

Introductory notes

Welcome to Primary Ethics Bites! This **Bite** takes around 15 minutes to complete, but you may find the ideas within are revisited in conversations for weeks to come.

This **Bite** is available in both audio and printed (PDF) format. The same content is covered in each, so choose the option that best suits your students' learning environment. There's no need to download the PDF to use as a worksheet if you have chosen to listen to the audio.

Bites for years 3 – 6 are designed for children to tackle individually or with a small group. An adult learning supervisor may like to participate by helping to read the stories and questions, by modelling genuine curiosity and by supporting the student to think for themselves.

Aim to be neutral when listening to the ideas expressed by your students and ask them to give the reasons behind their opinion rather than try to do the thinking and reasoning for them. Encourage the student to talk through their ideas by using expressions like "OK", "Hmmm, I wonder..." and "That's an interesting thought!".

There is often not a single right answer when it comes to exploring an ethical dilemma. In that way, ethics is different to other lessons like maths.

Instead, what ethical inquiry helps us do is to look at a situation or idea from different points of view and to build a deeper understanding of the considerations in each dilemma. We develop our skills in critical thinking and ethical reasoning and our ability to make sound and well thought out decisions in a range of circumstances.

Who's flying this plane?

Objectives/ethical concepts explored

- Invites students to think about the ancient notion of Fatalism – the idea that our futures, our fates, are fixed and that whatever we do, we cannot change them.
- This topic aims to help students to:
 - develop an understanding of the notion of Fatalism
 - question the idea that what we do today has no effect on what happens in the future
 - think about how a belief in Fatalism might affect the way we act.

Knowledge & skills developed

Knowledge

- The concept of fate
- Osmo's story
- Mecca tunnel tragedy

Skills

- Listening, recalling, reflecting on own beliefs
- Applying understanding of the concept of fate to different situations

Essential questions

- Do you think that our futures are locked in, or do you think that what we do today has an effect on the future?
- Can the future be foretold?
- If the choices you make are determined by fate, and you commit a crime, should you be held responsible for your actions?

This topic contains some potentially confronting issues including a scenario about a modern-day tragedy. It could be reassuring for children if a parent or carer worked through the **Bite** with them.

Students are invited to think about the ancient notion of Fatalism, which is the view that our futures -- our fates -- are predetermined and that nothing we do (or don't do) can alter them. Whatever decisions we make, and whatever actions we take, the end result will be the same. It seems a natural human impulse to turn to the idea of fatalism when faced with what appear to be overwhelming difficulties.

The **Bite** starts by introducing the idea of Fatalism, it asks students to reflect on the following questions:

- Do you think that what you do today has an effect on the future?
- If what we do today does make a difference to what happens tomorrow (or sometime in the future), then does that mean that we are free to determine our own futures?

While it might seem obvious that the answer to this second question is 'Yes', this is debatable. After all, if our choices, actions and so on are caused by what has come before, in what sense are they made freely? And if they are not made freely, can we be said to be morally responsible for them? The 'Story of Osmo' is used as a device to make clear the meaning and implications of Fatalism. The **Bite** then deals with the Mecca tunnel tragedy as a modern example of Fatalism.

Bites are based on Primary Ethics lessons developed for use by trained adult volunteer facilitators in NSW public schools. Our lessons are based on philosophical ethics and use a 'community of inquiry' approach – the *asking power* of the group – to work together in discussion. The community of inquiry approach provides students with the opportunity to reflect on and form their own responses and consider the ideas of others in a safe and supportive environment.

You can read more about the community of inquiry approach here: <https://primaryethics.com.au/about-ethics-classes/what-happens-in-an-ethics-class/>

And watch this video for a great explanation of philosophical ethics: <https://vimeo.com/199903396>