



I wonder if the Sun will rise tomorrow?

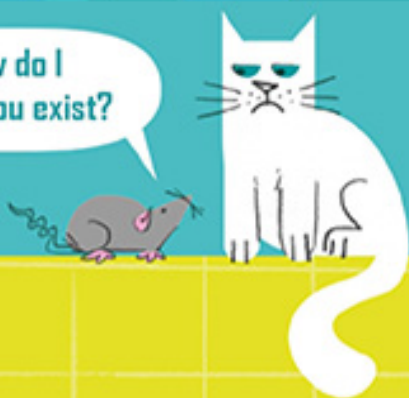
Why wouldn't it? It has risen every day so far!

But what's that got to do with what will happen tomorrow?

Who decides what's beautiful?



How do I know you exist?



USBORNE

PHILOSOPHY

FOR BEGINNERS

All that I know about my life, it seems, I have learned in books.



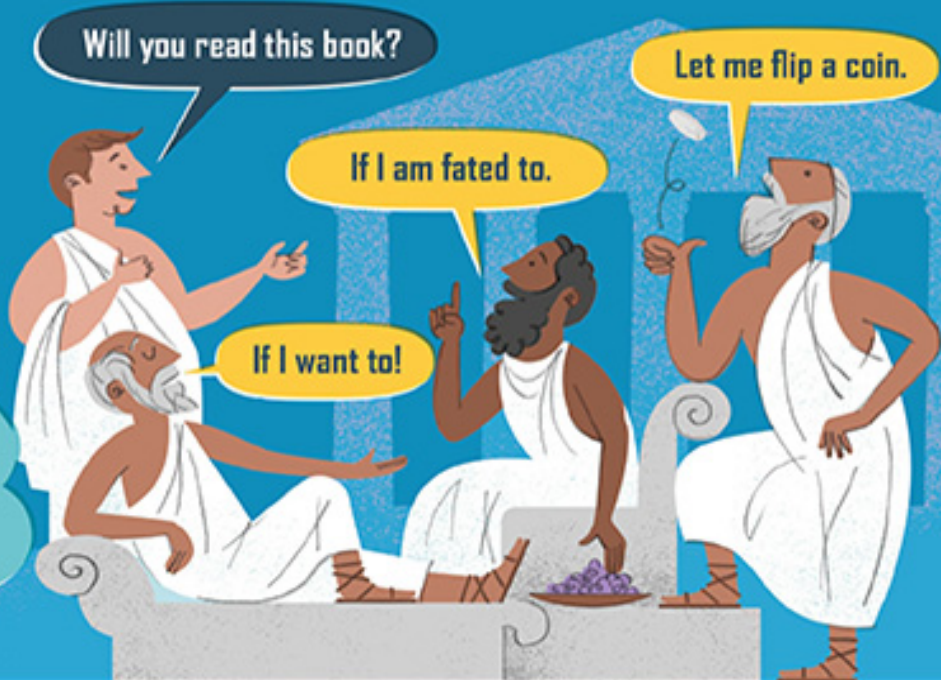
Will you read this book?

If I am fated to.

Let me flip a coin.

If I want to!

How do I know there's a real world that exists outside my mind?



This sentence is true.

This sentence is false.

**USBORNE
PHILOSOPHY**

FOR BEGINNERS

**Written by
Jordan Akpojaró,
Rachel Firth and
Minna Lacey**

**Illustrated by
Nick Radford**



**Consultant philosopher: Dr. Alex Kaiserman
Designed by Freya Harrison**





CONTENTS



What is philosophy?	4
A world of philosophy	6
Doing philosophy	8
How to argue	10
Thought experiments	12
Why do philosophy?	14
Chapter 1: Knowledge	17
How do we know anything about the world around us – can we be sure that we know anything at all?	
Chapter 2: The mind	29
Is your mind somehow different from your body, and are you even in control of it?	
Chapter 3: Beauty and art	41
What is beauty, and what is art? And why is it so hard to answer these questions?	
Chapter 4: God	53
If there is a God, is it possible to prove that he or she exists?	
Chapter 5: Politics	65
Are there any rules that everyone can agree on that would make society a fair and happy place for everyone to live in?	
Chapter 6: How to be good	77

Chapter 7: Time and identity 93

Everything changes with time – but how much can something change and still count as the same thing?
What is time, anyway?

Chapter 8: Logic and language 105

What are the rules of philosophy, and how can you follow them if people don't always agree on what words themselves actually mean?

Chapter 9: The meaning of life 113

Is philosophy merely a way of asking questions about the world – or can it also be a way of life itself? Can it answer the ultimate question: what is the meaning of life?

What next? 120

Multiple mysteries 122

Glossary 124

Famous philosophers 125

Discover more 126

Acknowledgements 133

USBORNE QUICKLINKS

For links to websites where you can find out more about philosophy, famous philosophers including Socrates and Plato, and start thinking like a philosopher with videos, games and activities, go to **usborne.com/Quicklinks** and type in the title of this book.

Please follow the internet safety guidelines at the Usborne Quicklinks website.
Children should be supervised online.



WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

Philosophy is a way of thinking about things – from what the world around us is like, to what beauty is, to the existence of God. These are BIG subjects, and to get to the bottom of them, philosophers ask BIG questions.

But philosophy isn't just for philosophers. Chances are you've asked some of these questions yourself...







If there are aliens, do they have the same ideas about 'right' and 'wrong' as we do?

Can anyone prove that God exists?

Does outer space come to an end?

What makes something a work of art?

Is it right to help someone if I know that doing so will hurt someone else?

Is it possible to do absolutely nothing?

Art Gallery

Why should we do what the government tells us? In fact, should we even have a government?

If scientists built a machine that behaved just like a human, would it have feelings, and should I treat it kindly?

Do animals have rights?

Some of these questions may seem like science fiction, but others can and do affect us in our day-to-day lives. This can mean anything from how we behave, to the way governments operate, to the laws we live by.

A WORLD OF PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy covers so many different questions that it's usually broken down into different branches. Here are just some of them, and a few examples of questions they deal with.









DOING PHILOSOPHY

Philosophers question EVERYTHING and ANYTHING. They question ideas and concepts, theories and arguments. They even question the questions that they and other philosophers ask...

So why ask so many questions? What's the point?

The point is that when you're doing philosophy, you can't take anything for granted.

What, not even things we're certain about?

No. *Especially* not those things.

Give me an example, please.

How do you know that the Sun will rise tomorrow?

Well, it always has.

OK. Now, can you imagine the Sun *not* rising?

Yes, I suppose so.

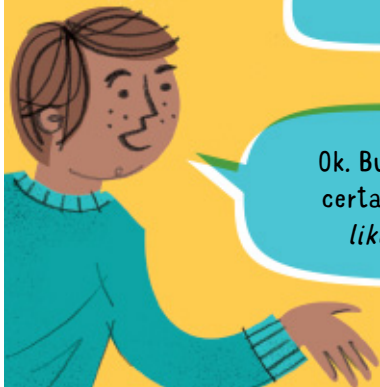
Since you can imagine it, surely you agree it's *possible* the Sun *won't* rise.

Um, yeeesss...

Well, if it's *possible*, you can't know for certain that it *will* rise...

Ok. But do I have to be certain? It still seems *likely* it *will* rise!

But does it being 'likely' give you a good reason to believe it?







The question and answer approach to philosophy has its origins thousands of years ago, in Ancient Greece. It's sometimes known as the **Socratic Method**, after the philosopher Socrates, who was famous for using it. In fact, the word 'philosophy' itself comes from an Ancient Greek word, meaning 'love of wisdom'. Here are two tips on how to do it well.

Socrates*



Listen carefully when someone is putting forward an argument.

Be polite. Even though it's called an 'argument', you can still present your ideas, or question someone else's, in a calm and cool-headed manner.

* say sock-rat-ease

HOW TO ARGUE

It's not enough to ask any old question when you're doing philosophy, you need to know how to argue properly. In particular, it's useful to know how to spot different ways an argument can be *true* or *false*.

Arguments are the key tools of philosophy. They're made up of two components: a **premise** and a **conclusion**.


PREMISE

A **premise** is a statement that can either be true or false.

CONCLUSION

A **conclusion** is a statement that's meant to follow from one or more premises.

If an argument is a good one, its premises give you good reasons to believe its conclusion. Here are some examples of arguments. Not all of them are good ones:

	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
A	All footballs are round.	This is a football. Therefore...	This football is round. 
B	All people with brown hair have brown eyes.	This person has brown hair. Therefore...	This person has brown eyes. 
C	All cats are animals.	My pet rat is an animal. Therefore...	My pet rat is a cat. 

Philosophers examine arguments using a system of rules known as **logic**. If a premise is true, and the conclusion makes sense as a result of that premise, then it's a good argument. Now, you might have noticed that there is something wrong with arguments B and C. They're both *bad* arguments – for two different reasons.

B is a bad argument because one of the premises – premise 1 – is false.



It's not *true* that all people with brown hair have brown eyes.

Once you realize that premise 1 is false, you have no reason to believe the conclusion. When an argument fails in this way, it's said to be **unsound**.

C is a bad argument because the conclusion doesn't follow from the premises.



I agree that premises 1 and 2 are true. But, even so, the conclusion doesn't follow from them.

When an argument fails for this reason, it's said to be **invalid**.

Logic is a very useful tool for examining philosophical and, indeed, everyday arguments. If you can explain *why* an argument is bad, it can help everyone to move forward.





THOUGHT EXPERIMENTS

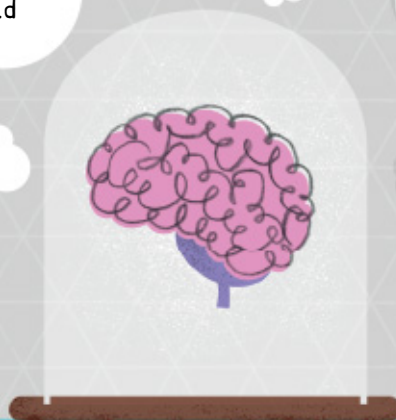
Another one of philosophy's key tools is known as a **thought experiment**. This is a 'what if' question that sparks a series of further questions. Be warned, thought experiments can get you to imagine some very bizarre situations.

What if I wasn't walking around in a body, but was really just a brain in a jar that *thinks* it has a body?

What if you could save 10 people by killing one person. What would be the right thing to do? What if that person was your brother or sister?

What if someone went to prison voluntarily, and didn't *want* to leave their prison cell, would they still be free?

What if a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?



A good thought experiment should lead you onto a path of questions and answers that often challenge your first response to each experiment. The scenarios they

12

describe don't have to be likely, or even physically possible, but they *do* have