

THINKING MOVES

**Ideas for Tutors, Students &
Teachers**

**Developed, adapted and
collected by
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INTRODUCTION

I have used *Thinking Moves* in diverse settings such as conferences, teacher education, outdoor residentials, summer schools and classrooms with learners as young as three and as old as eighty-three. I have used them in small groups, but also adapted versions with very large conference audiences. The moves described here have been specially selected for the small-group tutorials of a *Critical Reasoning in the Classroom* course with first year BEd students, but application possibilities are endless, including classrooms with young learners.

They introduce bodily *moves*, an important kinaesthetic element in what is traditionally regarded as a field concerned only with texts and the written word. Philosophical enquiry requires more than just 'headwork'. Whole bodies are involved when people explore ideas often held dearly for many years and may have become somewhat 'fossilised'. When respectfully challenged in enquiries, passionate commitment to our own points of view can sometimes lead not only to heated discussion, but even the experience of disturbing exploration. The strategies encourage students to commit themselves to a stance, rather than 'sitting on the fence'. Critical enquiry requires the courage to make explicit what one believes, and also the need to be sufficiently open-minded to be *moved* in one's own thinking by thinking with others. External dialogue profoundly changes internal dialogue (the conversations you have with yourself). Introducing physicality can help *move* learners out of their comfort-zone, a necessary condition for long-lasting learning. One student recently expressed his disturbance something like this:

"I know that the bathplug didn't completely fit, but at least it kept the water in the bath. I now have various plugs, but I don't yet which one fits best. In the meantime, the water is gone ... I feel beheaded".

There is another reason for my commitment to *Thinking Moves*. The strategies help move the emphasis of power to be more equally shared with learners. Certain moves, especially the use of the Joker card, offer democratic opportunities to influence the content of a lesson by offering new strategies and ideas for the community of thinkers to consider. Important decisions become a shared responsibility.

Finally, *Thinking Moves* motivates and encourages learners to work collaboratively and cooperatively in a playful and enjoyable manner. They dramatically increase engagement (e.g. *Mad Hatter's Tea Party*) and fun (e.g. *Philosopher's Fruit Bowl*) when exploring ideas. The strategies express respect for individual voices and offer increased opportunities to listen responsively to the ideas of others and to build on them. You can carefully plan for whole sessions, or include short versions of them in any lesson.

Thinking Moves will continue to be work in progress and any feedback and new ideas to add to the growing repertoire to support educators worldwide are very welcome.

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I would like to thank the educators, learners and students I have had the privilege to work with for their enthusiasm and encouragement to use and further develop the *Thinking Moves*.

The community of enquiry pedagogy is the heart of an approach to teaching and learning called Philosophy with Children (P4C). It was pioneered by Matthew Lipman some fifty years ago in the United States and is now practiced in more than 60 countries worldwide. An overview of classroom organisation and procedures is sketched in this publication, but further training in facilitating communities of enquiry is highly recommended. It is a multi-dimensional approach to the teaching of Critical, Creative, Caring and Collaborative Thinking, involving various cross-curricular skills, attitudes, values and virtues.

The original inspiration for *Thinking Moves* has been Wilson Mervin from the Scottish charity *Fair Play*. After I introduced him to Philosophy with Children (P4C) in the early Nineties, Wilson produced a booklet with a collection of traditional games that linked with these skills and values of P4C. The *Stand-up Game* and *Philosophical Fruitbowl* are his ideas. He has since changed direction to be more professionally involved with drama and changed his name to Wilson McDuff.

Some years later I met Dr Roger Greenaway. His generous sharing of ideas and reflective practice has been truly inspirational. An outdoor reviewing skills course profoundly influenced my teaching. His ideas can be found on www.reviewing.co.uk. I subsequently adapted some of his many suggestions to conform more to the values and ethos of P4C, as well as the rigour of philosophy.

Meanwhile, I was co-teaching many courses with fellow P4Cer Roger Sutcliffe www.dialogueworks.co.uk. His collaborative practice helped to move forward the idea of including kinaesthetic movements in P4C. This included the title *Thinking Moves* for our planned joint publication. Unfortunately, as a result of my appointment at the University of the Witwatersrand in January 2009, this never came about.

I would also like to thank Dr Sue Lyle from Swansea Metropolitan University for her support and commitment to my interpretation of P4C using picture books, moving images and physical movements. Her own publication of *Let's Think Together* inspired me to put the following collection of ideas together and follows a similar format. Sue introduced me to the *Stirring the Bean* strategy.

Finally, my inspiration for the *Mantle of the Expert* activity comes from the pioneering work of Dorothy Heathcote, and my training in this powerful drama approach to teaching by Tim Taylor and Luke Abbott.

Stand-up game

Resources A small group of people

Organisation No tables; chairs in a circle.

Procedure Begin by asking everyone to sit in a chair. Without being allowed to speak, or show your intentions in any other way each person has to take turns in standing up. The aim is simple – everyone must stand up. The rule, however, is that no two (or more) people can get up at the very same time. If this happens, everyone must sit down and start the game again. When people don't know each other's name it is a good idea to let people say their name when they get up.

Giving reasons

Resources Ropes. Sheets of A4 and 1 large felt tip.

Organisation No tables; chairs in a circle.

Procedure Choose a resource that provokes the giving of reasons. John Burningham's *Would you Rather* is excellent for young learners. Cards from the game *Would you Rather* (www.zobmondo.com) are more suitable for older learners.

Stage 1 **Organising the space.** Put a rope on the floor in the middle of the circle to cut the circle in half. You can make a cross with another rope offering 4 quadrants to allow 4 choices. Write the choice on A4 paper and put them in the spaces on the floor.

Stage 2 **Offer individual thinking time.** After a few minutes reflection, ask learners to stand in the space that represents their choice.

Stage 3 **In small groups.** The groups that have formed in between the ropes form small circles and explain their reasons to each other.

Stage 4 **Strong reasons.** Each group decides which of their reasons are the strongest.

Stage 5 **Plenary.** Each group offers their strong reasons and tries to persuade others to join their group.

Stage 6 **Change of mind.** After some thinking time, ask learners to move to another place if they have changed their mind. Evaluate the reasons that persuaded some to move places.

Idea: This is a good follow-up to more open-ended brainstorming sessions. For example, when exploring Mordicai Gerstein's *The Mountains of Tibet*. Select from learners' more popular choices.

Community of enquiry

Resources Post-it notes. Sheets of A4 and 6 large felt tips. Large beads or counters or shells.

Organisation No tables, chairs in a circle.

Procedure Ask participants to sit in the circle. If they are new to each other, ask each person just to say their name and where they are from.

Stage 1 **Individual thinking time.** After presenting your starting point (story, question, problem, film, newspaper article etc), give each participant a post-it note and ask them to reflect on ideas that most interested or puzzled them. Any questions already perhaps?

Stage 2 **In small groups.** Develop a question collaboratively. Construct a new one or choose one from the group by consensus. Write your question down on the A4 piece of paper and put it on the floor for all to see.

Stage 3 Each group explains their chosen question, other students often ask clarification questions at this stage.

Stage 4 Beads or counters are handed out and each person can cast their votes by putting beads/counters on their selected piece of paper (not two on one and the same).

Stage 5 The question with most votes is the starting point. The focus of the subsequent enquiry is to answer that question.

Stage 6 Before starting the enquiry (length minimum 20 mins), suggest ways in which participants can take turns (e.g. put up hand to indicate you want to speak, current speaker nominates next speaker and so on). Ask the person whose question has been chosen to start off the discussion. Avoid giving your opinion – you are there to facilitate, not join in. Instead try to ask questions to help participants deepen their thinking. What assumptions underlie that? What are the implications of that? Does everyone agree with that? Who doesn't agree with that? Can anyone give an example of that? Can anyone provide a counter example? What evidence would we need to support that?

Evaluating with Blobs

Resources Copies of a Blobtree (www.blobtree.com)

Organisation Nothing specific, but you can put the blob on an OHT/data projector. It makes life easier to number the various Blobs, so they are easy to identify and talked about.

Procedure After a lesson give out a copy of the sheet or project a copy for all to see using a projector.

Stage 1 Ask learners with which Blob(s) they most identified with during the lesson. They can mark or colour-in their Blobs. Give them plenty of individual thinking time.

Stage 2 Let learners share their reflections in threes or fours (larger group sharing is good but can take longer). Feedback to the whole group – a fellow member speaks on another's behalf.

Finally Identify where various people are on the sheet and where they would like to be as a means to progress together and to develop rules.

Variation Enlarge one copy and get each person to colour in or mark their character so that you can see how the whole group fits together.

Easy or hard questions

Resources Scrap pieces of A5 paper and a pen.

Organisation Possible with very large groups.

Procedure Ask participants to think of *one easy* and *one hard* question they can ask others in the room and to write both down on a blank (loose) scrap piece of paper.

Stage 1 People walk around the room and decide on *one* person to ask their question to. Give them a choice – *Easy* or *Hard* question? Ask them the question they choose and wait for their answer. Take turns. Then swop the pieces of papers and move on to another person. Continue doing this for some 10 minutes.

Stage 3 Explore plenary what makes a question easy or hard. Which questions would you like to spend more time discussing? Draw out of the discussion that most hard questions are questions that have central concepts in them with contestable meanings.

Categorising Questions

Resources A1 pieces of paper and 6 various colours large felt tips.

Organisation Break out groups with ideally 5 seats around a table. Put one piece of flipchart paper on each table with one felt tip.

Procedure Choose an everyday object (e.g. cell phone, keys).

Stage 1 Ask the groups to brainstorm as many questions as they can that they would like to ask about this paper. Tell them not to think about it too much and just get a wide variety of 10 questions down on paper.

Stage 2 Now ask the groups to classify their questions. If a question is *factual* ask them to put a symbol of a book next to it. If a question is an open question ask them to put a smiley face next to it. If a question is a *closed* question ask them to put a tick next to it. Finally, for a *philosophical* questions ask them to use a smiley face with a question mark on top. More important than anything here is the discussion they will have about the difficulty of distinguishing between these four categories.

Stage 4 Take the completed flip chart sheets with questions and symbols and pass them down one table (clockwise). Ask the groups to look at the questions and symbols from the other groups and see if they agree with their classifications. If they don't they can put their own symbols beside them. Each group needs to identify at least one question they want to ask the other group.

Stage 5 **Plenary.** Spend time (at least 10 minutes) on the questions they pose to each other. Pull together the various threads of what these four categories mean.

Stirring the Beans

This is an excellent way of mixing existing groups of 4 or 5 sitting at one table, but it quickly leads to chaos. Really important to follow instructions exactly!

- Ask each group to number themselves 0-3 (if 5 in the group they will have two 0's)
- Ask those who are 0 to stay at the table
- Ask those numbered 1 to move on ONE TABLE clockwise
- Ask those numbered 2 to move on TWO TABLES clockwise
- Ask those numbered 3 to move on THREE TABLES clockwise
- Ask those numbered 4 to move on FOUR TABLES clockwise

Mad Hatter's Teaparty

Resources Chairs and a list of about 8 previously generated questions.

Organisation Can be done with groups as large as 80.

Procedure Ask participants to arrange their chairs in two lines 'knees to knees'. It sometimes helps when explaining this strategy that another name for this activity is 'speed dating'.

Stage 1 Take each of the questions put on A4 in turn and in pairs people should try and answer the question. Move on when it becomes obvious that the discussions are 'drying up' (usually 3 or 4 minutes).

Stage 2 After each question has been aired, ask people to stand up and move on **one** chair to the left (clockwise). They will now have a new partner. Read the second question to the group and so on. Continue until all the questions have been discussed or time has run out.

Philosophical Fruitbowl

Resources A group of not less than 8 people.

Organisation No tables; chairs in a circle.

Procedure This is a great game to examine beliefs and points of view.

Stage 1 In this a non-philosophical warm-up to the game. You go round the circle and give each person the name of a fruit. With a group size of 30 a helpful number of fruits is 5 (e.g. oranges, apples, bananas, strawberry, pears). Go round the circle and end up by giving yourself a fruit name too.

Stage 2 Now stand in the middle of the circle and call out one of the fruits, say apples. All the people who are apples must quickly swap seats. As they do so, you must try and sit on an empty chair. If you manage to do so, one of the other players will be left in the middle. This person now becomes the new caller and calls out another fruit. So the game continues. At any time, the caller may also call 'fruit bowl' in which case everyone must change places.

Stage 3 Don't use fruits, but 'things you observe', e.g. all those wearing jeans have to swap places.

Stage 4 Introduce philosophical statements e.g. those who believe in an afterlife have to swap places, or everyone who disagrees with the author in this text who claims that ... etc It is a playful way of getting people to commit themselves to certain statements, to see physically whether there are differences of opinion, or simply to make sure people sit in different places.

Mantle of the Expert

Resources Appropriate Music, A4 pieces of paper and 6 various colours of felt tip pens.

Organisation No tables; chairs in a circle.

Procedure Divide the class into small groups of 5 .

Stage 1 Let each group choose a moment in the story they would like to 'freeze-frame' (like a DVD that has been paused). Play music in the background to add to the atmosphere.

Stage 2 When ready (usually within 10-15mins) each group acts out their 'freeze-frame' to the others. After each frame ask individuals make clear who or what they were acting out.

Stage 3 From their expert perspective (i.e. the character or thing in the story) invite them to ask probing questions and write them down on A4 sheets of paper.

Stage 4 Use a selection of questions for Mad Hatter's tea party or Choose one question democratically and start a Community of Enquiry.

Revolver

Resources Rope

Organisation No tables; chairs in a circle.

Procedure Choose a controversial topic. Put a rope in the middle of the circle so that the circle is 'sliced in half'.

Stage 1 Introduce the topic (For example, 'Britain should/should not host the Olympic games in 2012'). Give each side a chance to think of some arguments for and against.

Stage 2 Tell one side to start arguing for and the other side against. They need to take turns and be constructive. Remind them not to 'shoot each other down' (despite what the name of the game suggests!).

Stage 3 After 5 minutes or so, ask them to get up and move (revolve) three places clockwise. The people who have crossed the rope now have to argue for the opposite position they have just argued for.

Stage 4 Continue in this way until everyone has argued for and against.

Stage 5 Finally, give everyone the opportunity to go the side they agree with most. If undecided they can stand on the rope.

Stage 6 Ask feedback from various people and plenary assess their reasons and arguments.

Joker card

Resources Laminated large or small joker from a pack of cards.

Organisation Give each person a joker or enlarge one for the whole group to use.

Procedure Explain how to use the joker. In a game of cards the joker is the one who breaks the rules, who isn't governed by them. In any dialogue there are implicit rules and strategies and authorities. Sometimes they need to be changed or adapted. Whenever a learner believes that intervention at a strategic level will benefit his/her participation, pulling the joker is a good idea.

Stage 1 Invite learners to pick up the joker and promise that the dialogue about 'content' (e.g. answering a question) will stop immediately.

Reminder It is often necessary to keep reminding learners how to use the joker. It makes it possible to dialogue about the dialogue (i.e. to meta-dialogue together). They can be about more trivial things, such as the need to have some air in the room by opening a window, or a change of direction regarding content. Make sure that such interventions are constructive (e.g. 'I don't think we are making much progress with this question, I suggest that') and not a way to 'jump the queue'. Interventions can also be about the way people perceive they or others are being treated. All decisions need to be put to a democratic decision-making process.

Venn Diagrammes

Resources Two ropes or hoops

Organisation No tables; chairs in a circle.

Procedure Put the hoops or ropes on the floor in such a way that they partly overlap ('butterfly'). Let each hoop/rope represent an abstract concept.

Stage 1 Bring examples that can be put in the circles, e.g. objects, pictures, photos and ask them in pairs to choose where they should be put in the circles. For example, you can choose the concepts 'art' and 'beauty' and ask learners to bring in examples.

Stage 2 Ask everyone to put their example in the circle(s), or outside the circles.

Stage 3 Ask learners to walk around and decide in pairs whether they disagree with the place of certain examples and/or have questions to ask about the particular placing of an example. If so, all sit down and start an enquiry.

Stage 4 When exhausted one example, move on to others and so on.

Conceptlines

Resources A long rope, A4 sheets of paper and large felt tips.

Organisation No tables; chairs in a circle.

Procedure Put a rope in the middle of the room and A4 sheets with two opposing abstract concepts on either side of the rope.

Stage 1 Suggest examples that can be put on this continuum. For example, if the concepts are 'choice' and 'no choice' you can suggest e.g. 'being a teacher', 'eating food', 'being me', 'dying'.

Stage 2 Ask them for more examples.

Stage 3 In pairs perhaps let them make decisions about where the examples belong.

Stage 4 Invite volunteers to show by standing on the rope where they place the example. Ask others whether they agree. Start a discussion with each example that provokes disagreement.

Space Odyssey

Resources Cards, large felt tip pens, timer

Organisation Tables and chairs in one large horseshoe.

Procedure Each person gets a role allocated in the following way. Write the following roles (or others you devise) on cards and put them on the tables for all to see: househusband, architect, politician, doctor, pregnant woman, movie director, natural scientist, teacher, child, baby, nurse, cleaner, PhD student, actor, author, painter, musician, policewoman, taxi-driver, professor, guard, hairdresser, chemist, dog, arms dealer, astronaut, pilot, engineer, footballer, rockstar, journalist, priest, disabled plumber.

Stage 2 Present the following scenario. In the corner of the room is a space ship. The Earth will self-destruct in about 15 minutes, but there are two spaceships that will leave the Earth. The first carries 6 passengers and will leave in 10 minutes. That one will definitely leave safely. The second spaceship can only carry 4 people and will leave 5 minutes later are the second. This may or may not be on time. Everyone else will most certainly die.

Stage 3 Give everyone 5 minutes to rehearse strong arguments for why they deserve a place on the space ship.

Stage 4 The group has to decide who goes and who stays.

Stage 5 Set the timer for 10 minutes and guard the spaceship. Only the chosen ones are allowed to enter. Make sure of strict timekeeping. After exactly 10 minutes make sure 6 people (and no more!) board the ship. Do the same with the second ship.

Stage 6 Use the remainder of the time to discuss the activity. Some may be angry, so allow time for this. Develop some second-order questions in small groups.