

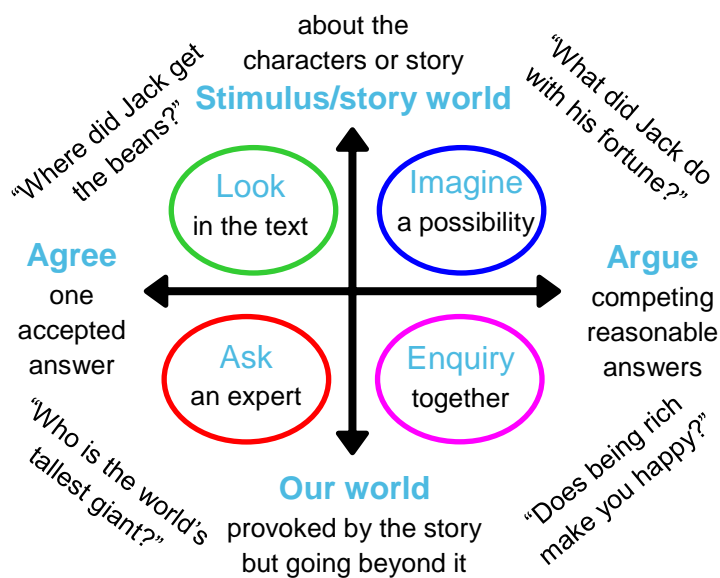
What makes a question philosophical?

You've just presented a picture book to a class. The story is rich with problems and juicy, contestable concepts like fairness, trust and greed. You're waiting to see what questions they come up with. And the first question is...

"Where did the frogs go?"

One of the difficulties of getting children to understand the difference between questions suitable for P4C and other kinds of questions is that they don't have enough examples to go on. So textual and factual questions can come thick and fast to begin with. More tricky, it can be hard for them to distinguish between open ended questions where "anything goes" because they are a matter of pure imagination, and those that might have different answers but where you can still work towards better answers by a reasoned argument.

Here's a reminder of the "Question Quadrant" from Pocket P4C, my take on an idea of Phil Cam's. It's best to mark it out with tape and labels in the middle of the circle.



Below are a variety of questions using the story Goldilocks as a stimulus. You could get the group to retell the story briefly (you can do this with teenagers too – they know it's just for a training exercise). Get each person in turn to stand at the centre of the quadrant and asks one of the questions. The rest then point to the section they think the questioner should be in, and a few give their reasons.

You could then proceed to getting them to come up with their own questions, again with the group telling each questioner where to stand.

Some questions will fit into two or more categories depending on how the question is interpreted (as is the case with the examples). You could have a vote for a question to discuss, but this is mainly intended as a skill building exercise. The moving around makes what could be a rather dry activity a little more engaging and informal.

There's another debate to be had about whether all questions in the "enquiry" section are "philosophical enough" for P4C. But that's for another day.

What do bears really eat?

Why did Goldilocks like the
baby bear's bed?

What did the bears do next?

Does Goldilocks have any
brothers and sisters?

Can it ever be right to steal?

Was it wrong for Goldilocks
to go inside?

If someone's door isn't
locked, is it OK to go inside?

Whose porridge did
Goldilocks like best?

Why did Goldilocks go into
the house?

Why do girls in story books
usually have blonde hair?

Can bears talk?

How do people become
spoilt?

Is it good to be fussy?

How much should people
share with each other?

Do bears eat people?

Do bears get jealous?