



EduTrend Contents

P4C · THOUGHT EXPERIMENTS · HIGH SCHOOL

Mary's Room

Does knowing all the facts about colour tell you what red looks like?

Ages 15–18

Level: Advanced

60 minutes

Circle and pairs · up to
30

Activity 05

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 student worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 05 · AT A GLANCE

Mary's Room

Students consider a thought experiment from the philosopher Frank Jackson: Mary is a brilliant scientist who knows every physical fact about colour vision, but she has lived all her life in a black and white room. One day she steps outside and sees a red tomato. Does she learn something new? Teams map the argument, test objections and enquire into what the case shows about knowledge and the mind.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- reconstruct a philosophical argument;
- distinguish knowing facts and knowing experiences;
- evaluate objections;
- reflect on the mind–body debate.

KEY WORDS

knowledge · experience · physical · consciousness · qualia · argument

CURRICULUM LINKS

Science: vision and light.
Psychology: perception.
Philosophy of mind.

1

STIMULUS

Share something to think about

2

THINK

Quiet thinking time

3

QUESTION

Create and choose a question

4

ENQUIRE

Reason together

5

BUILD

Agree, disagree, add

6

REFLECT

Last words

Materials (per class)

- Scenario and argument map
- Question and thinking-move cards
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Read the stimulus and note possible concepts.
- Prepare question and thinking-move cards.
- Set out a circle so everyone can see each other.
- Print the worksheets.

SAFETY

Everyone may pass. Discuss ideas, not people, and use the story or invented examples rather than personal situations.

ACTIVITY 05 · SESSION PLAN

Step by step

Stay neutral: ask for reasons, examples and counter-examples rather than giving your own view.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–10 min Stimulus	Present Mary's room and the argument map.	<i>"What did you notice?"</i>
10–22 min Questions	Students create questions in pairs and vote on one.	<i>"Which question is most interesting to talk about?"</i>
22–52 min Enquiry	Enquire into the chosen question, building on each other's ideas.	<i>"Does Mary learn something new?"</i>
52–60 min Last words	Each person says one last thought or passes.	<i>"Has your thinking changed?"</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Argue whether Mary learns something new and answer the strongest reply.

ACTIVITY 05 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

Frank Jackson presented the knowledge argument in 1982, using the case of Mary.

Critics reply that Mary gains a new ability or way of knowing, not new facts.

Common ideas to listen for

- “The case is about colour blindness.” Mary can see colour.
- “It proves science is wrong.” It questions what science covers.
- “Everyone agrees.” Jackson himself later changed his view.

Adapting the activity

Support

Focus on the yes/no question first.

Stretch

Research one reply to the argument.

WORKSHEET 1

Argument map

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Reconstruct.

Argument map

Step	Statement

WORKSHEET 2

Thinking moves

Use these in the enquiry.

Thinking moves

Thinking move	My example
I agree with... because...	
I disagree with... because...	
An example is...	
A counter-example is...	
Building on what... said...	

WORKSHEET 3

Last words

Before and after.

Can science explain everything about experience? Before the enquiry I thought... Now I think... because...

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight students; copy as needed.

Student	Asks a philosophical question	Gives reasons and examples	Listens and builds on others

Suggested codes: W = working towards · E = expected · G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Mary's Room is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Thought Experiments programme (high school, level: advanced). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

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