



EduTrend Contents

P4C · REALITY AND IMAGINATION · MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Cave

Plato's allegory and what counts as real

Ages 12–14

Level: Intermediate

50 minutes

Circle and small groups
· up to 30

Activity 04

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

ACTIVITY 04 · AT A GLANCE

The Cave

Students hear a retelling of Plato's allegory of the cave from the Republic. Prisoners have only ever seen shadows on a wall and think the shadows are real. One prisoner escapes, sees the real world and returns, but the others do not believe him. Students act out the story with a torch and shadows, then create questions and enquire into whether we might be like the prisoners.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- explain Plato's allegory;
- interpret its meaning;
- apply it to modern life;
- reach a justified view.

KEY WORDS

allegory · shadow · cave · Plato · reality · truth

CURRICULUM LINKS

English: allegory and symbolism.
Science: light and shadows. Media studies: screens and reality.

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)

- Cave story card
- A torch and objects for shadows
- 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 04 · 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
0–8 min Stimulus	Retell and act out the allegory with shadows.	<i>“What did you notice?”</i>
8–20 min Questions	Students create questions in pairs and vote on one.	<i>“Which question is most interesting to talk about?”</i>
20–44 min Enquiry	Enquire into the chosen question, building on each other’s ideas.	<i>“Could we be like the prisoners in the cave?”</i>
44–50 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)

Explain what the cave might stand for today.

ACTIVITY 04 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

The allegory of the cave appears in Book VII of Plato's Republic.

Plato used it to suggest that education turns people from appearances towards a better understanding of reality.

Common ideas to listen for

- "It is just a story about a cave." It is an allegory.
- "The prisoners are stupid." They only know shadows.
- "We are definitely in a cave." It raises questions, not proof.

Adapting the activity

Support

Act out the story.

Stretch

Write a modern version of the cave.

WORKSHEET 1

Our questions

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Write questions the stimulus makes you wonder about.

Our questions

Question	Who asked	Votes

WORKSHEET 2

Inside the allegory

Interpret.

Inside the allegory

Part of the story	What it might stand for
The shadows	
The prisoners	
The escape	
The sun	

WORKSHEET 3

Last words

Before and after.

Why do the prisoners not believe the one who escaped? 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

The Cave is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Reality and Imagination programme (middle school, level: intermediate). 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.

© 2026 EduTrend Contents. This activity may be printed and copied for use with students in your own school, club or home. It may not be resold or published elsewhere. Photos: Aaron Burden / Unsplash.