



EduTrend Contents

P4C · ASKING PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS · PRIMARY

The Question Quadrant

Sorting questions to find the ones worth thinking about together

Ages 8–11

Level: Developing

45 minutes

Whole class circle · up
to 30

Activity 02

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

ACTIVITY 02 · AT A GLANCE

The Question Quadrant

Pupils read a short story and write questions about it. They then sort the questions using a question quadrant, a tool popularised by the Australian philosopher Philip Cam: closed questions answered by the story, closed questions needing outside knowledge, open questions about the story, and open questions for thinking. They vote on a thinking question for the enquiry.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session pupils can:

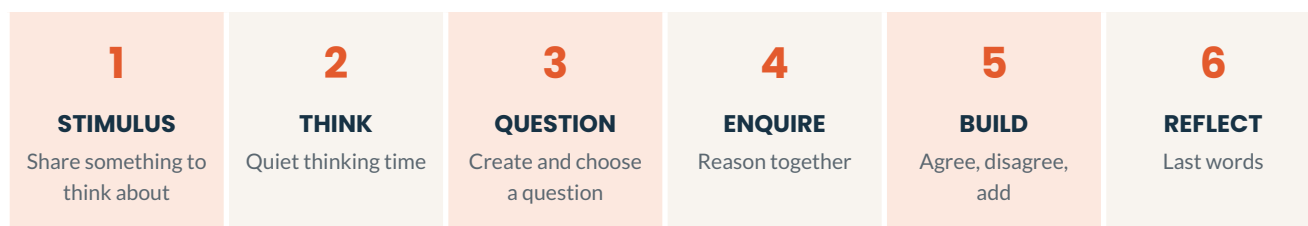
- write questions about a text;
- sort questions by type;
- identify philosophical questions;
- justify their choice.

KEY WORDS

open · closed · factual ·
philosophical · sort · quadrant

CURRICULUM LINKS

English: comprehension questions.
Science: investigable questions.
PSHE: discussion.



Materials (per class)

- Short story
- Quadrant chart
- Sticky notes
- 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 02 · 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	Read a short story and collect questions.	<i>"What did you notice?"</i>
8–18 min Questions	Pupils create questions in pairs and vote on one.	<i>"Which question is most interesting to talk about?"</i>
18–40 min Enquiry	Enquire into the chosen question, building on each other's ideas.	<i>"What makes a question good for thinking about?"</i>
40–45 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 why your chosen question is good for a class enquiry.

ACTIVITY 02 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

Sorting questions helps pupils see that some questions need information while others need thinking together.

Choosing the question gives pupils ownership of the enquiry.

Common ideas to listen for

- “Open questions are always better.” Closed ones have uses.
- “Philosophical means difficult words.” It means big ideas.
- “Only one question is right.” Several may be good.

Adapting the activity

Support

Sort into two groups first.

Stretch

Turn a closed question into a philosophical one.

WORKSHEET 1

Question quadrant

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Sort your questions.

Question quadrant

Closed, in the story	Closed, need to look it up	Open, about the story	Open, for thinking

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 a question be both simple and deep? Before the enquiry I thought... Now I think... because...

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

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

Pupil	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 Question Quadrant is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Asking Philosophical Questions programme (primary, level: developing). 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 pupils in your own school, club or home. It may not be resold or published elsewhere. Photos: Adriana Elias / Unsplash.