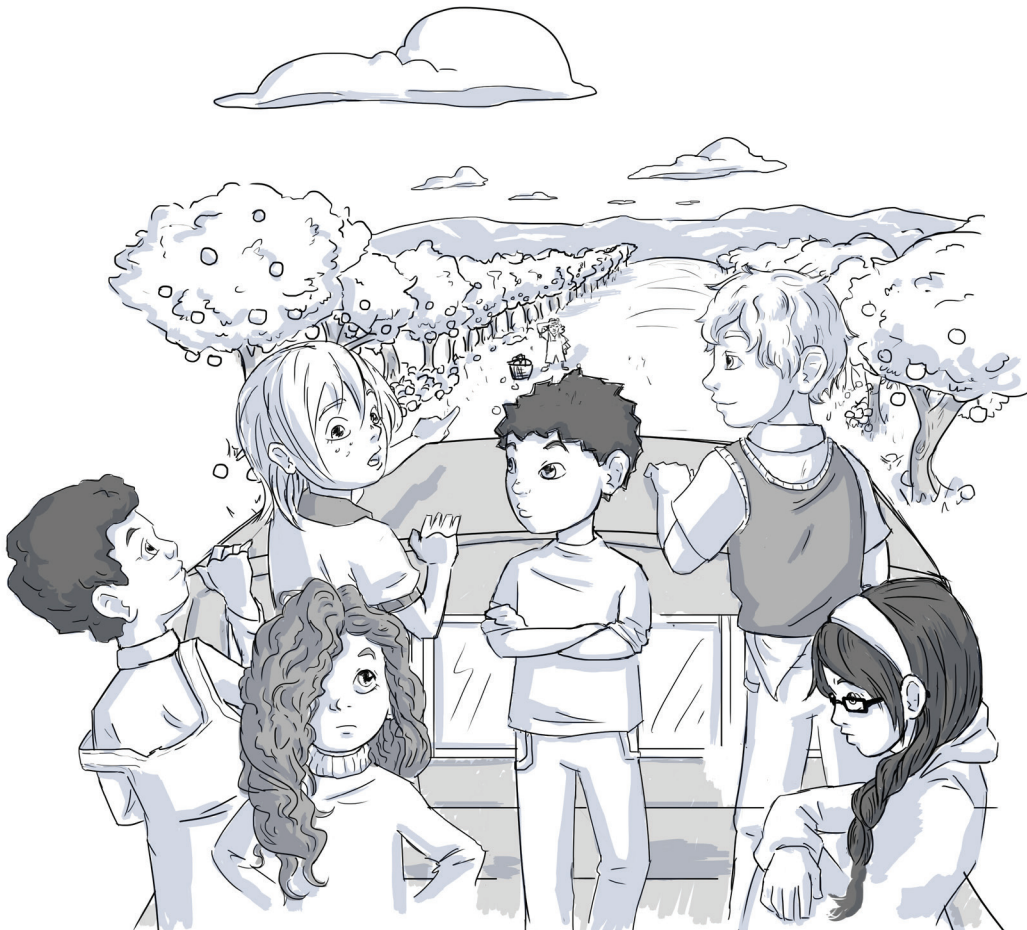


# Xperiment

Level D Philosophy Curriculum  
Guidebook



Sharon Kaye

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# Xperiment

*Xperiment* is an introduction to philosophy for intellectually adventuresome children. As the fourth volume in the Royal Fireworks philosophy curriculum, it is designed to be suitable for children in third grade. Because philosophy is so richly layered, however, this volume could be of interest to children who have advanced beyond the third grade—perhaps significantly so. Although it presupposes no prior familiarity with philosophy, it is loosely linked to the fifth volume in Royal Fireworks’ philosophy curriculum.

*Xperiment* is less of a textbook and more of a chapter book, with mind-opening ideas and activities conveyed through concepts and events working together. Its thirteen chapters aim to demonstrate the central philosophical skills of *selective rule-breaking*, *thought-experimenting*, and *proposing alternative theories*. Great thinkers throughout history have used these skills to challenge the status quo and envision new possibilities for humankind.

*Xperiment* explores the question *What is justice?* Justice has always been controversial among philosophers because it is the glue that holds society together. Society needs leaders and laws. But what justifies one person telling other people what to do? This is a vivid question for children dealing with bullies, teachers, and parents, as well as for adults who vote in political elections. In this guidebook, we’ll look at several of the most important and influential political theories ever written, which are reflected in the story about X and his schoolmates.

This companion book is called a “Guidebook” instead of a “Teacher Manual” in recognition of the fact that the material within its pages may be of interest to especially motivated children or to older children who want to delve more deeply into the content. Of course, the story can be enjoyed without the Guidebook, but the Guidebook will help to bring home the philosophical content. It 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 for some chapters, web links to videos for further exploration of the content.



# Chapter One: Selective Rule-Breaking

## Summary

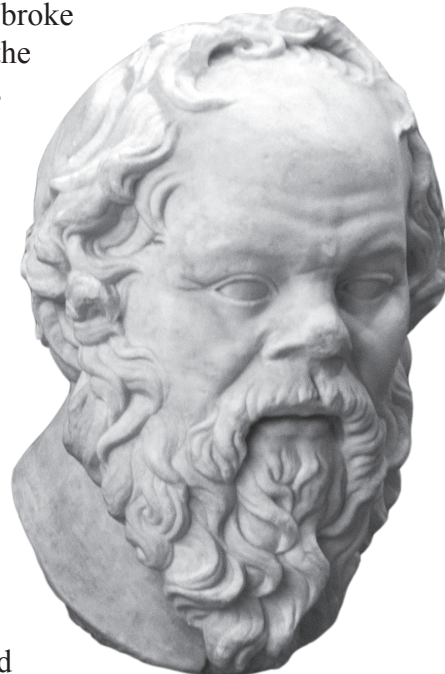
Xalden “X” Fujimoto is upset at recess because Mrs. Phatears yelled at him. Trying to get as far away from the school playground as possible, he discovers a hole in the fence that leads to a junkyard. He decides to sneak through.

## Philosophical Basis

There is no point in trying to hide it: philosophers are rule-breakers. From Socrates to John Rawls, every philosopher who ever made it big broke the rules—and got in trouble for it, too. Each philosopher breaks the rules in his or her own way, but what they all have in common is refusing to go along with the crowd.

Why does our culture admire philosophers so much? Because sometimes rules need to be broken. Philosophers do not break rules at random, just for kicks. They break rules when they realize that the rules are wrong. This is **selective rule-breaking**. Philosophers are the ones who remind us that if we stick to the same rules forever, society will never improve. In the past, for example, girls were not allowed to go to school. Someone had to break that rule in order to get to where we are today.

Socrates is known as the founder of Western philosophy because he started the tradition of breaking rules that needed to be broken. In particular, he liked to question authority, asking important people, such as teachers, if they knew what they were doing. He said, “Above all, I should like to spend my time...examining and searching people’s minds, to find out who is *really* wise among them, and who only *thinks* that he is wise.” He encouraged young people to do the same. However, many of his fellow citizens did not appreciate that. Moreover, two of Socrates’s prominent former students acted in ways that were seen as treasonous. As a result, Socrates was tried and convicted of corrupting the minds of young people and was banished from Athens. That punishment was unacceptable to him, and he chose to end his life instead.



## Discussion Questions

### 1. Remembering

Why does Mrs. Phatears blow her whistle at X?

### 2. Understanding

Why does X want to get as far away from the playground as possible?

### 3. Applying

Have you ever gotten in trouble when you didn’t think you had done anything wrong? How did it make you feel?

4. **Analyzing**

X feels self-conscious when Vida calls attention to the fact that he is not Caucasian. Why do you think he feels that way? Is there a way Vida could have made her observation that wouldn't have made X feel self-conscious?

5. **Evaluating**

Do you think it is wrong of X to slip through the wooden fence? Why or why not?

6. **Creating**

If you were X, would you have gone through the hole in the fence, and if so, what would you expect to happen as a result?

**For Further Exploration**

Watch the video "Who Was Socrates?" ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJUuOnsRcvc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJUuOnsRcvc)).

# Chapter Two: Political Theory

## Summary

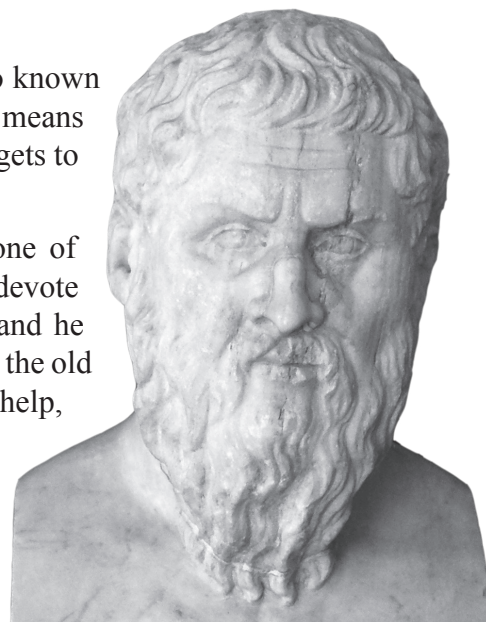
X slips through the fence to the junkyard, “Republic Junk,” where he sees someone watching him from an abandoned camper. He finds out the next day that it was Vida Hume. She wants him to join her team in a battle against other kids over the camper.

## Philosophical Basis

While philosophers are known for breaking old rules, they are also known for proposing new ones. Human beings have to live together. This means that we have to find a way to get along. Good rules help. But who gets to decide which rules are good, and how do they decide?

When Socrates was convicted of corrupting the young people, one of the young people he “corrupted” was so angry that he decided to devote his life to corrupting more young people! His name was Plato, and he established a school for philosophers called the Academy. Breaking the old rules, he allowed both young men and women to attend. With their help, he wrote the oldest surviving philosophy books.

Plato’s most famous book is the *Republic*, in which he imagines an ideal city in order to figure out how real cities should be run. This was one of the world’s first political theories. (The word *political* comes from the Greek word *polis*, meaning city.) A **political theory** is an idea about which form of government is best.



You have to be brave to reject the old system and envision new possibilities. Plato took great risks in order to develop and promote the ideas in his *Republic*. He wrote, “Courage is knowing what not to fear.”

## Discussion Questions

- 1. Remembering**  
Why did X run from the junkyard?
- 2. Understanding**  
Why did Vida ask who X was working for?
- 3. Applying**  
If you were X, would you join Vida’s team? Why or why not?
- 4. Analyzing**  
X sees the junkyard as a new place, full of possibilities. What kinds of possibilities do you think he envisions?
- 5. Evaluating**  
Do you think it is brave of Vida to fight for the camper? Or do you think she should try to stop the war? Explain your view.
- 6. Creating**  
Imagine that you are turning a treehouse into a clubhouse for your friends. Think of the five most important rules you will need to have in place so that everyone has a good time.