

Who's flying this plane?

Today we have a story and a scenario to share with you. We'll be doing lots of thinking in question time, and we'll be hearing from other children, too. Are you comfortable?

Today we are going to be thinking about **fate**.



Have you heard that word before?

What do you understand it to mean?



Let's hear what some others think.



Anna: It's your destiny

Eva: It's what you are born to do. Like, if your fate is to be an Olympic runner, then that's what will happen.

Lennox: It means that your future is locked-in, and it doesn't matter what you do – you can't change what is going to happen to you.

To help us think a bit more about the idea of fate - that our futures are fixed in advance, I am going to read you a story written by a philosopher called Richard Taylor. He made up this story because he was interested in the idea of 'fate.' It's called: ***The Story of Osmo***.

Once upon a time there was a girl who believed she received messages from God. These messages were all about an ordinary man called Osmo. Because she believed these messages came from God, the girl thought she should write them down. Eventually she published them as a book, with the title, *The Life of Osmo*, but it attracted very little attention because it was quite boring.

Sometime later, a high school teacher, whose name was Osmo, finds the book gathering dust in a library. He is struck by the opening sentence: 'Osmo is born in Mercy Hospital in Auburn, Indiana, on June 6th, 1965, and after nearly losing his life from pneumonia at the age of five, is enrolled in the St James school there.' Osmo reads on, and discovers that the book accurately describes his life in every respect, with each chapter in the book corresponding to a year in his life. Then it occurs to him to go to Chapter 26, as he has just had his 26th birthday. He is astonished to find that what the book says is true: it rains on his birthday, his wife doesn't give him the binoculars he wanted, he gets a pay rise shortly afterwards, and so on.

But, Osmo thinks, that's impossible. These events have just happened, and the book has dust on it.

Then he decides to flip to the end of the book, and is horrified to see that there are only 29 chapters. He reads the following: 'Osmo dies when the plane he has taken from O'Hare airport in Chicago crashes on the runway at Fort Wayne.' That was the end of the book.

'This is ridiculous,' Osmo thought. 'Even though the rest of the book seems to be true, I can make sure the plane crash never happens - I'll just never catch a plane from O'Hare airport to Fort Wayne.' Three years later, Osmo is on a flight from O'Hare to St. Paul, when the pilot announces that the flight is being diverted to Fort Wayne. Osmo went hysterical, and tried to hijack the plane. In his attempt to divert it to another airport, he caused it to crash into the runway at Fort Wayne.

Osmo was unable to escape his fate.



Hmmm ... what if Osmo had refused ever to get on a plane, could he have avoided dying in a plane crash?

Let's hear what some other children are thinking...



Eva: Yes, because it wasn't his fate to die in the plane crash – he died because of the decision he made to try and hijack the plane.

Anna: Well, the plane might have crashed into his house even if he never got on the plane.

Eva: If he'd never read the book, he wouldn't have died in the plane crash.

Sragvee: But it was his fate to read the book!

Anna: It's just a story - I saw a movie like this...

There are many people who share the belief that the future could be known, and foretold. People pay money to hear their future from fortune tellers and psychics.



Do you think that it might be possible to tell the future? What makes you think that?



Eva: It's not possible to tell the future – the future depends on what I decide to do. It's under my control.

Anna: Well not if you believe in fate. You think that you are making a decision, but it's your fate to make those decisions.

Osmo was a made-up story, but here's a real story about the idea of 'fate'.

It's about a tragic event that occurred in 1990 in a tunnel in Saudi Arabia. The tunnel went from Mecca to another holy site called Mina and was built to hold 1000 people at a time. A damaged railing on the bridge above the tunnel caused people to fall onto those leaving the tunnel. This

meant that the exit was blocked and before too long, there were 5000 Muslim pilgrims in the tunnel. Some of them were suffocated; others were trampled to death. More than 1400 died. Saudi Arabia's King Fahd said that the deaths were 'the will of God'. 'It was fate', he said. 'Had they not died there, they would have died elsewhere and at the same moment.'



Do you think the king might have been right? What makes you think that?

Let's hear what some other children are thinking...



Anna: I think the king was wrong. The people only died because they were in the tunnel and it was a terrible accident.

Eva: And I don't think they would have died if they were somewhere else.

Lennox: I think the king might have been right. My mum says some things are just meant to be – maybe they were just meant to die there.

Eva: The king was just making an excuse because there were too many people in the tunnel. I think he was just worried he'd be in trouble for letting too many people in the tunnel.

Anna: So the king is saying that no matter what those people did that day, they were going to die. They could have been safe at home, watching TV or something. So why would they die? That doesn't make sense to me.



Do you think that what you choose to do today can have an effect on what happens in the future, or do you believe that your choices and actions have no effect on the future? What do you think?



Anna: Your choices and actions do have an effect - like if you're riding your bike too fast and you break your arm, then you won't be able to play sport for a while.

Eva: Or, if I don't do an assignment it will reflect on my school report and then maybe my career.

Lennox: I think that sometimes things that are meant to happen, just happen. My mum says it was her fate to meet my dad. She didn't meet him at her sister's party because she was too sick to go, but then she met him somewhere else.



Imagine that someone does believe that their fate is locked in. If the choices you make are determined by fate and you commit a crime - say, for example, you rob a bank - should you be held responsible for your actions? What makes you think that?



Anna: You did it, so you should take responsibility – you can't blame fate –that's a cop out. It was your choice to rob someone.

Lennox: Well, your mum would say that if someone was meant to commit a crime,if that was their fate, there is nothing they could do to avoid it. So it's not fair to blame them.

We've been thinking about the idea of fate. Osmo was fated to die in a plane crash.

King Fahd believed that the lives lost in the tunnel were fated to be lost that day – that those people would have died even if they had chosen to do something else.

And you've been thinking about whether the choices and action you take can affect your future or whether your choices and actions have no effect on the future.



Does that change how you think about fate?

We heard some really thought-provoking ideas today. Thank you for joining us.You might like to keep thinking about whether you think that what we do today can have an effect on what happens tomorrow or whether our futures are locked-in, and you might like have a talk to your family and friends about what they think, too.

Photo credit: Plane photo by [Nafis Al Sadnan](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Thank you to our wonderful actors Anna, Eva, Lennox and Sragvee who helped us to hear different points of view. While sometimes these points of view might have reflected their own opinions, at other times they were asked to express an opposing view in order to help us think more deeply about the topic.