “Socratic irony”.

At the end Socrates was seen as being unpleasant and annoying. Especially the rulers, the leaders saw him like that. Socrates once said: “Athens is as a slow horse, and I’m the horsefly who is trying to wake it up and trying to keep it alive”. Quite a shock for the leaders, because it was their task to take care of Athens.

As explained before, it wasn’t Socrates’ intention to teas people. There was something inside him that let him no option. He explained this as if there was a divine voice inside him that told him to discuss with people. Socrates protested against death penalties and he refused to report political opponents. As a good citizen of Athens, you were supposed to do so.

Following his mission in life became his death. He himself got a death penalty. He was charged for ‘introducing new gods’ and ‘misleading youngsters’. At his trial was a jury of 500 members and he was found guilty with a narrow majority. He could have appealed for mercy or he could have fled and live in exile. But he didn’t appeal for mercy and didn’t flee. He considered his conscience and the truth more important than his life. He was convinced that whatever he did, he did it with the states interest in mind. He was surrounded by his friends when he drank the poisoned chalice.

One of his statements was: “The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.”

One of Socrates pupils was Plato. Plato is a very famous and great philosopher. Plato wrote many dialogues or philosophical discussions in which he used Socrates as a mouthpiece. It can be that Plato put words in Socrates mouth. That’s why it is hard to say what exactly are Socrates principles.

Learn wisdom was Socrates ambition, he wanted to learn people to use their brain and think about life. He saw that not everyone had the same ambition. Not all people wanted to learn wisdom. *He divided these people in three groups:*

1. *Some people are ignorant and they are not curious at all and therefore they do not want to learn wisdom*
2. *Some people think they are wise already and they think they already know everything and that is why they do not want to learn wisdom*
3. *Some people unthinkingly say whatever other people say, these people do not think themselves and that is why they do not want to learn wisdom.*

Names we use for the three groups are:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.  Thought-  less fool | Gerelateerde afbeelding | 2.  Smarty  pants | Afbeeldingsresultaat voor smarty pants | 3.  Copy cat | Afbeeldingsresultaat voor copycat |

**Section 5, Philosophy**

*Philosophy: the search for knowledge and truth.*

You can philosophize about important questions or you wonder at ordinary things. In both cases you search for knowledge and truth.

If you philosophize you do four things:

1. You think about a subject
2. You investigate possible points of view or possible answers
3. You put into words your point of view or your answer, based on arguments
4. You realise that no one will ever be able to give the **only** right answer or have the **only** right point of view.

You can philosophize on your own or do it with others. If you philosophize with others you have to remember that it is not a match you can win or lose. Philosophizing properly means the two (or more) of you learn wisdom.

There are some rules for a good philosophical conversation:

1. Be open to each other

The starting point is that you can learn from someone else, that everyone is entitled to have his own opinion and that you can ask for an explanation or for an example if you do not understand what is said.

1. Put yourself in someone else’s shoes

We call this the *you-point of view*. This means you really try to understand someone else’s opinion, although it can be different from yours.

1. Think before speaking and do not get personal

Avoid saying things like: ‘you are stupid’, ‘you are always complaining’, what you are saying is wrong’, etc.

1. Stay with the subject

If you stay with the subject, you show interest.

*I-point of view: your opinion on a subject.*

*You-point of view: you putting yourself in someone else’s shoes and trying to understand someone else’s opinion on a subject.*

Task 7.

Your individual philosophy of life

Create a poster, drawing, film, comic, Power Point, story, …. In your creation you have to show four things:

* What is important in your life?
* Why is it important?
* How can that be seen?
* Give an example about how philosophizing or thinking about important questions made you a happier person?

Remember to tell your teacher what exactly you are going to make and in which way you are going to hand it in.