

Philosophy Discussion Questions

Philosophy: 1) The love of, or search for, wisdom and knowledge. 2) The logical analysis of the principles underlying conduct and thought. 3) A system of principles for the conduct of life.

As you read *Sophie's World*, write down the page numbers where these questions are discussed. In the table of contents, discuss why the author included the phrase under each chapter title.

Introduction Questions

1. Prove to me that you are alive.
2. What do you think are the differences between philosophy and theology?
3. What are some of the philosophies or philosophers that you know about?
4. Is Christianity a philosophy? Are there varying philosophies within Christianity?
5. Are you aware of any current philosophies swaying our culture?
6. Are you aware of any current philosophers?
7. Where do you get YOUR ideas from?
8. What or who influences you the most in life?
9. What or who *should* most influence your life? Why?
10. How is Christianity impacting our culture?
11. What issues are important to Americans and how do they determine their importance?
12. Do you think about WHY you do what you do, or do you just do what everyone else does?
13. Why do you go to church on Sunday? Own a car? Study academics? Play an instrument? Play a sport? Hang out with friends?
14. What do you want to accomplish in your life? How are you going to accomplish it?
15. Do you think you know more than most people, or less?
16. Are you confident that you can discern truth? Why?
17. What kinds of questions do you think philosophers ask?

Chapters 1-3

1. Are you astonished to be alive?
2. Who are you?
3. Would you be someone else if your parents had given you a different name?
4. What is a human being?
5. Is there life after death?
6. Where does the world come from?
7. Can anything always have existed?
8. If so, then where did that thing come from?
9. Is there something that interests all of us?

10. What is the most important thing in life?
11. What methods do people use to answer these kinds of questions?
12. Why does our childish faculty of wonder diminish as we get older?
13. How would you define a myth?
14. How would you define religion?

Chapters 4-6

1. What was Democritus' theory of atoms? Why was it important?
2. What is astonishing about Christianity?
3. How does chemistry relate to the questions the natural philosophers asked?
4. How does nature change? Stay constant?
5. How do religion, philosophy, and science relate to each other?
6. What questions did the natural philosophers ask?
7. What were their answers?
8. Why is LEGO® the most ingenious toy in the world?
9. What is an atom?
10. Who is a materialist?
11. What is the soul made of?
12. Do you believe in fate?
13. Is sickness the punishment of God?
14. What forces govern the course of history?
15. What is superstition?
16. How does man's free will relate to God's sovereignty?

Chapters 7-9

1. Who was Socrates?
2. How did he view the Art of Discourse?
3. What did Socrates' "Divine Voice" cost him? Was it worth it?
4. What is the joke Socrates felt we always play on ourselves?
5. Who do you think Alberto Knox is?
6. Prove to me that you exist.
7. Is there such a thing as natural modesty?
8. Does true insight come from within?
9. If we know what is right, will we do right?
10. Is man the measure of all things?
11. How do we know about Socrates?
12. What is Socratic irony? Give an example.
13. What did Socrates most value?
14. Did he have to die by poison?
15. What would you die for?
16. What is the difference between a sophist and a philosopher?
17. Do people choose to be unhappy?

Philosophy Discussion Questions (continued)

18. How can a baker bake absolutely identical cookies? Is this reflected in nature?
19. What is Plato's "Myth of the Cave"? Can you relate it to your life?

Chapters 10–12

1. How is Aristotle a philosopher and a scientist?
2. Why does Aristotle say there are no innate ideas?
3. What is the form of a thing?
4. What is Aristotle's idea of the final cause?
5. How did Aristotle use logic?
6. In Nature's scale, what is the difference between living and non-living things?
7. What are Aristotle's views on ethics?
8. Why does Aristotle call man a "political animal"?
9. Which came first, the chicken or the "idea" chicken?
10. Are we born with innate "ideas"?
11. What is the difference between a plant, an animal, and a human?
12. Why does it rain?
13. What does it take to live the good life?
14. Why did Sophie's reflection wink at her?
15. How are Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Alexander the Great related?

Chapters 13–15

1. Who are the Indo-Europeans and what do they believe?
2. Who are the Semites and what do they believe?
3. How does King David and his kingdom relate to Israel?
4. Who is Jesus and what is Christianity?
5. Who was Paul and how did he affect Christianity?
6. Compare Indo-European philosophy to Semite/Christian philosophy.
7. What is important about covenant?
8. Does Gaarder describe Christianity accurately?
9. Can you trust how Gaarder describes non-Christian philosophy? Explain.
10. What is the Creed and why was it developed?
11. How did Constantine affect world history?
12. Why was the Middle Ages a unifying force for Christian culture?
13. Why is the term "Dark Ages" a misnomer?
14. How did the Catholic, Byzantine, and Arabic cultures affect the Greco-Roman heritage?
15. Who was Augustine?
16. How did he reconcile ancient philosophy with Christianity?
17. Who did Augustine believe God would save?

18. Why were the great cathedrals of Europe built?
19. Who is Thomas Aquinas?
20. How did Aquinas Christianize Aristotle?
21. How can we recognize there is a God without the Bible?
22. How did Aristotle and Aquinas view women?

Chapters 16–18

1. What was the Renaissance?
2. How did the previous streams of philosophy affect the Renaissance?
3. Describe and compare the humanism of the Renaissance with its current definition.
4. What is pantheism?
5. If you have access to the book *The Soul of Science*, find out the true story of Bruno's persecution.
6. What is the empirical method?
7. Explain the difference between geocentric and heliocentric theories.
8. How did Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton affect philosophy?
9. What were the differences between Luther and Erasmus?
10. What is a mechanistic worldview?
11. What is determinism?
12. How is Descartes the father of modern philosophy?

Chapters 19–21

1. Can you feel or imagine your place in the universe? What is it you sense?
2. When does a baby develop a free will?
3. From where do we get our ideas?
4. Can you always rely on your senses?
5. Who was Spinoza?
6. What is the historico-critical interpretation of the Bible?
7. What is pantheism?
8. How was Spinoza part of the rationalistic tradition?
9. How is Spinoza being a monist different from being a Christian monist?
10. How does Spinoza define God?
11. How was Spinoza like the Stoics?
12. How do we live according to the laws of nature?
13. Why did Spinoza believe man has no free will?
14. Who was John Locke?
15. How does Locke differentiate between sensation and reflection?
16. Explain primary and secondary qualities, according to Locke.
17. What is Hume's complex idea?
18. What did he want committed to the flames?

Philosophy Discussion Questions (continued)

19. How did Hume distinguish between impressions and ideas?
20. How did Hume define God?

Chapters 22–24

1. Who was George Berkeley?
2. How did Berkeley question the experience of pain?
3. Was “matter” real to him? What was real to him?
4. Does our world consist of real things or are we encircled by the mind?
5. How did Berkeley define God?
6. Can you think of any religious groups that think like Berkeley?
7. How do you think Sophie and Hilde are related?
8. Explain the seven points of the French Enlightenment.
9. How are Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau involved in the French Enlightenment?
10. What does “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” have to do with the French Revolution?

Chapters 25–27

1. Who was Immanuel Kant?
2. What is the difference between a rationalist and an empiricist?
3. What affects how we perceive the world?
4. Does our personal nature or our environment affect our perceptions the most?
5. How do you perceive time and space? Are you right? How do you know?
6. What is the law of causality?
7. Can we know about anything for certain or only through our personal perceptions as Kant claimed?
8. Is the world made up of finite particles or can they always be divided into a smaller particle?
9. How did Kant tie together reason, experience, and faith?
10. How do the “Starry heavens above me and the moral law within me” affect you?
11. Who was Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel?
12. What is Romanticism?
13. What does Hegel mean by calling Truth subjective?
14. How did Hegel compare history to a river?
15. How can one idea be better than another if truth is subjective?
16. What does Hegel mean by a “world spirit”?
17. How did Hegel view the individual compared to the community? How would Jesus respond?

Chapters 28–30

1. What are the big or large questions of philosophy?
2. What patterns of thought can you see as philosophy has been built and developed upon the ideas of previous philosophers?
3. How has Christianity affected philosophers?
4. Can you mention any people living who are philosophers?
5. Can you prove you exist yet? Which groups of philosophers would believe you could prove that you exist?
6. Who was Søren Kierkegaard?
7. What is an Existentialist?
8. What makes a man a human?
9. Do you think most humans live existentially (like the example Buddha gave), or do they live philosophically? Explain.
10. Who was Karl Marx?
11. What kind of philosophy did Hegel end and Kierkegaard and Marx begin?
12. According to Marx, what makes up a community’s superstructure?
13. What are the “conditions of production”?
14. What are the “means of production”?
15. What is the “mode of production”?
16. Would you allow your parents to pick your spouse? Explain.

Chapters 30–35

1. Who is Hilde?
2. Who is Sophie?
3. Who is Hilde’s father?
4. Did you like the story?
5. What is the author implying by writing the book in this way?
6. Are you in Hilde’s world, or Sophie’s world, or neither? Explain how you know.