



A G.A.T.E.WAYS JOURNEY

for gifted Year 5 and 6 children with

a love of thinking and learning

'CURIUSER AND CURIUSER

...a philosophical adventure down the rabbit hole'

G.A.T.E.WAYS is an independent organisation offering challenging and enriching activities and experiences to develop and extend highly able children. This *JOURNEY* for both girls and boys will run over four sessions.

Who am I? It is a question we ask ourselves, and those around us ask, every day. Even when we think we might know the answer, bigger questions usually arise. Philosophy is all about asking big questions, seeking truth, and examining concepts. In this Journey we will join philosopher Lewis Carroll's Alice (of Wonderland fame) on an intriguing trip down the rabbit hole, where we will seek answers to questions about what makes us who we are, what it means to belong, and whether we are the same person today as we were yesterday. Throughout this Journey, we will use philosophical inquiry techniques to explore metaphysics, political philosophy, and ontology, and we will draw on the works of some great philosophers including Leibniz, Kant, Heraclitus and, others.

Session 1: Curiouser and Curiouser!

When Alice lands at the bottom of the rabbit hole and wishes to follow the White Rabbit, she comes upon her first challenge - she is far too big to fit through the door! Throughout her adventures in Wonderland, Alice uses magical food and drink to grow and shrink. Through the establishment of a Community of Inquiry we will ask the question, if your body or appearance changes, are you still the same person? We will use Plutarch's classic thought experiment, The Ship of Theseus, to explore the relationship between physicality and identity, and then explore the concept of identity, and how it relates to our physical presence in the world. Finally, you will create a Venn diagram, to identify the parts of you that have changed, and the parts of you that have stayed the same over your lifetime.

Session 2: How Doth the Little Crocodile...

After making her way through the door, Alice wonders whether she has been changed during the night. Is she still Alice? Has she become one of her friends? Or maybe, she is someone different altogether! To solve this puzzle Alice tries to test her memory by recalling facts, and reciting poems to make sure she is still herself. This session, just like Alice, we will explore the role that memory plays in forming our identities. Using the book *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge* as a starting point, we'll ask questions and critically analyse how memory contributes to who we are. Are we just the sum of our experiences? Does a person with amnesia cease to be who they were before? What if aliens stole your brain in the night and, using celestial goop, kept it alive in a jar? You wake up with all your memories, and you still feel like you, but is that possible without a body? Then, before you head home, we will create a timeline of memories. Which ones would you need to keep, and how many could you lose without losing yourself in the process?

Session 3: The Serpent and the Pigeon

During Alice's adventure, she comes upon a pigeon who insists that she is a serpent. In fact, wherever she goes in Wonderland, someone, or something, keeps telling her who, or what, she is. To the White Rabbit, she is Mary-Ann, to the pigeon she is a serpent, and by the time she makes it to meet the Queen of Hearts, all Alice can be certain of is her name! This session we will discuss some of the different ways that people around us can view us, and how (and if) that aligns with our self-identity. Sometimes others' perceptions of us are based on parts of themselves that they think they identify in us; sometimes they perceive us as we perceive ourselves; but often people's perceptions of us are based on the images we project to the outside world—almost like a mask or a series of different masks we wear for different people and situations. Once we've had time to explore this concept, you'll get creative as you decorate a mask of your own. One side will represent how you think others perceive you, and the other side will represent how you perceive yourself. Then, using the ideas you generate, we will dive into a Community of Inquiry to explore how our own, and other peoples', perceptions of us can impact upon our identity.

Session 4: Wake Up Alice, It's Time For Tea...

As Alice makes her journey through the topsy-turvy world of Wonderland, she constantly marvels at the strangeness of it all. It's not at all like home, and she can't help feeling she just doesn't belong! After taking a look at Shaun Tan's wonderful book, *The Lost Thing*, we'll explore the concept of belonging, and how it relates to our identity. We investigate what it means to belong, how we know that we belong, how belonging shapes our identity, and what 'belonging' says about who we are. We will reflect on what we have learned about identity, and work to solidify our sense of self-understanding by developing a list of the things that we feel constitute our individual identities. Then, to end the session, you will have an opportunity to create a jigsaw puzzle of all the things that make up your identity.

Homework

You may be asked to complete short writing tasks between each of the sessions.

About the Presenter

Carley is a Philosopher, Ethicist, and PhD candidate, who loves doing philosophy with kids! She believes kids are naturally great philosophers because they're so full of wonder. Carley has developed and facilitated several philosophy workshops for kids, and she is passionate about making philosophy a fun, everyday part of life.

Requirements

- For Session 1 bring two photos of yourself: one recent, one as a toddler;
- Bring a notebook and a well-stocked pencil case with coloured pencils and textas; scissors.
- Also bring a snack (no nuts please)