

What is Philosophy?

INTRODUCTION

At the start of the session, explain to students that the word philosophy comes from 2 Greek words:

- *Philo* meaning love, and
- *Sophia* meaning wisdom.

So a Philosopher is a lover of wisdom.

ACTIVITY

Ask the students to create a mind map around the word PHILOSOPHY. What meanings and thoughts can they come up with?

Get some feedback from the students, asking them to explain their ideas with examples.

Follow this up by presenting them with a list of things that philosophers might be doing, e.g.:

- Asking questions
- Searching for meaning
- Thinking deeply
- Wondering about truth
- Considering answers
- Delving deeper
- Looking behind the mask
- Exploring beneath the surface
- Making sense of things
- Creating links

Ask them to choose one of these phrases and explain how they might apply it to religion, for example, 'Creating links' might involve thinking about what Buddhism has in common with Hinduism.

ACTIVITY

Bring out students' thinking about philosophy and religion and add in some further questions, such as:

- *In what ways is philosophy exciting?*
- *Why do you think it can be hard?*
- *Do you think people always like philosophers?*
- *Are philosophers bound to be good people?*

ACTIVITY

After exploring students' ideas about the nature of philosophy and philosophers, introduce them to two great philosophers, Socrates and Confucius. Provide students with a little background information, such as:

- Socrates lived in Athens 2,500 years ago and he was said to be the wisest man in Greece.

Present them with some of his sayings:

- *The wisest man is he who realises that his wisdom is worthless.*
- *The unexamined life is not worth living.*
- *See how many things I can do without.* (He said this while looking into the window of a shop full of expensive items.)

Ask the students to exchange views with a partner on what they think he meant by such sayings. Do they think he was wise?

- Confucius was Chinese philosopher who lived around the same time as Socrates. He believed strongly in a tradition of learning by listening to others.

Here is one of his sayings:

- *I can always be certain of learning from those I am with. There will be good qualities that I can select for imitation and bad ones that will teach me what requires correction in myself.*

Ask the students to exchange views with a partner on what they think we could learn from others.

CONCLUSION

Ask students to reflect on their conversations about philosophy and to say, on the basis of what they have heard so far, who they think was the greatest, Socrates or Confucius? What more would they need to know to make a more informed decision? Ask them to explain their view.