



Philosophy  
Circles

# Would you like to be taught by a robot?

*These stimuli were suggested by Brynhildur Sigurðardóttir, a bulletin reader from Iceland. The first is about a robot teacher that has been used to show new technology to Japanese children. In an ideal P4C-world, we would want to give pupils an experience of being taught by a robot as the stimulus. Unfortunately, school budgets probably won't stretch to that. So next best thing? If you can do a good robot impression, give it a go...*

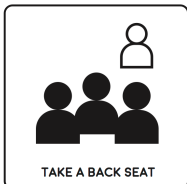


If pupils could create a robot that could do anything, what would it do? Get them into pairs to discuss. To add a nice touch of collaboration, a few could feed back and have their partner act as the robot.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bE4DnQ5GITc>

You could begin discussing the clip straight away, but best to create a bit of a back story. Announce that your school is thinking about bringing these robots. The Headteacher is looking for your class' advice. Talk of your relief at being able to take more holidays. What do the pupils think about this proposal? What would be the advantages and disadvantages?



Let the discussion flow, and scribe the points being made. Robot teachers raise interesting questions about the nature of education, knowledge, and the differences between people and machines, natural and artificial intelligence. Pupils will touch on many of these as they think through the consequences of robot teachers.

Towards the end, hold a vote on whether robots should replace teachers. On balance, it's unlikely to pass. But could robots play any role in school? Here's a video about South Korea's plan to put 8,000 teaching assistant robots into classrooms: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWR7x48AwZk>

## NEXT STEPS

A more detailed article below featuring a robot interacting with an autistic boy (more for your own interest): [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/11/science/11robots.html?\\_r2&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/11/science/11robots.html?_r2&pagewanted=all) but it could be edited to give pupils new ideas about robots and special educational needs.

Hold a new discussion, but imagine you are 100 years into the future. Would the pupils stick to the same arguments? Or present a future where robots have become the norm, but now some people want to revert back to humans doing the teachings. What would be the arguments for each side? You might get similar ideas, but framed in a whole new way.