

Introductory note for parents and carers

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 student's learning environment. There's no need to download the PDF to use as a worksheet if you chose to listen to the audio.

Bites for years 3 – 6 are designed for students to tackle individually or with their siblings or peers. An adult 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 student 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 think about the reasons behind those points of view. When we do this, we think more deeply about our own views, discover new ideas, and 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 well- thought-out decisions in a range of circumstances.

Do you really have a choice?

Objectives/ethical concepts explored

- determinism
- cause and effect
- causal chain
- moral responsibility

Skills developed

- listening
- inductive reasoning to identify causal chain
- applying the concept of determinism to different scenarios

Essential questions

- Are we generally free to make up our own minds on what to do?
- Are our choices, decisions and actions caused?
- Should we hold people responsible even if their actions are determined by forces outside their control?

This **Bite** invites students to think about the extent to which we can be held morally responsible for our decisions and actions; and what it might mean for society if it turns out that even our conscious decisions are determined in advance. It deals with a further (and stronger) challenge to the idea that we are free to make our own futures. Determinism is the view that, although what we do today affects what happens tomorrow, what we do today is completely determined by forces outside our control: by the way we've been brought up, by our personalities and the way we think, and the circumstances we find ourselves in.

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/199903>