

All About Me – Ideas for thinking about the theme of identity.

Philosophical discussion about identity, the '*What makes me, me?*' isn't confined to a particular time in the year, but the start of the new term with a new class of children is perhaps an appropriate time to explore these fascinating philosophical themes.

Here are a few ideas to stimulate your thinking sessions:

There are links to literacy objectives but it is up to you whether you want the session(s) to lead to formal pieces of writing or not.

Not every thinking session should though - or children will 'switch off' which is the opposite of what you are trying to achieve.

You can decide how much or how deeply to go with your children; how appropriate the questions and activities - or whether to use the ideas over a series of sessions - encouraging children to think more deeply each time.

The important thing is to set aside some 'quality thinking time' - where children don't feel rushed and can 'meander' around their ideas and thoughts.

Silence as well as structured discussion time creates an atmosphere that helps children to think more effectively.

Me – Inside and Out

Give children a mirror and ask them to draw /write or talk with a partner about what everyone can see about them.

In pairs they can discuss whether when we look in a mirror we see what others see.



If not – why not? What are the differences, if any, between the perceptions we have of ourselves and how others view us?

Then shift children's thinking to - What is on the inside of us?

If we hold a mirror to our hearts what would we see? How much do we really know/see of the inside of ourselves and how much do we share with others?

Is there another part of your body where the real 'you' exists? Why do we talk about our hearts? What about our minds or our souls? Which part holds the 'real' you?

Are there things our family sees that people at school don't see?

Bring children together into a larger group and ask children to share their thoughts.

This can lead to longer, 'sideways' discussions about identity and personality and a host of deep questions will no doubt arise. That's OK – come back to them later.

You're not pretending to have the answer... that's the point of philosophical thinking.

MY BOX - and what it says about me

Use the poem 'My Magical Box' by Kit Wright as a starting point – there's a video version on this BBC website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/kit-wright-the-magic-box-poem-only/8837.html>

Talk children through what their box would be. This is a good drama session – all in a circle together and thinking/talking/taking time to savour each stage of the box. Encourage creative vocabulary and abstract ideas. Add or amend these questions as appropriate:

- What is your box made of? What are the most precious things to you that it could be made of? (E.g. the inky blackness of the night sky, peppered with the silvery stars.)
- What does it smell of? (My mum's perfume and her favourite flowers)
- Describe the outside of your box in 5 'special' words.
- Your box opens in a way that is characteristic of you – how does it open? (gently, secretly, laughingly, etc.)
- Who will you allow to open your box? Anyone or just some people? Who? Why?
- Inside your box is your most treasured possession – what is it?
- Where does your box come from? What is your favourite place, real or imagined?
- Inside are also some treasured memories – what are your top three?
- Inside you can put the most incredible thing you can think of (peace in the world, enough food for everyone etc.)
- You can also fit inside your box things that scare you or make you anxious – silently put those in too.
- Now close your box carefully. How do you feel now?

The Important Book by Margaret Wise-Brown

Read the book and explore each page – choose some objects in the room or look out of the window and do a shared writing session where you collect ideas about what is important about them.

E.g. The Important thing about.....

Then lead to The Important Thing about Me.....

Depending on the age of the children they can draw, write or simply talk about the things that make them unique and important.

If this is done on cut out outlines of each child they can be displayed on a line strung across the room – or a 'line-up on the wall – with the message 'Everyone is Important'

What's in a Name?

Spend some time exploring the concept of names:

Why do people have names?

Why do some people have more than one name?

Where do our names come from?

If you could change your name, would you? Why?

If you meet someone who has the same name as you – how do you feel?

What would the world be like if we didn't have names?

If someone gets your name wrong or calls you a different name how do you feel?

Could everyone have the same name? Why/not?

Should animals have names? Are they different to human names?

You could use a poem by James Berry: 'Isn't My Name Magical?' as a stimulus.

<http://www.poetryarchive.org/childrensarchive/singlePoem.do?poemId=121>

Or 'The Naming of Cats' by T.S. Eliot

There is a lot of follow up research and/or writing that could be done – origins of names, names in other languages, naming ceremonies in different cultures and religions,