THE QUEST FOR THE STONE OF WISDOM

An Introduction to Philosophy Using Creative and Critical Thinking

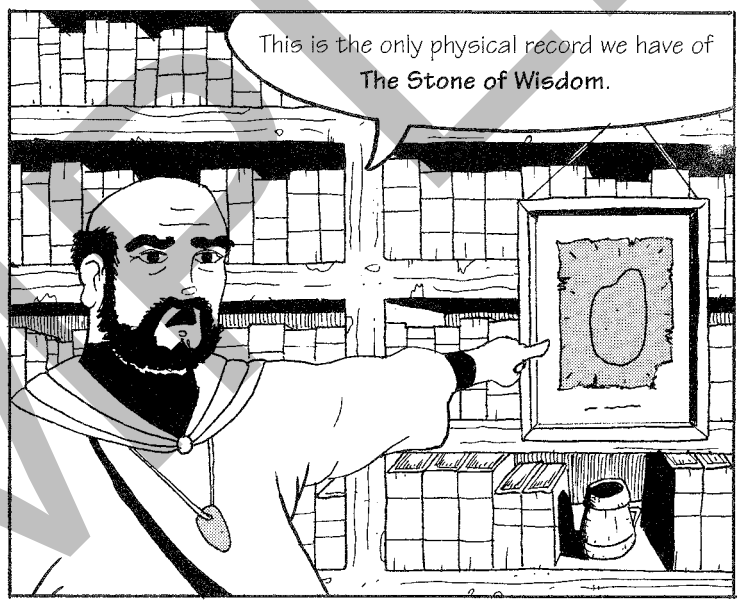
STUDENT'S HANDBOOK

Michael Parker
illustrated by James Willcocks

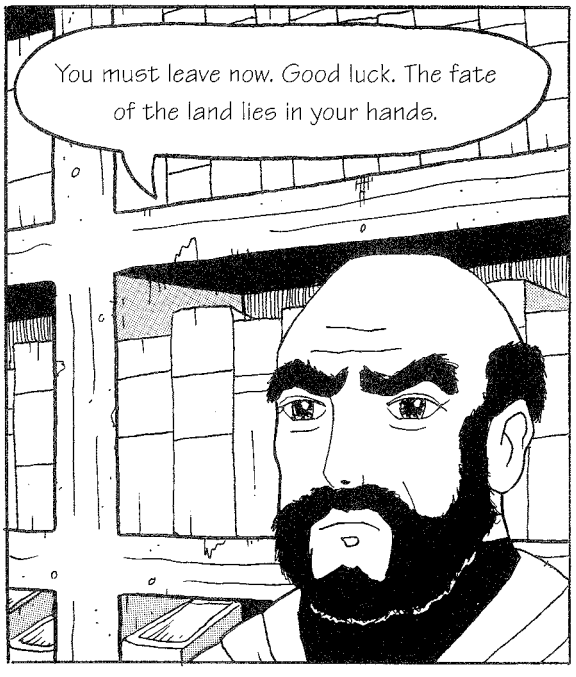
SAMPLE


The Memnon still controls much of the land. She will try to stop you in your quest at every turn.
One of your teachers, Rinpoche, will be travelling with you.




This is the only physical record we have of **The Stone of Wisdom**.


Over the thousand years, our thoughts of the Stone have become as real to us as the Stone itself, because it is all we have ever had.


You must leave now. Good luck. The fate of the land lies in your hands.

SAMPLE

CONTENTS

UNIT 1: What is life? 26
If my computer could think and feel for itself, would it have become alive?

UNIT 2: Thoughts and thinking 30
Where do my thoughts go when I have finished thinking them?

UNIT 3: Dreams—Do we exist? 37
How do I know I'm not dreaming right now?

UNIT 4: Breaking the law: Should Kohlberg steal the drug? 41
Would I steal a very expensive medicine to save the life of someone I love?

UNIT 5: Dreams and reality 45
How do I know I'm not caught in the middle of someone *else's* dream?

UNIT 6: Animals 50
Do we have the right to eat other animals?

UNIT 7: Free will and fate 54
If it is my fate to get into a fight this afternoon, is there anything I can do to stop it?

UNIT 8: Death 57
If somebody I know dies, could they keep living in my memory?

UNIT 9: Good and right 61
If I roll around in the mud, eat worms, then run down the street with no clothes on, have I done anything wrong?

UNIT 10: Memory 65
If someone *remembers* something they did not actually do, is this a real memory?

UNIT 11: Beauty and art 70
How can my parents hate the music I love?

UNIT 12: Mind and body 73
If all my thoughts were put into my best friend's body, and all their thoughts were put into my body, who would be whom?

UNIT 13: Battle of the senses 78
Is what my best friend sees as red the same thing that *I* see as red?

UNIT 14: Invention/discovery 85
Would two plus two still equal four if nobody in the world could count?

UNIT 15: Identity 88
If I had grown up in a New York slum, would I be a different person from the way I am now?

UNIT 16: Mind game 91
If I could make up all the laws in the world, what would they be?

UNIT 17: Living forever (Immortality) 97
If somebody offered me the chance to live forever, would I take it?

UNIT 18: Wisdom and infinity 102
What happened before the beginning of the Universe?

SAMPLE

2 THOUGHTS AND THINKING

You will need to read the comic section for Unit 2 before you start this unit.

1 THINKING AND WRITING

1 Can the thoughts of the *Stone* ever be as real as the *Stone* itself?

2 What happens to people when they think? For example, what happens to their brains, their actions, their personalities?

2 DISCUSSION: SPARE A THOUGHT

The section in the comic about the thoughts of the *Stone* may make you want to discuss some of the following questions. Perhaps you want to discuss your answers to the *Thinking and writing* section or you may want to ask some of your own questions.

1 Where do thoughts come from?

2 Where does a thought go when we have finished thinking it?

3 Is a thought made up of smaller thoughts?

4 Would there be any thoughts if there were nobody to think them?

5 If you have a thought about a cupboard, is your thought a *copy* of the cupboard?

6 Can you see thoughts? Where are they?

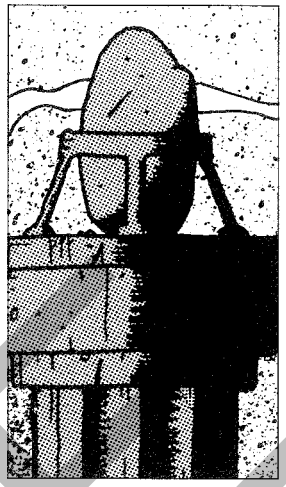
7 If your friend tells you a thought, and then you think it, is your thought identical to theirs? Is your thought a copy of theirs? Can you think somebody else's thoughts?

8 If you are in love, are your thoughts in love as well?

SAMPLE

9 What are the differences between the following types of thinking:

- imagining
- remembering
- wondering
- reflecting?



10 Do you think in your sleep?

11 Is thinking about something better than doing it?

12 Are thoughts facts?

3 WHAT I LEARNT FROM THIS DISCUSSION

4 EXERCISE: HOW *REAL* ARE THOUGHTS?

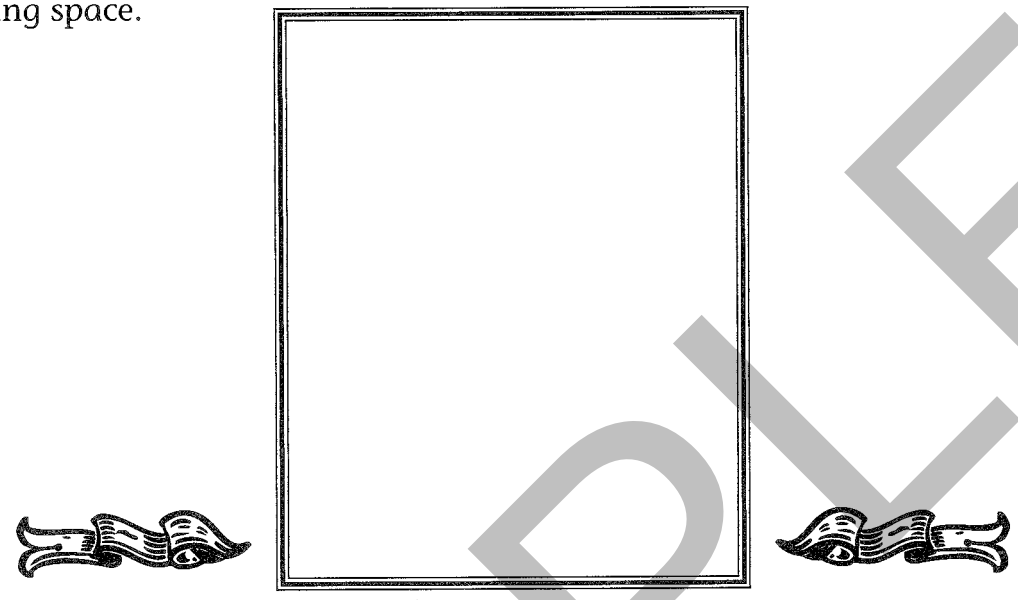
STEP 1:

In the space below draw a picture of something that is important to you (a holiday spot would be good, though you can make it something like a pet instead).

SAMPLE

STEP 2:
Explain to the person next to you why this thing is important to you.

STEP 3:
Go to a magazine, cut out a photo of a person you have never seen before and stick it in the following space.



STEP 4:
Write some thoughts about the person here (eg what they might eat for breakfast).

Thought One:_____

Thought Two:_____

STEP 5:
Discuss with the rest of the class:

1 Which is more real right now, your *drawing* of the thing or the thing itself?

2 Which is more real to you *right now*, your *thoughts* of the thing or the thing itself?

3 What are more *important* to you:
- Your *thoughts* about the thing that you drew?
- Your *drawing*?
- The *thing* that you drew?

4 Look at your thoughts about the photo you found. Are they more real to you than the person in the photo?

5 What would be more real: your thoughts about the photo or the person in the photo?
- If the person in the photo were dead?
- If it were a computer portrait of somebody who had never existed?

SAMPLE

5 CAN WE STOP THINKING?

Close your eyes and try to stop thinking. Can you do it, just for a few seconds? Why/Why not?

Talk about this with the class, then try writing the ending to the story below.

6 THE VACUUM CLEANERS OF EVIL

All of the vacuum cleaners in Australia come to life one night . . . and they are all evil and angry. They have a cunning plan to revenge themselves on humankind for making them suck carpets for so long.

So . . . at two o'clock in the morning, they creep into their owners' bedrooms, place themselves next to their owners' ears . . . and turn themselves on! All of their sleeping owners have their thoughts sucked away into the vacuum cleaners' dust bags. The vacuum cleaners all go on a rampage for the rest of the night and suck away everybody's thoughts.

Write the story of what happens the next morning when everyone wakes up without thoughts. You can make it funny or serious. If you want, you can include what happens to the thoughts in the dust bags as well.



SAMPLE

7 REASONING EXERCISE: COMING TO CONCLUSIONS

Here is one way of coming to some conclusions that are good for you.

STEP ONE:
Work out the problem properly
eg Mrs Smith seems to get cross with Dominique every morning for chatting to her best friend in class. How could Dominique stop getting into trouble?

STEP TWO:
Make up a theory to help answer the problem
eg Mrs Smith does not like people chatting to each other in the mornings in class. So Dominique should only chat in the afternoon.

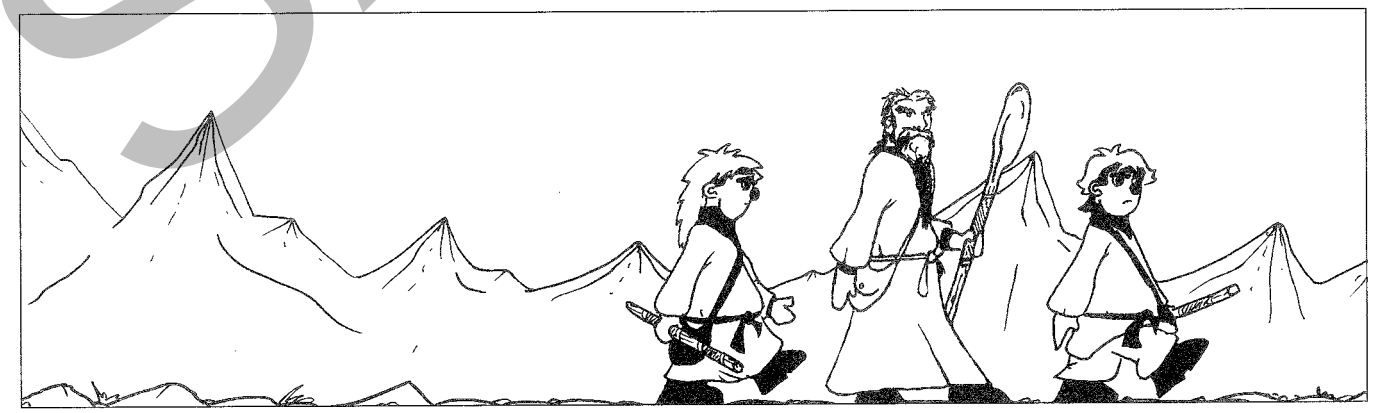
STEP THREE:
Test the theory with evidence
eg Dominique does not chat in the morning. She does not get into trouble. So far so good. Dominique chats to her best friend in the afternoon. She gets into trouble.

STEP FOUR:
Use the evidence to find a problem with the theory
The theory half works because it identifies that Mrs Smith does not like people chatting in class. But it seems to be too narrow to say that she doesn't like it in the morning only.

STEP FIVE:
Revising the theory to take account of the evidence
Mrs Smith does not like people chatting in class at all.

You can keep revising and testing a theory until it is right for you and fits the evidence.

Here are some five-step stories with only the first step done. Finish the steps to show how the process of inquiry could be used to solve these problems. In your examples, try to make the first theory *half* right and the second theory *all* right.



SAMPLE

STEP ONE:

Problem—Rita, aged three, cries when her parents put her to bed at four o'clock in the afternoon.

STEP TWO:

STEP THREE:

STEP FOUR:

STEP FIVE:

STEP ONE:

Problem—Scott bullies James in the playground.

STEP TWO:

STEP THREE:

STEP FOUR:

STEP FIVE:

SAMPLE

STEP ONE:

Problem—Julie Jones wants to be Prime Minister, but she is not very popular.

STEP TWO:

STEP THREE:

STEP FOUR:

STEP FIVE:

SAMPLE

