FEAR, DEATH, AND THE UNKNOWN

A Curated Collection and Teacher's Guide from The Prindle Post

FALL 2025

The Prindle Institute *for Ethics*

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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This workbook has been carefully designed by the Prindle Institute for Ethics to help students practice the art of moral reasoning through reading, discussion, and reflection. Drawing on the Institute's deliberative pedagogical expertise and materials from *The Prindle Post* newsmagazine, the contents of this resource invite students to explore contemporary ethical questions in a structured, open-ended way. Every article and activity has been chosen to align with national learning standards and to model how ethical inquiry can deepen critical thinking, civic understanding, and communication skills. In the classroom, our workbooks function as tools for dialogue—encouraging curiosity, empathy, and the thoughtful exchange of ideas across difference.

ABOUT THE PRINDLE INSTITUTE

The Prindle Institute for Ethics equips people to deepen their understanding of different moral perspectives and to think critically about the inescapable ethical issues of our time. Through ethics education resources and interactive experiences, we bring communities together to fully engage with the ethical dimensions of their lives. To learn more, please visit us at **prindleinstitute.org**.

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HOW TO TALK ABOUT ETHICS IN THE CLASSROOM

by Tucker Sechrest and Alex Richardson

At the Prindle Institute, we believe ethics belongs everywhere—and to everyone. Teaching ethics doesn't mean telling students what to think; it means helping them learn how to think more clearly, generously, and carefully about what matters. The Prindle Post classroom workbooks are designed to make that process approachable, structured, and lively. Whether you're leading a full class discussion or a short reflective exercise, these materials help students slow down, examine their assumptions, and practice the habits of ethical reasoning that make for better learners, citizens, and communities.

START WITH BIG QUESTIONS.

Each Prindle Post article begins with an open-ended ethical question. Let that question drive your conversation. Encourage students to identify what values are in tension, who is affected, and what kinds of reasoning might support different viewpoints. Ethics thrives on curiosity—so make room for students to ask their own questions and follow where those questions lead.

INVITE MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES.

Ethical reflection deepens when we recognize that good people can disagree for good reasons. Create a classroom environment where students can voice uncertainty, curiosity, and dissent without fear of judgment. Remind them that disagreement isn't a breakdown—it's a necessary part of moral learning. Model active listening and ask follow-up questions that help students articulate not just what they think, but why.

MOVE FROM OPINIONS TO REASONS.

Students often start with strong feelings about an issue. That's a good place to begin, but not a good place to end. Encourage them to move beyond reactions by asking, "What principle supports that view?" or "Would you apply that

reasoning in a different case?" Ethical thinking is less about defending a stance and more about examining the ideas and values behind it.

CONNECT ETHICS TO REAL LIFE.

The cases and commentaries in The Prindle Post are drawn from the world students already inhabit—news, culture, and community life. Invite them to make those connections explicit: "Where else do we see this issue play out?" "How might this dilemma affect people in our own community?" When students connect ethical reasoning to the choices and systems that shape their world, they begin to see philosophy as something they live, not just study.

END WITH REFLECTION.

Ethical inquiry is as much about personal growth as intellectual skill. Close each lesson by asking students to reflect on what they learned—about the issue, about others, and about themselves. Prompts like "What new question are you taking away?" or "What challenged your thinking today?" help students internalize the process of ethical reflection and carry it into future discussions.

TEACHER TIPS FOR FACILITATING GOOD CONVERSATIONS

Lead with questions.
Start with curiosity, not conclusions.

Make space for disagreement.
Difference is where the best thinking happens.

Listen generously.
Model openness, patience, and respect.

Ask for reasons, not just reactions.
Help students explain why they think what they think.

Keep it real.
Link big ideas to everyday life.

End with reflection.
Ask what changed—or what still feels unresolved.

THE PRINDLE POST

MCKAMEY MANOR: THE HOUSE OF NO CONSENT

by Evan Butts

OCTOBER 31, 2019

Since 2005 Russ McKamey has been running McKamey Manor, an extreme horror attraction. When patrons sign-up for the tour they are signing-up for being physically and psychologically mistreated. Before participating, patrons must go through extensive interviews, a medical examination, and sign a long legal waiver. However some participants complain that the experience is too extreme and that the legal waiver does not excuse their behavior. The nature of the attraction brings up a host of issues concerning the nature and extent of consent.

A waiver is a voluntary surrender of a right or opportunity to enforce a right. Many horror attractions require patrons to sign a waiver before entering, in which the participants acknowledge that they are knowingly taking on the risk of various losses and relinquish the right to seek damages they may suffer while attending the attraction. For example, if a person who attended a horror attraction suffered from a heart condition and experienced a heart attack during their participation, they would not be able to sue that attraction for any medical expenses incurred as a result of that heart attack. In the case of McKamey Manor the waiver is reportedly about 40-pages long. In addition to the waiver, potential patrons are required to watch videos of other people's experiences at McKamey Manor. The participants in these videos all ask to have their experience ended prematurely, and advise the potential participants that they "don't want to do this."

But does it follow that potential participants, duly informed of what may happen to them, truly consent to be buried alive, forced to ingest their own vomit, held under water, cut, struck, and verbally abused? Not necessarily. Not even a signed legal form, or other explicit signal of consent automatically creates genuine consent. There are several conditions which render void apparent consent such as when no genuine choice is available to participants or when the participant is offered something that undermines their ability to make rational decisions. McKamey Manor offers participants $20,000 if they

can survive the entire experience (which is of variable length, ranging from 4 – 10 hours). Even in the longest scenario a successful participant would stand to make $2,000 per hour of their time — an inducement that undermines a person's ability to think clearly.

While recent McKamey attractions allow participants to create safe words to automatically end their horror experience, this was not always this case. And McKamey patron Amy Milligan claims that even when she begged the actors to stop, they continued to torment her. If a person cannot end the experience at will — if they are at the mercy of the actors creating the experience — then that person has been robbed of their autonomy, even if only for a limited time. This creates another type of situation in which the explicit consent signal, in the form of the waiver, is a legal fiction. It is not possible for a person to fully waive their autonomy, as doing so would be to essentially sign themselves into slavery.

The idea that such "voluntary slavery" could exist is discounted as a possibility by philosophers with views and methodologies as different as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill. Rousseau argued that once a person becomes a slave by losing all autonomy, they cease to be a moral agent at all. As such to consent to being a slave would be to consent to no longer being a moral or legal person. Mill argued that voluntary slavery was an exception to his harm-to-others principle, which stated that any person could do as they pleased so long as they did not harm someone else. He claimed that although a person attempting to sell themselves into slavery may not be causing harm to anyone but themselves, it nonetheless stood in contradiction with the whole point of the harm-to-others principle — to maintain maximum individual liberty.

Though McKamey Manor residents do not sign themselves away into permanent slavery, they do "waive" their autonomy for a limited amount of time. Importantly, the effective duration of this "waiver" is determined not by

the participants, but rather by the actors. Moreover some of the experiences patrons are subjected to are essentially torture. Here again the substantiveness, or, at least, relevance, of patrons' consent is dubious. Consider waterboarding, a form of simulated drowning. (McKamey contends that no participants are waterboarded, but admits that they will be made to feel like they are drowning — a spurious distinction.) The problem with military detainees being waterboarded is not that they weren't asked for their permission first. Indeed lack of permission is not the sole moral shortcoming of any form of torture. The problem is instead the nature of the activity and the relationship it creates between people: a relationship in which one person is inflicting suffering an another for enjoyment or profit.

McKamey and his defenders claim that the screening and waiver process creates a situation in which McKamey Mansion patrons consent to a prolonged period of physical and emotional abuse. However there are some things that no waiver, no matter how length and legalistic can create consent for. A person's autonomy is inalienable. This doesn't just mean that it cannot be taken away, but also that it can't be given away.

EVAN BUTTS is a law student at Villanova University's Charles Widger School of Law. He is interested in developing legal tools to curtail corporate behavior that is harmful to the environment. As a researcher, he has published articles about issues on the border of epistemology and philosophy of cognitive science.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions as prompts for written assignments or task questions for class or small group conversations.

1. Can people ever truly consent to being harmed or humiliated? If someone signs a waiver agreeing to extreme treatment, does that make the actions of others morally acceptable?

2. Philosophers like Rousseau and Mill argued that autonomy can't be given away—even voluntarily. Do you agree that certain freedoms should be "inalienable," or should adults be allowed to do whatever they choose with their own bodies?

3. McKamey Manor's defenders call it an extreme form of entertainment; critics call it legalized torture. What ethical responsibilities do creators of such attractions have toward participants—and where should society draw the line between thrill and abuse?

THE PRINDLE POST

THE ETHICS OF 'DARK TOURISM'

by Rachel Robison-Greene

APRIL 07, 2021

In February 2020, Netflix released a four-part docuseries called Crime Scene: The Vanishing at the Cecil Hotel. The series focuses on the death of Elisa Lam, but along the way it tells the story of the building. It was built in the 1920s with all of the glamour that is often associated with hotels of that age in that area. The hotel struggled during the Great Depression. It is located on skid row, and eventually it became a common resting point for the city's poor. The Cecil is infamous for the deaths that have taken place there and for the fact that two famous serial killers, Richard Ramirez and Jack Unterweger, stayed there during the period in which they were actively killing people. A season of American Horror Story was based on the folklore that surrounds the Cecil Hotel.

Elisa Lam was a 21-year-old student at the University of British Columbia. She vacationed in California in the early months of 2013. Several days into her trip, she checked into the Cecil Hotel. It was frequented by international travelers because it was inexpensive and functioned as a hostel. These travelers were also largely unfamiliar with the hotel's past and as a result they were undeterred by it. During her stay, Lam initially shared a room with some of the hotel's other international travelers. She was moved to her own room when those travelers complained about her erratic behavior. Shortly thereafter, Lam disappeared. The last known images of her are captured on a hotel security tape. Her behavior is unusual. The police released the tape and the video went viral, causing internet sleuths across the globe to speculate about what happened to her. At times, she appears to be checking for something or someone outside the elevator door. She moves her hands in unusual ways and presses the buttons to all of the floors. Finally, she walks awkwardly out of the elevator and down the hall. She was found weeks later, naked, dead in the water tower on top of the hotel which a maintenance worker checked after guests complained that their shower and tap water was coming out black.

After the series came out, there was renewed interest in staying at the Cecil Hotel. Crime aficionados and ghost hunters were eager to spend the night — preferably in a room in which Ramirez or Lam once stayed. The hotel has been closed for renovations since 2017, but this has not stopped "dark tourists" and social media personalities from sneaking in to take pictures and footage.

Many people would rather visit the home of a serial killer, the location where a famous murder happened, or the site of a natural disaster than a sandy beach or a world heritage site. Dark tourism isn't new. People often feel powerful connections to some of the world's most tragic events. This connection is so strong that thousands of people visit Gettysburg every year, not simply to observe a historical site or to pay their respects to the many human beings that died in that battle, but to actually take on roles and act out what occurred there.

People will engage in dark tourism even when there is risk that doing so might be dangerous to their health and safety. For instance, for years tourists have been visiting Chernobyl, the location of the nuclear disaster that led to agonizing death and long-term illness for so many people in the 1980s and beyond. The risk of exposure to radiation has been no source of concern for many tourists who just want to be close to tragedy.

One way of viewing this kind of behavior is as just one form that an interest in history can take, and there is no reason to be critical of anyone for taking an interest in history. Millions of people visit the Tower of London every year. The fact that terrible things happened there is part of what makes it an interesting place. Most cities and the buildings in them have a rich variety of stories to tell. The ability these destinations have to call up our sense of empathy and shared humanity is part of what makes many of us interested in traveling in the first place.

On the other hand, intentions may turn out to matter quite a bit. If a person gets a charge from visiting the home of a serial killer and their preferred vacation destination is a tour of death, that person may have some soul searching to do.

It also might matter whether it is "too soon" to treat the location in question as a place where tourists can get cheap thrills. Since the Battle of Bosworth happened in 1485, it may be the case that no one can be thought of as particularly perverse for experiencing excitement when visiting the location where it took place. If the event occurred in living memory, it may be wise to be more circumspect. There are actual living, breathing human beings that might be hurt by the decision to treat the location of their personal tragedy as if it is a great spot to grab an Instagram photo on spring break. In the case of Elisa Lam, there is good reason to believe that mental illness played a role in her death. When people visit the Cecil Hotel hoping to contact the ghost they believe killed her, it minimizes the real tragedy of what likely actually happened.

That said, it may be that some events were so inhumane that it is never appropriate to visit sites associated with them for kicks. For instance, over the years there has been much discussion about what to do with Hitler's childhood home. There was discussion for a while of turning it into a museum dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Nazis. In recent years, Austria has decided to tear it down to reduce or eliminate the attraction the location has for neo-Nazis.

In Salem, Massachusetts, visitors can buy a ticket to the Salem Witch Dungeon, which is ostensibly a site to educate tourists about what the trials, imprisonment, and execution of people accused of witchcraft would have been like for those who experienced them. Unfortunately, at many turns the Witch Dungeon is more like a modern haunted house than it is a respectful

educational opportunity. When people wearing spooky makeup are hired to generate screams, it can be easy to forget that everyone who was accused of witchcraft was innocent of that charge and that the events that are being reenacted in the dungeons are based on the last torturous days of the innocent.

Aristotle thought that part of what it is to be a virtuous person is to habituate the dispositions to have apt feelings and reactions to one's circumstances. This requires practice and keeping a close eye on others who have well-developed characters. Having the right response to a location associated with tragedy may not be a matter of avoiding these locations, but, instead, visiting with the appropriate amount of respect and understanding.

RACHEL ROBISON-GREENE is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Utah State University. Her research interests include the nature of personhood and the self, animal minds and animal ethics, environmental ethics, and ethics and technology. She is the co-host of the pop culture and philosophy podcast *I Think Therefore I Fan*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions as prompts for written assignments or task questions for class or small group conversations.

1. What, if anything, makes it morally wrong to visit a place where recent tragedy occurred? How should we balance curiosity and historical interest against the risk of exploiting others' suffering?

2. The article suggests that a visitor's motives might determine whether their actions are ethical. Do you agree that intentions matter most, or should we judge behavior by its effects on victims' families and communities?

3. When tragedy becomes a tourist attraction—like the Cecil Hotel or Chernobyl—does society gain a meaningful way to remember the past, or do we risk turning pain into entertainment? How should we draw that line?

THE PRINDLE POST

CRYONICS: THE TRAP OBJECTION

by Daniel Story

MAY 11, 2022

Cryonics is the technique of preserving the bodies (or brains) of recently deceased people with the hope that future scientific advances will enable these people to be revived and live on. The technology to revive cryons (i.e., cryonically preserved people) doesn't exist, and there's no guarantee that it will ever be developed. Nevertheless, there's a chance that it will be. This chance motivates people to spend money to undergo cryonic preservation.

The basic argument for cryonics is that it might not work, but what do you have to lose? As my colleague Richard Gibson has noted, we can think of the cryonics choice as a wager.

> *If you choose not to be preserved, then you certainly won't enjoy any more life after death (I'm assuming there's no spiritual afterlife). But if you choose to be preserved, then although there's a chance you won't be revived, there's also a chance that you will be revived, enabling you to enjoy more life after you die.*

Therefore, choosing preservation is a better bet, assuming the costs aren't too high. By analogy, if you have to choose between placing a bet that has no chance of winning, and placing a bet that has some unspecified but non-zero chance of winning, the latter is definitely the better bet (ignoring the costs of placing the bets).

I want to explore an objection to this argument. Call it the Trap Objection. The Trap Objection questions the presupposition that revival would be a good outcome. Basically, the Trap Objection points out that while revival might be a good outcome for a cryon, it's also possible for a cryon to be revived into a

situation that is both undesirable and inescapable. Thus, the wager is less straightforward than it appears.

To appreciate the Trap Objection, first note that life is not always worth living. Life is filled with lots of bad things, such as pain, grief, and disappointment, to which we would not be exposed if we were not alive.

> *Most of us believe that most of the time the good in our lives outweighs the bad, and thus life is on balance worth living despite the drawbacks. Such assessments are probably usually correct (although some question this). It sometimes happens, though, that the bad things in life outweigh the good.*

For example, the life of someone with an agonizing incurable illness may contain lots of pain and virtually no compensatory goods. For this person, life is no longer better than nothing at all.

Second, note that sometimes suicide is on balance good and consequently justified when life is no longer worth living. For example, the incurably ill person may reasonably view suicide as preferable to living on since living on will bring him more bad than good but death will permanently close the account, so to speak. And because suicide is sometimes justified and preferable to living on, it is sometimes a great misfortune when someone loses the capacity to choose death. If the incurably ill person were unable to choose to escape the agony of his life, this would likely be a great misfortune for him.

Let a Trap Situation be any situation wherein (i) a person's life has permanently ceased to be worth living yet (ii) the person has lost the capacity to choose to end their life. For example, individuals with late-stage Alzheimer's disease are often in Trap Situations, unable to enjoy life but also unable to end

it. Trap Situations are very bad, and people have very good reason to want to avoid them.

Now we are in a position to formulate the Trap Objection. The Trap Objection is that there is a chance that choosing cryonic preservation will lead to a Trap Situation, and until we have some understanding of how high this chance is and how bad the most likely Trap Situations would be, we are not in a position to determine whether cryonic preservation is a good or bad bet. But a death without cryonic preservation will certainly not lead to a Trap Situation. Thus, choosing against preservation is arguably the safer and better option.

> *By analogy, if you have to choose between placing a bet that has no chance of winning or losing any money, and placing a bet that has some unspecified chance of winning you some unspecified amount of money and some unspecified chance of losing you some unspecified amount of money, the former is arguably the safer and better bet (ignoring the costs of placing the bets).*

Cryonics could conceivably produce many types of Trap Situations. Here are some examples.

Brain Damage: The cryonics process irreversibly damages a cryon's brain. The cryon is revived and kept alive by advanced technology for centuries. But the cryon's brain damage causes her to suffer from irreversible severe dementia, rendering the cryon unable to enjoy her life and also unable to end it.

Environmental Mismatch: A cryon is revived into a radically unfamiliar social, political, and technological environment. The cryon is unable to adjust to this new environment and reasonably wants to end her life. The cryon is

unable to end her life, however, because suicide is culturally and legally prohibited, and the means exist to enforce this prohibition.

Valuable Specimen: The technology to revive cryons is developed in the distant future. Future humans are interested in learning about 21st century humans, but only a few have been successfully preserved. A cryon from the 21st century is revived and studied. The study techniques are barbaric and make the cryon miserable to such an extent that the cryon reasonably wants to kill herself. But because the cryon is a valuable specimen this is not permitted.

Mind Upload: A cryon's brain is scanned, and the cryon's consciousness is uploaded to a virtual world that is owned and operated by a technology company. The cryon finds life in the virtual world to be unbearably depressing and wants to opt out, but because the activities of the virtual world's digital inhabitants generate economic value for the technology company, inhabitants are not permitted to terminate themselves. Mental processes in the virtual world are simulated at 1,000 times their normal speed, such that one day in the real world feels like one thousand days to the digital inhabitants. The virtual world is maintained for 50 real-world years, which the cryon experiences as 50,000 years of unbearable depression.

This sampling is meant to illustrate that revival needn't be a good thing and might actually be a very bad thing – even an astronomically bad thing, as in **Mind Upload** – for a cryon. It does not represent an exhaustive mapping of the relevant possibility space.

I don't know how likely it is, either in absolute or relative terms, that a cryon will be revived into a Trap Situation, although the likelihood is definitely non-zero. Moreover, it's unclear how to go about determining this likelihood from our current perspective. Contemporary cryonic practitioners will claim that they would never revive a cryon into a Trap Situation. But it is very unlikely that the technology to revive cryons will be developed within the (natural)

lifespan of any living cryonic practitioners. Moreover, the world could change a lot by the time the technology is developed. So, the significance of these claims is dubious.

> *It seems that even if we ignore pre-preservation costs, choosing cryonic preservation is not clearly a safe or good option.*

If you are so terrified of nonexistence that you would prefer the chance at any sort of future life to certain annihilation, then cryonic preservation does seem reasonable. But this preference seems unreasonable. In some situations, the certainty of death should be preferred to the uncertainty of life.

DANIEL STORY received his PhD in Philosophy from the University of California, Santa Barbara and currently teaches at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. His research focuses primarily on issues relating to shared agency, responsibility, moral luck, and death.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions as prompts for written assignments or task questions for class or small group conversations.

1. If cryonics could bring someone back to life, would that always be a good thing? What makes a life "worth living," and who should decide whether future existence is better than death?

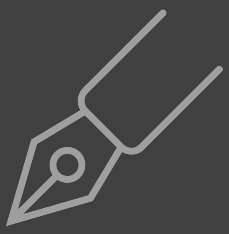
2. The author suggests that choosing cryonics might stem from being "terrified of nonexistence." Is fear of death a good reason to take extreme measures to extend life? How do we weigh the risks of a possible bad future against the certainty of death?

3. If future scientists were able to revive preserved people, what ethical obligations would they have to ensure those lives were good ones? Should there be limits on using technology to extend or restore life?

P

PUTTING BIG IDEAS TO WORK

ACTIVITY PLANS FOR YOUR CLASSROOM



Curiosity Killed the Tourist

ACTIVE LEARNING/CASE STUDY → 50-60 MINUTES

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze how curiosity, consent, and respect intersect in morally complex contexts by examining real-world examples of "dark tourism," thrill-seeking, and human experimentation. Through collaborative discussion, they will practice ethical reasoning, empathy, and the skills of democratic dialogue—listening carefully, disagreeing respectfully, and grounding claims in shared moral principles.

ACTIVITY FLOW

Bell Ringer

- Post on board: Is it ever wrong to want to know or experience something firsthand? Students move to "agree" or "disagree" sides and share quick reasons.

Content Immersion

Read short excerpts or summaries from "The Ethics of Dark Tourism," "McKamey Manor: The House of No Consent," and "Cryonics: The Trap Objection." Define curiosity, consent, autonomy, and exploitation.

Learning Tasks

- In small groups, act as ethics councils debating fictional proposals:
  - A haunted hotel reopening to dark tourists.
  - A new "extreme experience" attraction.
  - A cryonics lab selling resurrection packages.
- Identify stakeholders, competing values, and ethical questions.
- Present findings in a short "public hearing."
- Discuss: When does curiosity become morally dangerous?

Closure

Students respond aloud or in writing:

- "What did you learn about making moral judgments in community?"
- "Did anyone's reasoning change your view?

The High Price of Freedom

WRITING ASSIGNMENT → 60-75 MINUTES (OR TWO PERIODS)

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will construct a reasoned argument evaluating the boundaries of personal freedom and moral responsibility. They will examine how autonomy can conflict with dignity, safety, and the public good, using textual evidence and ethical theory to develop a thesis that addresses competing perspectives. Students will practice writing as a form of moral reasoning—clear, coherent, and responsive to counterarguments.

ACTIVITY FLOW

Bell Ringer

- Post on board: Should people be free to take any risk they want if no one else is directly harmed? Students write a one-sentence response.

Content Immersion

Discuss how each text challenges what it means to be "free" and how consent can fail. Review sample thesis statements showing ethical nuance.

Learning Tasks

- In groups, compose thesis statements for: prompt *Across the three cases, where should society draw the line between autonomy and protection?*
- Post theses on chart paper for peer feedback.
- Individually, write a 2–3-page essay defending a position and addressing one counterargument.

Closure

Students reflect: "Which argument or example haunted your thinking most—and why?"

Reflecting on Afterlife Ethics

CREATIVE/DISCUSSION → 45-50 MINUTES

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will synthesize philosophical and emotional responses to ethical questions about mortality, progress, and human limits. By interpreting images and quotations through dialogue, they will consider how technological ambition, fear of death, and respect for human dignity shape moral decision-making. This activity develops students' capacity to interpret meaning across media and to articulate shared ethical values through collective reflection.

ACTIVITY FLOW

Bell Ringer

- Four-corners prompt: We should always use technology to defeat death. Students move to their chosen corner and discuss why.

Gallery Setup

Around the room, display haunting visuals and quotations: cryonic chambers, abandoned hospitals, the Cecil Hotel, etc. At each station, include:

- *What emotion does this provoke?*
- *What ethical concern does it raise?*
- *What connection can you draw to one of the other texts?*

Learning Tasks

- Students rotate between stations, leaving sticky-note responses.
- After the walk, cluster responses by theme (hope, dignity, fear, exploitation).
- Each group drafts an "ethical statement" describing a shared moral insight.

Closure

Post statements in a "Philosopher's Corner" and reflect:

- *What does this reveal about what we value most as humans—alive or otherwise?*

ALIGNMENT WITH PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The articles and accompanying activities are designed to align with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies. Together, they foster close reading, evidence-based writing, and deliberative dialogue around complex ethical issues. Through discussion and reflection, students practice the literacy and civic skills essential to critical thinking, clear communication, and constructive participation in democratic life.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: LANGUAGE ARTS, 9-12

Reading

- RL.2 / RI.2 – Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development.
- RL.6 / RI.6 – Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated from what is meant.
- RL.7 / RI.7 – Analyze how different mediums (text, visuals, video) address similar themes or topics.
- RL.9 / RI.9 – Analyze how authors treat similar topics or themes from different perspectives.

Writing

- W.1 – Write arguments to support claims using valid reasoning and relevant evidence.
- W.4 – Produce clear, coherent writing appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- W.5 – Develop and strengthen writing by planning, revising, and editing.
- W.9 – Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Speaking and Listening

- SL.1 – Initiate and participate effectively in collaborative discussions with diverse partners.
- SL.2 – Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats.
- SL.3 – Evaluate a speaker's reasoning, use of evidence, and rhetoric.
- SL.4 – Present information and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically.

Language

- L.3 – Apply knowledge of language to make effective choices for meaning, style, and tone.

C3 FRAMEWORK STANDARDS: SOCIAL STUDIES, 9-12

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries

- D1.1.9-12: Explain how compelling and supporting questions contribute to an inquiry.
- D1.5.9-12: Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling questions about ethical or civic issues.

Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools

- Civics D2.Civ.2.9-12: Analyze the role of citizens in shaping and influencing government and society.
- Civics D2.Civ.7.9-12: Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.
- Economics D2.Eco.1.9-12: Analyze how choices made by individuals influence well-being.
- Ethics / Philosophy (Cross-Disciplinary Extension): Evaluate moral and ethical arguments about rights, responsibilities, and human dignity in historical and contemporary contexts.

Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence

- D3.1.9-12: Gather and evaluate sources, identifying relevant evidence and limitations.
- D3.3.9-12: Identify evidence that draws connections among multiple perspectives.

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action

- D4.1.9-12: Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources.
- D4.8.9-12: Apply democratic strategies to address disagreements in discussions of public issues.

CREATING EXCEPTIONAL ETHICS EDUCATION EXPERIENCES SINCE 2007.

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