

# Lesson Five: Philosophy for children, colleges and communities (P4C)

## OVERVIEW

P4C, or Philosophy for Children, Colleges and Communities, is an approach to learning and teaching which enhances children's thinking and communication skills, boosts their self-esteem, and improves their academic attainment.

In P4C, a stimulus, such as a story, video clip or image, is shared with a group of children. The children are encouraged by a facilitator, such as a teacher, to come up with big, engaging, philosophical questions about the stimulus.

The teacher gives the children time to think and reason individually about the question before facilitating the exchange of ideas and opinions as a group, or 'community of enquiry'. Children learn to listen carefully to each other, to explore differences of opinion respectfully, and to value the ideas of others.

*Adapted from the Society for Advancing Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERE). Read more about P4C here:*

<https://www.sapere.org.uk/about-us.aspx>

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- P4C aims for all students to think critically and deeply, to share their thoughts with others, and to build on the points that they hear.
- As it is a student-led process, the facilitator should let specific conclusions be drawn only once the philosophical enquiry has occurred.

## P4C AND THIS TEACHING RESOURCE

The following facilitation guidance provides P4C teachers/facilitators with stimuli and tips for conducting a P4C session concerning the central themes of *Critical Mass*. The following stimulus suggestions and tips complement previous lessons in the pack, and so could be delivered subsequently to them in order to deepen understanding, or in isolation.

Each lesson plan features an introduction to the stimulus, with links to online video where applicable. Suggestions are given for key concepts, central questions, facilitation tips, and possible conclusions. All are for guidance only, as P4C is a student-led method of inquiry, and are intended to help facilitators imagine the kind of session that is possible when a given stimulus is used.

## METHOD

Philosophy for Children, Colleges and Communities follows a 10-step process for philosophical enquiry. Sessions run to around an hour, though can also extend longer than this if timetabling allows.

Creating Ideas

1. Preparation – a starter activity to prepare students for thinking.
2. Presentation of Stimulus – read, watch or listen to a stimulus containing 'big ideas'.
3. Thinking Time – time for private reflection on the stimulus.

## CREATING QUESTIONS

4. Question-making – students create their own open, contestable, philosophical questions.
5. Questions-aising – the class' questions are aired, discussed and clarified.
6. Question-choosing – one question is agreed upon, by vote or through facilitated negotiation.

## CREATING DIALOGUE

7. First Thoughts – the person/group who submitted the question shares their thoughts.
8. Dialogue Building – all students participate in a facilitated discussion where each point is built upon by the next, towards a better understanding of key concepts as they arise.
9. Final Thoughts – each student has the opportunity to share their final remarks on the question.
10. Review – reflect on successes, possible improvements, and what can be taken further next time.

If you are attempting Philosophy for Children, Colleges and Communities for the first time, we recommend doing your own research and/or seeking facilitator training. The following are some helpful links:

- SAPERE, UK charity supporting P4C: [www.sapere.org.uk](http://www.sapere.org.uk) – includes guidance, sample lesson plans, and videos of sessions.
- [www.p4c.com](http://www.p4c.com) : a subscription site providing resources and advice on P4C.

# 1. Nuclear legacies

## Stimulus

Video: 'Maralinga Pieces' (2011) by Jessie Boylan, 12 minutes. <http://jessieboylan.com/maralinga-pieces/>



Screenshot reproduced with permission of the artist.

Between 1952 and 1963 the British Government performed highly secretive nuclear weapons tests at Maralinga and Emu Field in South Australia and on the Monte Bello Islands off the coast of Western Australia. A total of twelve major nuclear tests were performed, and up to 700 minor 'dirty' trials were also conducted. The area was massively contaminated with radioactive materials and cleanups were attempted in 1967 and 2000. However, examinations after these cleanups found that many of these sites still remain radioactive.

Shot on location at Maralinga in 2011, this short film takes the viewer through a haunting landscape of the places these bombs were exploded, as well as snippets of memories of Aboriginal elders and an Australian nuclear veteran, whose lives have been deeply impacted by these tests. – *Jessie Boylan*

**Key concepts: indigenous peoples, memory, recognition, fairness/justice, secrets, blame**

### KEY QUESTIONS:

- Why do some events matter more than others?
- Do we ever know the whole story?
- Is it right to make decisions on someone's behalf?
- Can you be guilty of something that wasn't your intention?

### FACILITATION:

- Starter activity (5 minutes): For younger years, play a memory game, such as the Supermarket game\* ("When I went to the supermarket I bought..."). For older years, play a game of deception, such as two truths and a lie\*\* with a partner, in small groups, or with one student in front of the class.
- Watch the video ahead of time and write down some quotations, to which you could refer in either the 'question building' activity or in the inquiry itself.
  - For example, 'I'm sure we all have the same feeling, and the hurt'.
- Although the video as a whole would make an effective and atmospheric stimulus, if you require a shorter stimulus during the P4C session, you could watch:
  - From 2.15 to 7.40
  - From 6.17 to 10.35
  - From 9.00 to 11.50

### SUB-QUESTIONS:

- Where appropriate, encourage students to think from multiple perspectives. Referencing the stimulus might help if this does not detract from the philosophical enquiry.
  - For example, would the former soldier see things differently? Would the Aboriginal couple have been persuaded by that argument? Why?
- Asking students 'How do you know that?', or 'How can you be sure?', or 'If that were true, what would then happen?' will help to bring out the themes of secrecy, uncertainty and contest.

### SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS:

- Matters of fairness or justice can be affected by one's perspective, even if the ideas are universal.
- Memory can help us to work out 'how we got here', but it involves emotion and can be different to someone else's memory.
- Fault/Blame can be helpful concepts, but do not themselves create a solution.

\* Guidance for The Supermarket Game: [https://www.fundamentallychildren.com/play\\_idea/supermarket-game/](https://www.fundamentallychildren.com/play_idea/supermarket-game/)

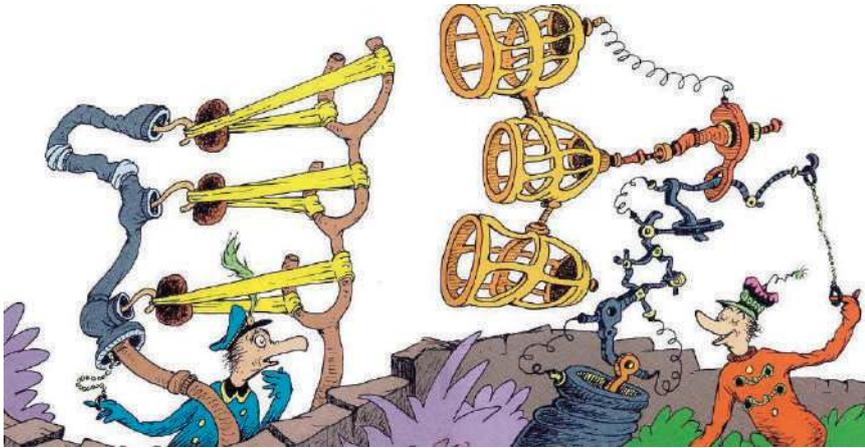
\*\* Guidance for two truths and a lie: <https://www.teachersfirst.com/content/knownyou/twotruths.cfm>

## 2. Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)

### Stimulus

Text/Video: The Butter Battle Book (1989) by Dr Seuss

Video animated by Ralph Bakshi, 20 minutes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prL1uva22Do> (Accessed 08/08/19)



'The Butter Battle Book' is an illustrated tale about the Yooks and the Zooks, who live on opposite sides of a wall. Because of a butter-related disagreement, the rivalry of the groups leads to something akin to an arms race, resulting in an incredibly powerful weapon being produced on both sides. Threatening each other with destruction, the story ends with 'The End?'

When it was released in 1984, some people took issue with the story, saying it was too critical of Ronald Reagan and the arms race occurring at the time. This meant it was banned in some libraries and bookshops. In response to calls that the book was 'brainwashing' children, Seuss made his opinion clear: 'I just want people to think'.

**Key Concepts: safety, responsibility, community/identity, war, peace, pride, courage, masculinity, difference.**

#### KEY QUESTIONS:

- Which comes first: defence or offence?
- Is it the job of a few to make sure everyone is safe?
- Can fear ever make us feel protected?
- What makes an enemy an enemy?

#### FACILITATION

- Starter activity (5 minutes): In pairs, students identify three things they have in common, and three things that make them different.
- Students might wish to focus solely on the weapons, and the security aspect of the stimulus. Because of this you could remind students to think about 'why' or 'for whom' the weapons are being made and used.
- You can read the picture book aloud with any age group, if you have access to a copy. You can play the animated video to any age group as well, though it is longer in duration (20 minutes). When presenting the stimulus in full, you could opt for a shorter enquiry, or preferably build questions in an earlier lesson.
  - Whilst the stimulus as a whole is very thought-provoking, the final scenes of the animation (17.30 – 22.30) can be played in isolation if you are concerned about time.

#### SUB-QUESTIONS:

- Where did all this begin? How did the Zooks and the Yooks end up in such a dangerous position? Students can reflect on when the 'starting point' of the story is. It could be when the first weapon is made, when the stones are slung across the wall, when the wall itself would have been built, or even when the toast was first buttered differently.
- If students were in Grandpa's (the protagonist's) shoes, would they have acted differently? If so, how and why?
- Who are the better side, the Zooks or the Yooks? Why?

#### SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS:

- Even the smallest differences can lead to big disagreements if pride or fear are involved.
- It can be harder to find true certainty in your actions, when you have great power and great responsibility.
- Aggression can provide a sense of strength in the face of danger, but it does not remove the sense of danger itself.
- When we reduce our capacity to communicate with other people, we reduce our ability to understand them.

### 3. Trident and Gender

#### Stimulus

Photograph: Courtesy of the Royal Navy (2012)

Pictured: The 'Weapons Engineer Officer's Tactical Trigger' used to launch a Trident Missile.

UK Ministry of Defence © Crown Copyright 2019



You can use the picture as a standalone stimulus, however we would recommend accessing another picture\*, depicting Lt Olsson, who was the first woman in the UK to become a submariner. The two images could be presented side by side.

Additional image LINK:

[https://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2016/01/21/13/306D481F00000578-0-image-a-14\\_1453383791400.jpg](https://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2016/01/21/13/306D481F00000578-0-image-a-14_1453383791400.jpg)

**Key concepts: duty, power, authority, gender/masculinity, morality, difference.**

#### KEY QUESTIONS:

- Should you do something just because you're told to?
- Is it true that with great power comes great responsibility?
- Does it matter who makes decisions and who follows them?

#### FACILITATION

- A 5-minute warm-up activity to do with following orders would be suitable, for example a game of 'Simon Says...'\*.
- A discussion of (gender) difference can easily become reductive e.g. 'women are [x] and men are [y]'. A facilitator can instead encourage children to think about ideas, traits, patterns and assumptions, instead of biological difference alone, which will generate a deeper philosophical inquiry. Be aware of the language students use in these instances, as some phrasing might cause offence or harm to other students.
- Students could dwell on the nuclear trigger and pose questions about the morality of using weapons of mass destruction. The facilitator could research nuclear weapons using CND Peace Education materials, or referring to CND's website: [www.cnduk.org](http://www.cnduk.org).

#### SUB-QUESTIONS:

- What do you have to say about the fact that the images show people of different genders? Is it significant that they are doing different things? Students may not see a distinction between two submariners 'doing their job', but an enquiry could benefit from a consideration of this.
- Discussion may likely consider obedience and authority. To help students think critically, ask what the next logical step in their thinking is. For example, 'does someone need to order someone else to give an order?', or 'who has the ultimate say, then', or 'can you decide to do something that someone has decided you should do'?

#### SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS:

- People of any gender can be involved in nuclear issues, but nuclear and/or societal issues can be gendered to some degree.
- There can be a rift between what you believe, and what you consider to be your duty, to which people have different responses.
- Being ready for war can be seen as a way to achieve peace, but can equally hinder peace.

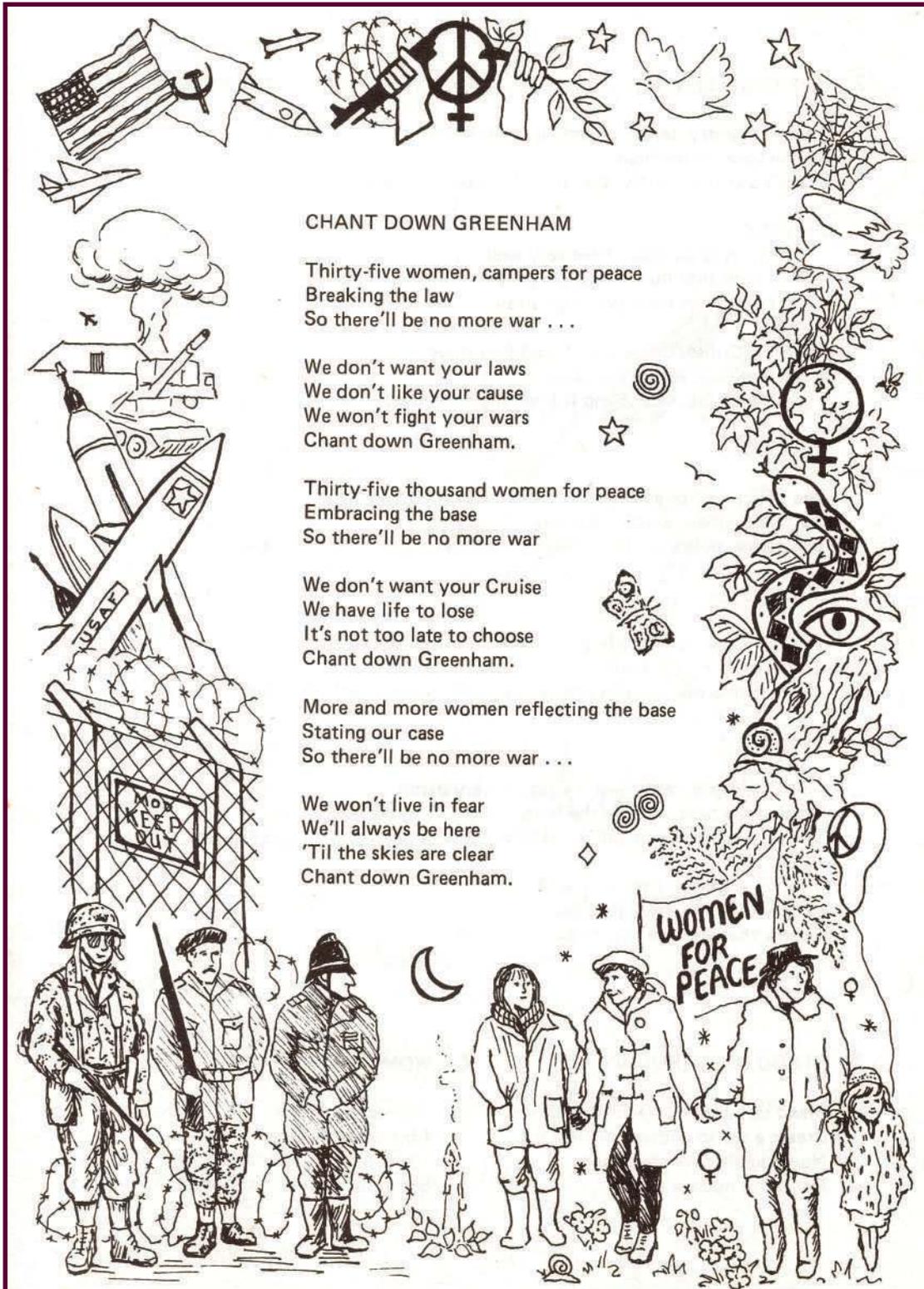
\* Guidance for 'Simon Says...' <https://www.teacher.org/lesson-plan/simon-says/>

## 4. Women for Peace

### Stimulus

Two Protest Song Lyrics from the 'Chant Down Greenham Songbook'  
(with thanks to The Women's Library and LSE Library, where the Greenham Common and CND collections are based).

i) Chant Down Greenham (illustrated):



#### CHANT DOWN GREENHAM

Thirty-five women, campers for peace  
Breaking the law  
So there'll be no more war . . .

We don't want your laws  
We don't like your cause  
We won't fight your wars  
Chant down Greenham.

Thirty-five thousand women for peace  
Embracing the base  
So there'll be no more war

We don't want your Cruise  
We have life to lose  
It's not too late to choose  
Chant down Greenham.

More and more women reflecting the base  
Stating our case  
So there'll be no more war . . .

We won't live in fear  
We'll always be here  
'Til the skies are clear  
Chant down Greenham.

With thanks to The Women's Library and LSE Library, where the Greenham Common and CND collections are based.

**Listen to the song here** (via Guardian's 'Your Greenham Songbook'):

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2007/may/18/chant.down.greenham>

ii) You Can't Kill the Spirit, a popular Greenham chant at demonstrations:

'...She goes on, and on, and on  
You can't kill the Spirit  
She is like a mountain  
Old and Strong  
She goes on and on  
You can't kill the Spirit...'

AUDIO LINK (via Lacuna's 'Memories of a Protest'): <https://soundcloud.com/lacuna-4/you-cant-kill-the-spirit>

**Key concepts: war, peace, integrity, belief, gender (womanhood), the law, morality.**

#### KEY QUESTIONS

Does gender matter? Does your gender make a difference?  
Are laws meant to be broken?  
Is peace possible? Is war inevitable?  
Can one person really make a difference?

#### FACILITATION

- An awareness of the Greenham Common Peace Camp would help you present the stimuli. Refer to Lesson 2 of Critical Mass for supporting information regarding the camp. This P4C session can serve as an introduction to, or revision of, Lesson 2.
- Discussions of the military, war and nuclear weapons can often feature hypotheticals e.g. 'but would you attack someone if...'. A hypothetical talking point could help students to apply their critical thinking to a theoretical example, but you might wish to ensure that the enquiry does not only use hypothetical scenarios. Encourage students to think about concepts too, rather than just application.
- A discussion of (gender) difference can easily become reductive e.g. 'women are [x] and men are [y]'. A facilitator can instead encourage children to think about ideas, traits, patterns and assumptions, instead of biological difference alone, which will generate a deeper philosophical inquiry. Be aware of the language students use in these instances, as some phrasing might cause offence or harm to other students.

#### SUB-QUESTIONS

- Is it right to take action against something, just because you don't want/don't like it? Students might have mixed opinions on this, but a facilitator could encourage a discussion of when it 'becomes' right for a person to take action, based on their beliefs. The facilitator might also wish to encourage consideration of consequences, i.e. of breaking the law.
- Students might talk about the concepts of war and peace more philosophically. If so, it is important to seek a definition for each concept, so that each point is easily built upon. Later, a comparison of the concepts can occur e.g. 'are war and peace opposites?'

#### SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS

- Laws and rules can 'keep the peace' but doesn't mean that everyone understands 'peace' in the same way.
- Our gender, like any aspect of our identity, can give us strength, just as it can be misunderstood.
- As individuals we are all involved in systems, movements, stories greater than ourselves.