

# Question Mark

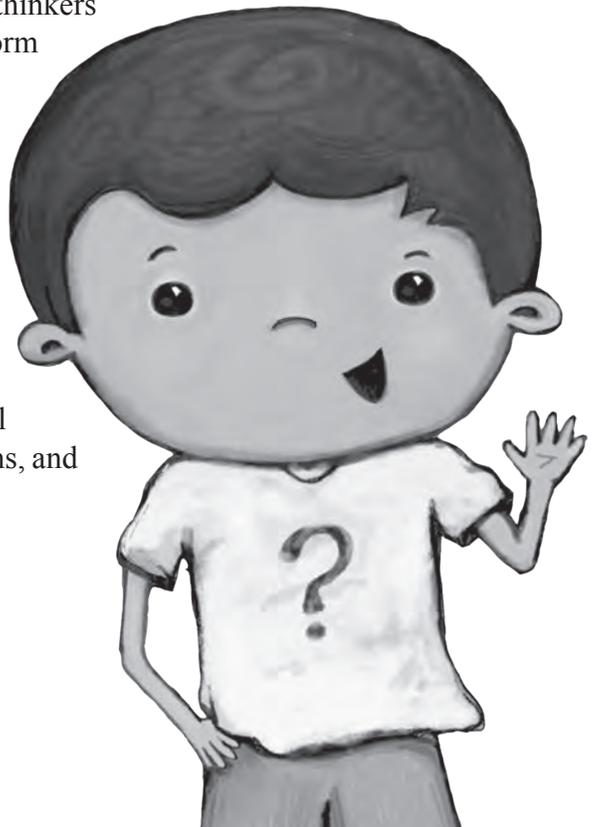
The *Question Mark* book is an introduction to philosophy for intellectually adventuresome children. As the first volume in the Royal Fireworks philosophy curriculum, it is designed to be suitable for young children. It presupposes no prior familiarity with philosophy. It is loosely connected to the second and third volumes in Royal Fireworks' philosophy curriculum.

The *Question Mark* book is less of a textbook and more of a picture book, with mind-opening ideas and activities conveyed through words and images working together. As the instructor, you can think of this volume as a single picture book with fifteen chapters or as a series of fifteen individual picture books that build a single storyline.

The fifteen chapters of the *Question Mark* book fall into three parts, corresponding to the three central philosophical skills we aim to impart: **questioning**, **doubting**, and **being certain**. These are fundamental skills that have inspired great thinkers throughout the history of civilization to build and transform the intellectual world.

You and your student(s) could read one chapter at a sitting. Or you could read one part each day for three days. You could even read the entire book in one day if you make sure to take plenty of breaks for talking and thinking about what you've read.

This instructor manual is a guide that provides for each chapter a summary of the plot developments, a philosophical basis for the key concepts of the chapter, discussion questions, and a suggestion for an activity that the student(s) can do.



# PART I: Questioning

## Question Mark One.

### A deep question: What is reality?

#### Summary

In the first chapter we meet Mark, a five-year-old boy who is at the beach. He makes shadow puppets with his hands. As he is wondering whether they are real, they come alive.

#### Philosophical Basis

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato told the Allegory of the Cave in his famous work *The Republic*.

Imagine a group of people watching a shadow-puppet show in a cave. Since they cannot see the puppeteers and have never left the cave, they believe that the shadows are real.

One day, one of the people leaves the cave and learns that the shadows are images of puppets, which in turn are images of the animals that live outside the cave. Amazed, he goes back into the cave to explain his discovery to the others, but they don't believe him, and they refuse to leave because they are enjoying the shadow-puppet show.

Plato used this allegory to argue that there are levels of reality. Most people assume that what they see around them is the whole truth. But according to Plato, what we see around us is just a shadow of the truth. He wrote, "The philosopher is in love with truth, that is, not with the changing world of sensation, which is the object of opinion, but with the unchanging reality which is the object of knowledge." **Philosophers** are the people who search for another level of reality behind what we see.

#### Discussion Questions

1. Why did Mark choose not to make any more shadow puppets? Would you have done the same thing? Why or why not?
2. What is the difference between people and their shadows?
3. Suppose your shadow came alive. What would you say to it? What do you think it might say to you?
4. Make a list of things that are real and a list of things that are not real. How can you tell the difference?

#### Activity

See how many different shadow puppets you can make. Which ones do you think look real enough to come alive?