

Teaching notes on MCG Plato & morality

Slide 1

Learning objective: LO: To find out about Plato and, using his tale of Gyges, to explore both his and our own thoughts on why humans behave how they do

Slide 2

As a warm up to this lesson's cultural exploration, this game of Word Roots Challenge introduces the etymology of some important philosophical vocabulary. As usual, the root will move to the correct derivation on mouse click.

Slide 3

Today's cultural segment, philosophy, starts with an analysis of the word itself.

[mouse click] φιλειν philein = to love

[mouse click] σοφος sophos = wise

[mouse click] These two words make 'philosophy', which literally means love of wisdom

Slide 4

One of Ancient Greece's most famous philosophers was Plato.

[mouse click] We can't be entirely sure when he lived, but it's something like 427- 347 BCE.

[mouse click] But we do know for sure that he lived (and philosophised!) in Athens, a powerful and important city-state in Ancient Greece. The map shows where Greece and Athens are in relation to Britain and the rest of Europe.

Plato asked questions such as...

[mouse click] What's the best way to rule? A king? Let the people decide?

[mouse click] How do we know what's real?

[mouse click] Do humans have souls? Do souls live forever?

Slide 5

Another question Plato asked was,

[mouse click] "What makes people behave the way they do?"

To illustrate one opinion on this, Plato tells the story of Gyges and the Magic Ring.

👉 The next four mouse clicks bring up a potted version of this story (complete with emoji illustration!). Either the teacher can read out aloud, or pupils can volunteer to read a paragraph each.

n.b. Gyges is pronounced 'guy-jeez', Lydia is pronounced 'lid-ee-yer'

👤 Can you think of any modern stories that may have been inspired by the tale of Gyges and the Magic Ring? [Harry Potter (Harry's invisibility cloak), The Hobbit]

Slide 6

[mouse click] This story gives one perspective on why people act in a good or bad way, but Plato didn't want to tell people what to think, he wanted them to think for themselves, so...

👤 [mouse click] Do you agree with the message of the story of Gyges? Take two minutes to discuss the question with the people on your table.

💡 If there is time, you can also use one or all of the 'dilemma' scenarios contained in the accompanying student worksheet. These scenarios are springboards for group discussion on making ethical decisions when a slightly unethical decision could (at least initially!) benefit the decision-maker.

Slide 7

The plenary slide:

Question 1 The Greek word 'sophos' means 'wise': true or false? [true]

Question 2 What Ancient Greek philosopher came up with the tale of Gyges and the Ring of Invisibility? [Plato]

Question 3 What was the name of the shepherd who found the ring of invisibility? [Gyges]