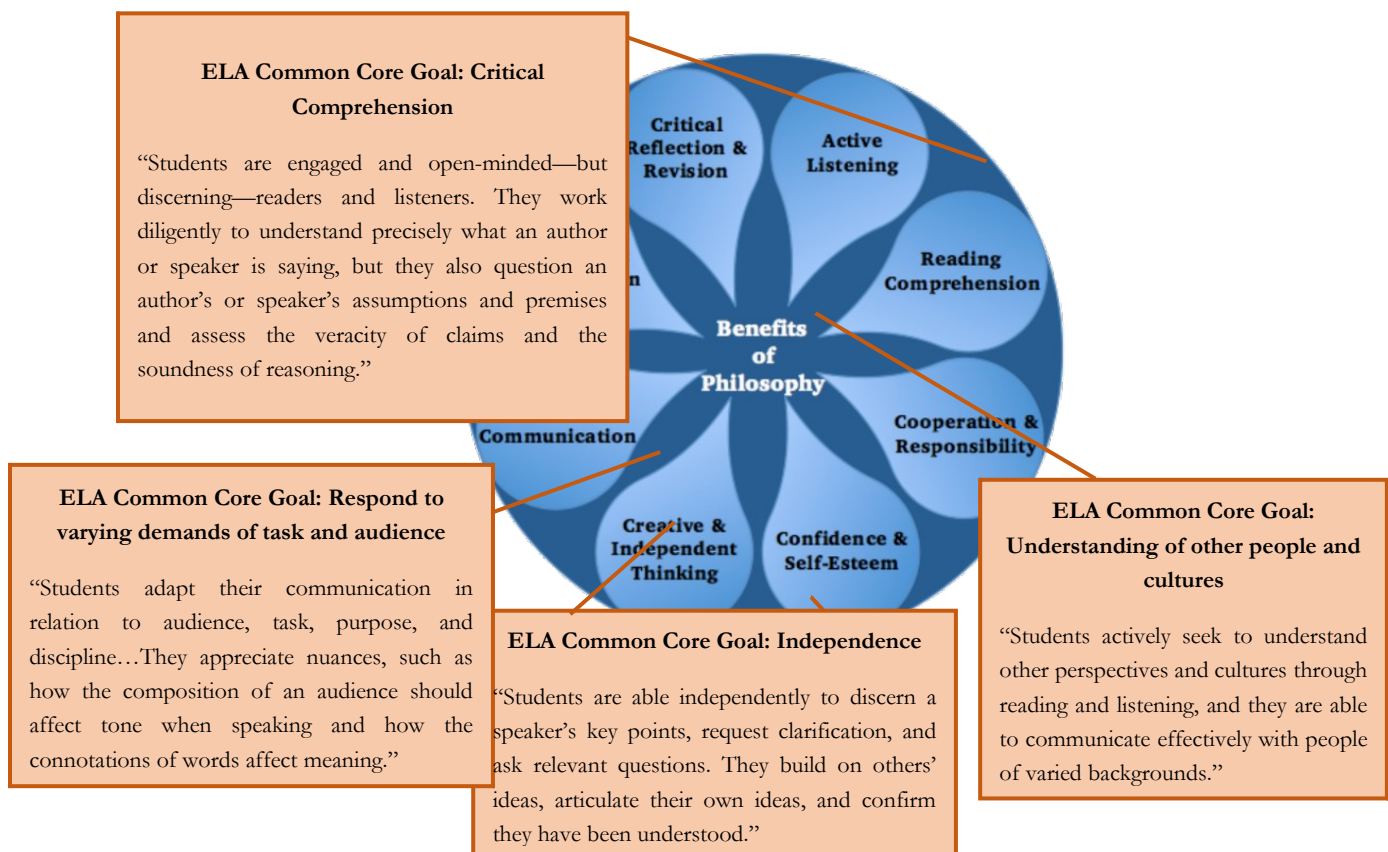


Philosophy with Children and the Common Core

Raising standardized test scores and adhering to federal standards are prevailing concerns for today's K-12 educators. In most public schools, teachers are expected to align their units and daily lessons to their state's standards, whether Common Core or another agreed-upon set of skills and competencies. Fortunately, there are many salient connections between philosophical skill sets and Common Core standards. Of special note is the fact that philosophical training has been shown to [positively impact standardized test scores in several areas](#).

The diagram below demonstrates how the major goals and benefits of engaging children with philosophy align closely with the stated aims of the Common Core's English Language Arts standards.¹ The blue diagram shows the [established benefits of doing philosophy with children](#); the text provided in the orange boxes reflect the intended outcomes for students who meet the ELA Common Core standards, using language taken directly from the CCSS initiative.



¹ For the purposes of this document, we limit alignment to the [ELA Common Core Standards](#). However, there are certainly meaningful connections to be made between philosophy and Math, Science, and History standards, as well. For example, Math CCSS strongly emphasizes abstract reasoning and using symbolic representation to make sense of problems. The study of logic most obviously connects with this objective, however any philosophical argumentation supports the goals of these Math standards. We hope to supplement this current resource with a similar comparison between philosophy and other disciplines in the future.

Philosophy Lesson Plans and Common Core

In this section, we clearly demonstrate these connections using [existing lessons available to teachers on the PLATO website](#). We break down a few sample lessons to show how certain aspects can be aligned with Common Core standards. As will become evident, the kinds of skills and thinking outlined in the Common Core work hand-in-hand with those fostered by philosophical inquiry.

Sample Lesson 1:

Lesson Topic: Exploring Existential Angst and the Self in Social Media; developed by Kelly Mansfield & Christine Onofrey

Objective: Students will notice and describe the difference between their internal and external states. They will experience their consciousness by noticing and recording their thoughts.

1. Students stare at their own faces in a mirror for a full minute.
2. After the minute is up, journal prompt:
 - o Write about what you noticed while looking at yourself.
 - o What did you notice about your face?
 - o What were you thinking about?
1. Read excerpt where Roquentin is looking at his face in a mirror, starting with “the wall, a mirror...” through “light halo gliding in the light.”
2. Journal Questions:
 - o In what way can you relate your mirror experience to Roquentin’s?
 - o What does Roquentin mean with his comment about the monkey?
 - o He sees something lower than the monkey. What does that mean?
 - o Why is he so fascinated/bothered by his reflection?
3. Discuss answers to all journal prompts so far in small group.
4. Share to class/ class discussion.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners,

HYPERLINK

"http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R/10/" CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape

Sample Lesson 2:

Lesson Topic: What is the world really made of? Leibniz’s *Monadology*; developed by Jessica Davis

Objective: Having read Leibniz’s *Monadology*, students will present a summary and your own questions about your particular section of the *Monadology*. Students will depict their summary and questions on their own “monad” and post their monad on the classroom wall when they present their findings. Once all student monads have been posted on the wall — making a larger monad — class discussion can ensue.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and

Possible Discussion Questions

1. In which ways has modern-day technology shown Leibniz's theory to be wrong?
2. In which ways was Leibniz right about the composition of the world?
3. Why do you think Leibniz's system and philosophy are known as Rationalist according to philosophers?
4. In which ways do we all develop theories about things of which we are uncertain?
5. In which ways might Leibniz be correct that each part of the world is a part of every other part?
6. Can reasoning about science and particle reality help us to live better with one another?
7. Do you agree with Leibniz that we each have the same relationship to reality and the world as you agree or disagree?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the

Sample Lesson 3:

Lesson Topic: James Joyce’s “Araby”: Coming out of the Cave; developed by William Mottolese

Objective: Using literary analysis and philosophical inquiry to examine how we see reality - What is the difference between what we see and what is real? This lesson is aimed at teaching students to examine their senses using reason and logic to overcome personal, cultural, sexual, and other biases.

“Araby” is one of the most widely taught short stories from James Joyce’s *Dubliners*. Told in the first person from the perspective of a boy in his early teens who has an infatuation with a neighborhood girl (Mangan’s sister), “Araby” ends with a dark epiphany. The boy, who envisioned himself on a quest to purchase the girl some trinket at an Arab bazaar, ends up seeing himself as “a creature derided by vanity.” This complex story raises some fascinating literary questions about:

Narrative point of view. The boy’s narrative voice is at once that of an adolescent and that of an older individual looking back on this episode in his life.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style, in which all details resonate with

Joyce’s method of “Scrupulous Meanness,” in which symbolic or psychological meaning.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining

Myth and Genre. The boy departs on an archetypal quest to gain a prize for his “princess.”

Desire and male gaze. The reader follows the boy’s eyes as they settle suggestively on the often glowing features and body parts of Mangan’s sister.

Sociological realism. The novel depicts the “blind” streets and daily rituals of the Dublin residents.

The text, however, pairs excellently with excerpts from Plato’s Republic or just The Allegory of the Cave. One of the most compelling dimensions of the story is epistemological, about how we see the world around us, often through illusion. The boy is deceived by his own physical vision (his eyes), one tinted by an adolescent desire that creates an illusory reality in his mind.

An ideal pairing would be to read and discuss The Allegory of the Cave first and then move to “Araby.” However, many of these philosophical questions can be asked about “Araby” alone, even if you haven’t read Plato. “Araby” alone or in conjunction with Plato could be a part of an early lesson on epistemology.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Possible Discussion Questions:

1. How does Joyce foreground the idea that part of the purpose of this story is an examination of seeing? According to Joyce, how do we see reality? Can we trust the way we see the world?
2. Introduce or tap into the notion of ontology. Is there a knowable and objective reality in this story? Can we know that reality through the boy’s eyes?
3. Is the boy deceived? If so, why? What passages in the story might be examples of false or deceptive seeing? Is any objective “reality” knowable?
4. Close read the fifth paragraph of the story beginning, “Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance...” Psychologically, what is the boy doing here? What kind of “reality” is he constructing in his mind?
5. Connect to the Cave. How is the boy in a cave? Does the boy ever realize, even in a small way, the cave that he is in? Do we see Platonic notions or imagery in this story?
6. How might “Araby” reinforce, connect to, or question Plato’s theory of forms?

