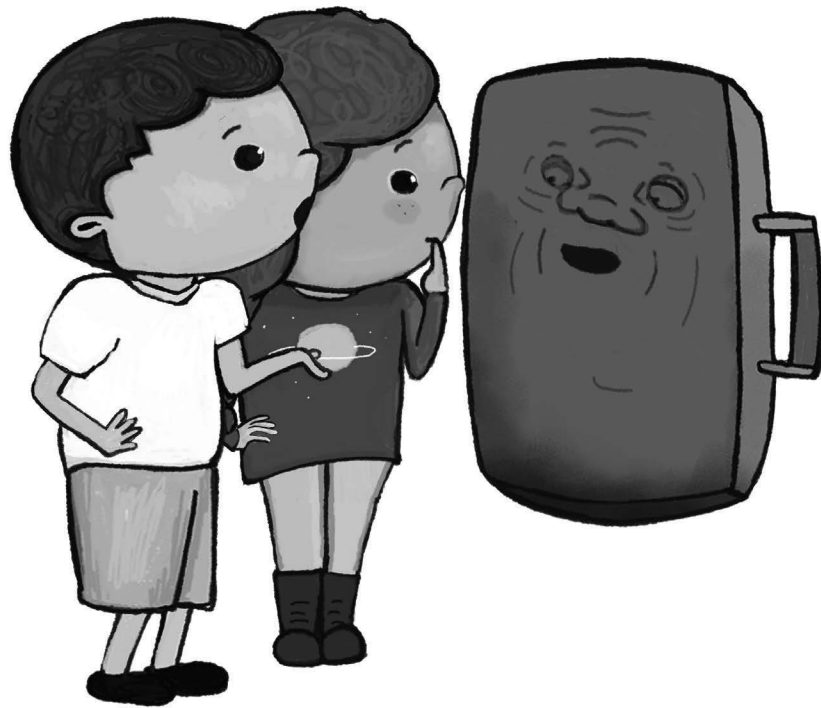


Mark and Theo Make Their Case



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Mark and Theo

Make Their Case

Mark and Theo Make Their Case is an introduction to philosophy for intellectually adventuresome children. As the third volume in the Royal Fireworks philosophy curriculum, it is designed to be suitable for children in second grade. Because of the perennial appeal of philosophy, however, this volume could be of interest to children of any age. Although it presupposes no prior familiarity with philosophy, it is loosely linked to the first and second volumes in Royal Fireworks' philosophy curriculum.

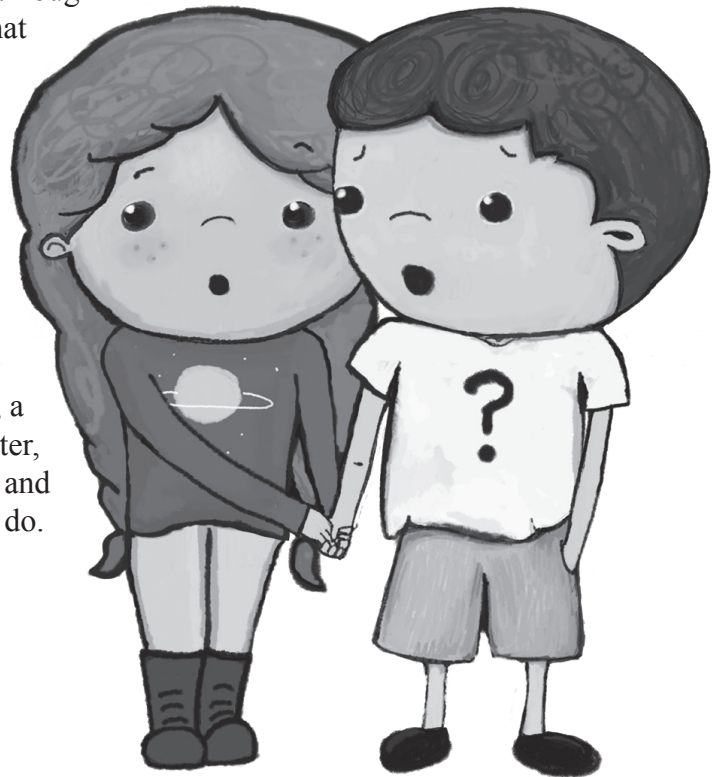
Mark and Theo Make Their Case is less of a textbook and more of a picture book, with mind-opening ideas and activities conveyed through words and images working together. As the instructor, you can think of this volume as a single picture book with thirteen chapters or as a series of thirteen individual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

The thirteen chapters of *Mark and Theo* aim to impart the three central philosophical skills we want children to develop: **identifying a problem**, **making an argument**, and **making objections**. These are fundamental skills that have inspired great thinkers throughout the history of civilization to build and transform the intellectual world.

The book falls into two parts. The first part, Chapters One through Seven, is inspired by Plato's quest for a perfect world; the second part, Chapters Eight through Thirteen, is inspired by Aristotle's rejection of that world.

You and your student(s) could read one chapter each day for thirteen days. Or you could read one part each day for two 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 based on Bloom's Taxonomy, and a suggestion for an activity that the student(s) can do.



Part I: Plato's Perfect World

Chapter One. Mark and Theo's Astonishing Discovery

Summary

Mark and Theo bump into each other while running from dive-bombing birds in the park. They learn that the birds were drawn by a boy named Will, who also drew *them*.

Philosophical Basis

"Astonishment is the root of philosophy." This is a quote from the twentieth-century philosopher Paul Tillich. It is a modern echo of the great ancient Greek philosopher Plato, who wrote, "Philosophy begins in wonder." Much of philosophy is hard to understand at first, but if you keep trying, there will come a moment when you are suddenly deeply surprised and amazed by the insight it brings.

Tillich believed that every philosopher ultimately arrives at the question of what it means to be a finite human being. We are limited and imperfect, yet our thoughts are unlimited, and we seem to have a special role to play in the world. Who are we, and why are we here? This is an "**infinite concern**," according to Tillich. The experience of discovering our infinite concern is so astonishing that it cannot be expressed in ordinary words, only symbols. While Tillich found the symbols of religion most satisfying, he believed that other symbols can be equally satisfying for those who are not religious.

Discussion Questions

1. **Remembering**
Who is Will?
2. **Understanding**
Why are Mark and Theo hiding under the trees?
3. **Applying**
Mark and Theo did not realize that someone was drawing them. Do you think it is possible that someone is drawing *you*? How could you tell?
4. **Analyzing**
Why do you think Theo felt that she could grab one of the birds?
5. **Evaluating**
Do you think Will is a good artist if one of his characters is able to pull him into the picture? Defend your answer.
6. **Creating**
If you were going to draw characters who come alive, who would they be? What would you have them do?

Activity

Draw a picture into which you would like to be pulled.

Chapter Two. Will's Problem

Summary

Will tells Mark and Theo that he drew the birds to create havoc in their world because he is unhappy with how imperfect it is. Refusing to erase the birds, Will begins drawing a mountain to take him to a perfect world, but he challenges Mark and Theo to make their case—to convince him that the imperfect world he created is worthwhile.

Philosophical Basis

Our physical world is imperfect. Picture a blade of grass without any flaws. You would never be able to find one like that in the real world. But it would be hard to understand what a perfect blade of grass *is* without a perfect model in mind. The same is true for everything you see; for example, you have a model of the perfect circle and of the color blue in your mind. If you didn't, you wouldn't know how to recognize particular circles or particular blue things when you saw them. Your mind contains a perfect model of everything you understand.

But how do these perfect models get in your mind if you never actually see them in the world? This is known as the **Problem of Universals**. The perfect models are called *universal* because they represent the essences shared by all members of a kind of thing.

The Problem of Universals stands at the gateway to philosophy because it asks, *How do human beings understand anything about the world?* Plato was concerned about this question. He argued that we can't simply make up perfect models. "If particulars are to have meaning," he wrote, "there must be universals." He believed that there is an invisible world beyond the world we see around us in which the perfect models actually exist.

Discussion Questions

1. Remembering

What does Will ask Mark and Theo to find? Do they find it?

2. Understanding

Why is Will leaving?

3. Applying

Does it bother you that this world is imperfect, or do you like it that way? Why?

4. Analyzing

Do you think it is possible for there to be another world out there that is perfect? What might a perfect world be like?

5. Evaluating

Do you think it is right for Will to abandon the world he made, since he's the one who made it imperfect? Why or why not?

6. Creating

List five things you would change to help make this a more perfect world.

Chapter Three. A Challenge for Mark and Theo

Summary

A suitcase named Case, tossed down from Will, informs the kids that if they want Will to come back and keep working on their world, they need to show that something can be good without being perfect. They propose a comfortable old bench. Case takes the bench to Will, but Will disagrees that it's comfortable.

Philosophical Basis

Plato looked around and noticed how all things in the physical world imperfectly reflect the perfect world he conceived in his mind. He called this perfect world the **World of Forms**, and he believed that it must truly exist in some sense, even though it is not a physical place. He suggested that it was a spiritual place where our souls existed before we were born and where our souls will go after the death of our bodies. In fact, Plato was convinced that learning feels like remembering because we have seen the forms of everything before we were born.

Plato had high standards for knowledge. He reasoned that knowledge should be universal, eternal (forever unchanging), and necessary (meaning unable to be otherwise). Since remembering the forms gives humans knowledge, the forms have to be universal, eternal, and necessary as well.

The forms not only tell us what things are; they also tell us their value. If a piece of pizza can be understood as a triangle only by comparing it to the Form of the Triangle, then it can be understood as a good only by comparing it to the Form of the Good. Goodness itself is the ultimate universal that is reflected to some degree in all things. Plato wrote, "The essential Form of the Good is the limit of our inquiries, and can barely be perceived; but, when perceived, we cannot help concluding that it is in every case the source of all that is bright and beautiful." Plato was increasingly disappointed throughout his life by how little goodness is reflected in the physical world.

Discussion Questions

1. **Remembering**
What does it mean to "make your case"?
2. **Understanding**
What do Mark and Theo need to do to make their case, according to Case?
3. **Applying**
Would you accept advice from someone who just called you a name? What would be the benefits of doing that? Why might it be a bad idea?
4. **Analyzing**
Think of an example of something that is good without being perfect. Explain how it can be both good and imperfect.
5. **Evaluating**
Does the fact that the bench is not comfortable for Will mean that it is not good? Explain your answer.

Chapter Six. Objection to the Third Argument

Summary

Case explains that although the snake they showed Will is a good snake, Will isn't convinced that snakes should exist at all. In fact, he doesn't think that any animals should exist. Only things that are necessary should exist, according to Will, and that means things that are true, such as numbers, which are perfect and which exist even if they are not in the physical world. Mark and Theo realize that this means *they* shouldn't exist, and they hitch a ride on a bird to head up the mountain to talk to Will themselves.

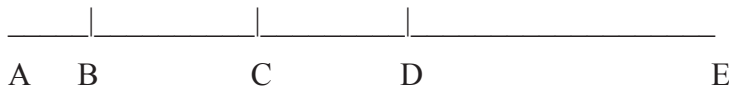
Philosophical Basis

In his most famous book, the *Republic*, Plato explained his view of reality in an image called the **Analogy of the Divided Line**. He asked us to picture a line unevenly divided:



The line represents all existing things. Everything on the left is the physical world that we can see with our bodily eyes; everything on the right is the intelligible world, which we can “see” only with the “mind’s eye.”

Now picture each portion of the line divided again, at the same uneven ratio:



Within the physical world, the segment from A to B represents shadows, reflections, dreams, and other illusions. This is the lowest form of existence. Since these things are the least real, we cannot really know anything about them. The segment from B to C represents physical objects. Although these things are slightly more real than illusions, we still cannot have genuine knowledge of them, only opinions. Crossing over into the intelligible world, the segment from C to D represents the realm of mathematics, which is more perfect and hence more real than the visible world. We can have genuine knowledge of it. The segment from D to E represents the World of Forms, as unified by the Form of the Good, which is the most perfect, most real, and most knowable realm. It is extremely difficult for human beings to attain the World of Forms in this life.

Plato was critical of the “lovers of sights and sounds” who spend their time between points A and C on the line. Becoming wise and good means turning your attention away from the visible and sensible world around us toward the invisible but intelligible world beyond us (between points C and E). He wrote, “Whenever a person strives, by the help of dialectic, to start in pursuit of every reality by a simple process of reason, independent of all information from the senses—never flinching, until by an act of the pure intelligence he has grasped the real nature of good—he arrives at the very end of the intellectual world.” Needless to say, Plato was not a proponent of biology, or any of the natural sciences—except chemistry, insofar as he asserted that physical objects must be composed of invisible geometrical structures (a step toward modern-day molecules) in order for them to have any reality at all.

Discussion Questions

1. Remembering

What does Will want to live with, according to Case?

2. Understanding

Why do Mark and Theo think there's no hope for them?

3. Applying

If you were Theo, would you grab onto Mark's ankles? Why might that be a good idea? Why might it be a bad idea?

4. Analyzing

What do you think Case means when he says that Will wants to live with intelligence itself?

5. Evaluating

Case says, "The fact that the animals we have are so random shows that they are unimportant." Do you agree? Explain your view.

6. Creating

Case says that you can't live without the number 5. Imagine a world without the number 5. How would it be different from this world?

Activity

Choose an animal, and draw a picture that shows how that animal fits into a food chain. You can also include any other elements in nature that are affected by the animal.

