



Just Think...

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Introduction

Just Think... is a new series of funny and thought-provoking stories to help children from 7 - 11 to get to grips with big ideas. Each story is framed around one of life's big questions, such as 'what does it mean to be brave?' or 'is it ever ok to lie?' Drawing on tested 'philosophy for children' techniques, the *Just Think...* series will help students to probe key ethical and interpersonal concepts, develop articulacy and build their capacity to ask high-level questions.

Each story is divided into three parts, with a break after each for discussion and activity. These notes suggest lines of approach for class, group and individual work to focus the issues raised by each story and to explore the dilemmas faced by the characters in them.

In this series :

Sir Alvin and the dragon... or what does it mean to be brave?

A cowardly medieval knight is called upon to save a village from a dragon. But what exactly is the bravest course of action?

Larry the lyrebird... or is it ever ok to lie?

Larry is a compulsive liar who stretches the truth any way he can, from the telling of tall tales and jokes to dangerously misleading the animals of the rainforest as they prepare for their big show.

Dave's cave... or what's fair?

Brian and Dave are cavemen grappling with the notion of fairness in a society based on survival of the fittest...not easy when there are sabre-tooth tigers and woolly mammoths to contend with.

Automato tomato... or what is a good life?

Princess Felicity is keen to give up her 'perfect' life on planet Automato, where her every need is met at the touch of a button, while down on earth, Billy would do anything to swap places with her.

Green Beard's treasure... or why are we here?

Pirate Molly leads a crew of scallywags on an adventure to find Green Beard's hidden treasure. Along the way, they face the trickiest question of all: 'why are we here?'

Using Just Think... in the classroom

The *Just Think...* series is designed to encourage high-level questioning skills. There are no clear 'answers' to the questions raised by the stories in the series, rather the aim is to encourage discussion and debate.

Each programme is 15 minutes long and has three parts. You can listen to the whole programme at once, or stop listening after each part to engage with the classroom activities and discussions.

Just Think... maps broadly to PSHE guidelines at KS2 by providing opportunities:

- 'for children and young people to reflect on and clarify their own values and attitudes' and 'to explore, clarify and if necessary challenge, their own and others' values, attitudes, beliefs, rights and responsibilities.'

You may choose to focus work with *Just Think...* on developing skills in English, particularly discussion skills, for example:

- making contributions relevant to the topic and taking turns in discussion
- qualifying or justifying what students think after listening to others' questions or accounts
- dealing politely with opposing points of view and enabling discussion to move on.

You can also find suggestions for focussed writing activities inspired by the *Just Think...* stories in the individual programme notes.

SIR ALVIN & THE Dragon

~OR~

WHAT DOES IT
MEAN TO BE BRAVE?



Programme 1

written by Alex Ganley

A cowardly medieval knight is called upon to save a village from a dragon.
But what exactly is the bravest course of *action*?

You may wish to ask some of these questions after listening to each part of the story:

Part 1

How would you describe Sir Alvin?

Is he brave? Why?/ Why not? How can you tell?

What is the opposite of bravery? Can you give an example?

Sir Alvin is scared of squirrels because he dreamt about them.
Can we be afraid of something which isn't real or true?

What does Scabwell think of Sir Alvin?

Would you be scared of the dragon?

What would you do if you were in Sir Alvin's shoes?



Part 2

Is bravery something you can inherit, like a name?

Is 'brave' something you are or something you do?

The villagers say that bravery is:
'When you do something you're scared of.'
'Standing up for what you believe in.'

Do you agree? Why?/ Why not?

Does the situation in the village change when Sir Alvin learns
that the dragon has Susie Peabody? How? Why?

At the end of part two, Sir Alvin decides to fight the dragon.
Is he being brave? Why?/ Why not? What is his main reason
for agreeing to do it?

Is it brave to do something even if you're just doing it
because someone tells you to? If you're doing it just to look
cool? If you're doing it to help someone else?



Part 3

Is it always right to do the bravest thing?

Do you think Sir Alvin would have gone to fight the dragon if he had known that Susie Peabody was a doll?

Sir Alvin says he went to fight the dragon for several reasons:

- because the villagers told him to
- to prove his bravery
- to rescue Susie Peabody
- so he could keep his name
- so they villagers wouldn't tease him any more
- because he got talked into it

Which do you think is the best reason? Which do you think is the worst reason? Why?

Roger doesn't spend time with the other dragons because he doesn't agree with their behaviour. Do you think that's brave? Why?/ Why not?

Why does Sir Alvin tell the villagers that he won't fight Roger? Do you think that's brave?

Have you ever done anything brave?

Why do you think it was brave?

Have your ideas about bravery changed since listening to Sir Alvin and the dragon? If so, how?

Activities

You could try:

- eliciting from the class some examples of things which are brave (you could suggest some yourself, eg 'standing up to a bully,' 'standing on a stage and singing,' etc). Students work individually to choose which one they would least prefer to do and to think of the reasons for their choice. They could then discuss their choices in small groups. Alternatively, you could put all the ideas/ examples before the class and ask each small group to put them in order from the most to the least brave. (There are no correct answers; the aim is to encourage debate.)
- asking pupils to write about when they did something brave or to make up a story about an act of bravery
- asking students to imagine they are going to interview Sir Alvin after his encounter with the dragon. What questions would they ask and why?
- asking pupils to write the story of what happens next in the story of Sir Alvin and the dragon.



Larry *The* LYREBIRD

OR

Is it ever
OK to lie?



Programme 2

written by Will Ford

Larry is a lyrebird. He stretches the truth any way he can, from the telling of tall tales and jokes to dangerously misleading the animals of the rainforest as they prepare for their big show.

Before listening to the story, you could introduce students to the real lyrebirds which live in Australian rainforests and can imitate the sound of almost anything they hear. You can see and hear a real lyrebird here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjE0Kdfos4Y>

You may wish to ask some of these questions after listening to each part:

Part 1

Do you agree with this statement: 'A lie is something which is not true?' Why?/ Why not?

If we tell a fictional story, eg a fairytale, is that the same as 'lying'? Why?/ Why not?

The following are examples of things which are 'not true.' Are they lies?

- Larry pretends to be a different animal to entertain his friends
- Larry tells Garry the Gorilla he can fly
- Larry tells a joke to make Kanga feel better.

Part 2

What do you think of the following examples from the story? Are these things lies? Are they wrong? Why?/ Why not?

- Larry makes the sound of a chainsaw to scare off Chris Croc, who is the forest bully
- Larry tells the others a 'tall tale' about how he scared off Chris Croc
- Larry tells his friends Sally the slug, Stevie the snake and Lenny the lion that their acts are great when he doesn't really think so.

Can a lie have good consequences? Can you lie with good intentions? (ie you tell someone you like their new haircut when really you think it looks terrible). What is a 'white lie'? Are white lies ok?

Part 3

Larry promises never to lie again. Is he going to find this difficult? Why?/ Why not?

We do not know if Larry lies to Chris Croc about his singing at the end of the story. What should he do? What would you do and why?

What would happen if everyone in the forest was just like Larry and lied all the time?



Activities

You could try:

- setting up a student debate. One half of the class argue the view that it is never acceptable to lie and the other argue that sometimes lying is justifiable because it makes people happy
- in small groups, re-enacting the scene in which Larry auditions his friends and lies to them about their skills. What would have happened if he had been honest?
- playing the game in which someone says three things about themselves, one of which is a lie. The rest of the group try to decide which. You could use this to stimulate discussion about how it feels to lie/ whether or not you can tell if someone is not being truthful
- asking students to write the story of Larry the lyrebird from Chris Croc's perspective.



DAVE'S CAVE

OR

WHAT'S FAIR?



Programme 3

Written by Alex Ganley

Brian and Dave are cavemen grappling with the notion of fairness in a society based on survival of the fittest...not easy when there are sabre-tooth tigers and woolly mammoths to contend with.

You may wish to ask some of these questions after listening to each part:

Part 1

The caveman society is based on 'survival of the fittest': 'Those that were strong survived. Those that were not...well, didn't.'
Is this the same in our society now? If so, how? If not, why not?

Is it fair for someone bigger and stronger than you to take something of yours just because they can? Why?/ Why not?

Part 2

'These were deeply unfair times'... The cavemen are trying to work out how to make things fairer in their world. How do you think they should do it? What are some things they could try?

Part 3

The cavemen think it is unfair that the tiger is more likely to catch the slowest of them. Do you agree?

Do you agree with these sentences:

- it's not fair that Nosey gets left behind because he has a sore leg
- it's not fair to make Brian and Dave go more slowly than they are able to just because Nosey has a sore leg.

What do they do to try to make things fairer?

What would you do in that situation?

What happens in your life that you think is fair/ unfair?



Activities

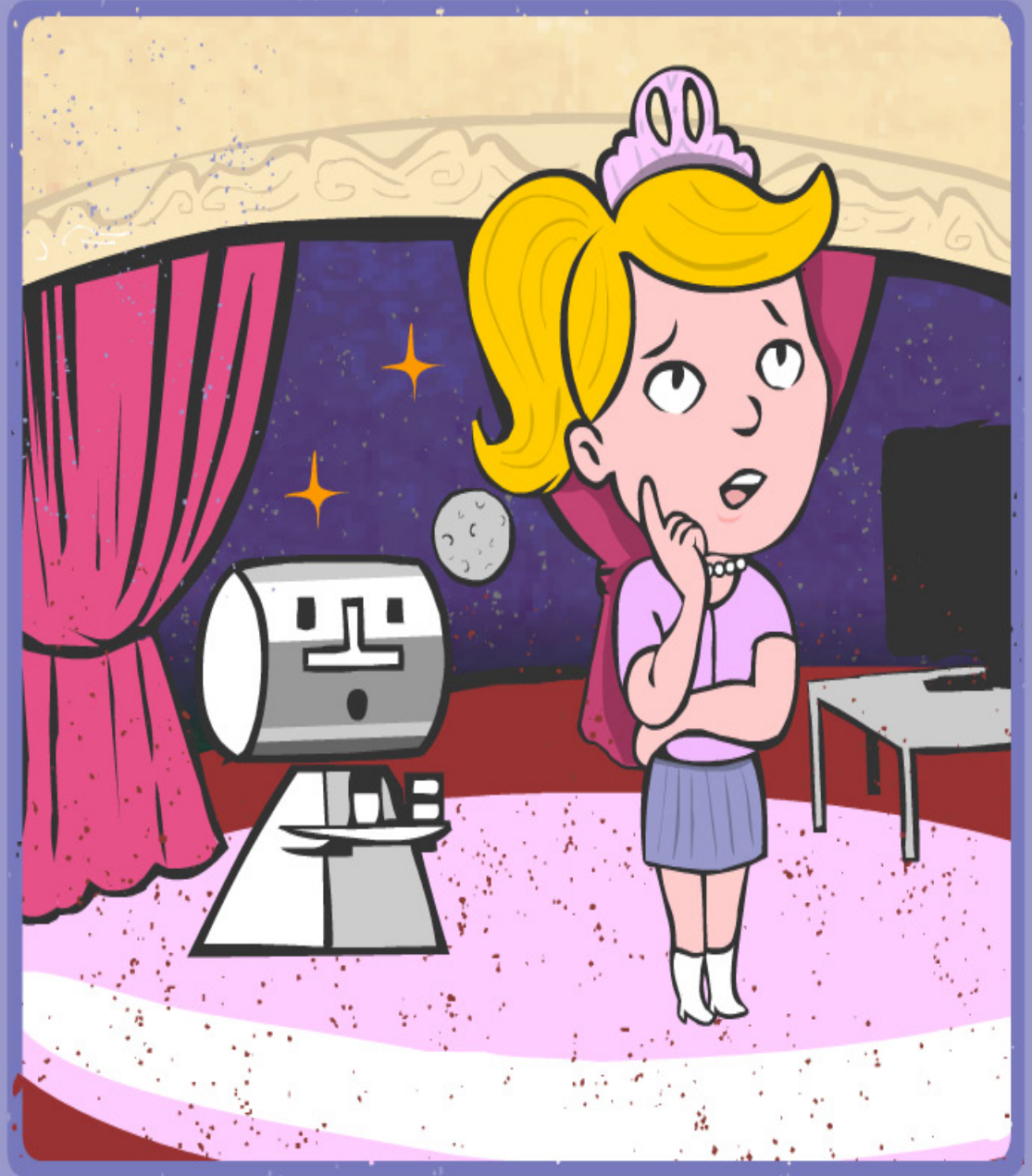
You could try:

- using pupils' own examples of things they find unfair to create an activity in which the examples are placed in order according to how fair/ unfair they are. Or you could ask students to reach a consensus on which single example is the least fair
- using the story as a springboard for work on history, discussing historical figures who have been prepared to challenge unfair situations, eg Emmeline Pankhurst and Martin Luther King
- asking pupils to write a story with the same themes as Dave's cave, but set in the present day.

Automato
Tomato

or

What is a
good Life?



Programme 4

Written by Will Ford

Princess Felicity is keen to give up her 'perfect' life on planet Automato, where her every need is met at the touch of a button, while down on earth Billy would do anything to swap places with her.

You may wish to ask some of these questions after listening to each part:

Part 1

Do you think that Automato sounds like a good place? Could you have a 'good life' there?

What do you like/ dislike about Automato?

Why do you think Princess Felicity is unhappy on Automato?

Do you think technology always improves life? Can you think of a time when it has improved your life? Or a time when it has done the opposite?

Can you have all the ingredients for a good life and still be unhappy? How?

Part 2

How is Billy's life different to Felicity's?

Is it true to say that Billy is making the best of what he has? How?



Part 3

The King says he is always looking for the 'ingredients for a good life.' What do you think this means?

Can you think of someone who has a 'good life'? What makes it good?

Can you have a better life than someone else? How?

How would you describe Billy's life versus Princess Felicity's life? Which would you prefer?

Activities

You could try:

- eliciting 10 'ingredients for a good life' from the class. You could suggest some of your own, eg water and education. Then you could ask students to work in small groups to select their top five ingredients, debating among themselves before feeding back to the rest of the class. If they had all of these ingredients, would they then be satisfied and never need anything else again?
- asking pupils to elaborate on what they think they would find on planet Automato and how they think life would be there. Which other gadgets would make life easier? If they could invent a gadget which would make their life easier now, what would it be? They could then write a story about this or about the day they visited Automato.

GREEN BEARD'S TREASURE



WHY ARE WE
HERE?



Programme 5

Written by Alex Ganley

Pirate Molly leads a crew of scallywags on an adventure to find Green Beard's hidden treasure. Along the way, they face the trickiest question of all: 'why are we here?'

You may wish to ask some of these questions after listening to each part:

Part 1

What can we notice about these questions:

- Why do I have to come to school?
- Why do I have to be healthy?
- Why do I have to do homework?
- Why is it Wednesday?
- Why is the sky blue?

Ask the person next to you a 'why' question.
What is their answer like?

Part 2

Fed up with their quest, the pirates start to question why it is that they do what they do. Do we have to have a reason for doing what we do?

What makes pirates pirates? Is it something they do or something they just are?

Could you still be a pirate if all you did was stay at home and watch TV all day?

Part 3

Here are the answers which the pirates give to the question 'why are we here?' What do you think of them? Are any of them good answers? Which? Why?

We're here for treasure!

We're here because the sky is blue.

We're here to make the world a better place.

We're here to have fun.

We're here to be good to one another.

We're here because we are not there.

We're here to look after and protect the planet for the next generation.

I'm here because I'm a pirate and I want to be the best pirate I can be and looking for treasure is what pirates do!

Do all 'why' questions have an answer? Does it matter?

Why do you think the stone moved at the end of the story?



Activities

You could try:

- looking at all the different kinds of 'wh' questions: who, what, where, why and when and discussing the difference between them. What is special about 'why' questions?
- looking at the difference between open and closed questions before making up an interview for a partner based on a selection of each
- asking a 'why' question, then asking another 'why' question about the answer. Keep going until you can't go any further
- asking pupils to make a list of 'why' questions they want to find an answer to and then encouraging them to try to find answers which satisfy them
- re-enacting Part 3 in class, with students making up their own suggested answers to the question 'why are we here?'
- asking students to write the story of Green Beard's treasure in their own words.



Accessing the programmes

Downloads/Podcasts:

These programmes are available as downloads or podcasts following transmission. Further information at the Podcasts page of the website:

www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/podcasts

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Just Think... on bbc.co.uk/

These Teacher's Notes are primarily intended for print. The content can also be found on the *Just Think...* pages of the School Radio website:

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01wrj7q

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