

A Level Philosophy (AQA) Summer Prep

Welcome to Philosophy! Below you will find a list of things that you might find useful to have a look at over the summer to help to prepare you for starting the Philosophy A Level in September. Some of these activities are compulsory, while others are optional – **please make sure that all of the compulsory tasks are completed in time for your first lesson**, and then just dip in & out of the additional activities based on what particularly interests you.

This isn't an exhaustive list: there are plenty of things out there which will help you to prepare! If you see any documentaries, podcasts or books on any of the topics studied throughout the course then give them a go!

You may also find it useful to have a look on the [AQA Philosophy Website](#) where you can find the [Specification](#) and [Past Papers](#). You can also click [here](#) for the Resource List recommended by the exam board (these are the books & articles that are specifically referred to on the Specification). We will provide you with a copy of the textbook, although you may wish to purchase a copy of the accompanying [revision guide](#).

Compulsory activities:

1. Crash Course introductions to Philosophy

Watch the following videos which introduce you to Philosophy and how to argue:

- Crash Course Philosophy – What is Philosophy?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A_CAkYt3GY

- Crash Course Philosophy – How to argue – Philosophical Reasoning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKEhdsnKKHs>

2. Plato's Analogy of the Cave from *The Republic*

Watch the Youtube animated version of Plato's analogy of the cave [here](#). If you are feeling brave, you might want to have a go at reading the original text, too! You can do that [here](#):

Once you have watched/read Plato's cave, please answer the following questions in as much depth as you can (using full sentences, not bullet points):

1. Why do you think the analogy of the cave is considered timeless and universal, having had such a long lasting effect, still being studied and considered illuminating today?
2. How could the analogy of the cave be an argument for studying Philosophy?
3. What might the analogy of the cave say about the way we live so much of our lives online and through social media?
4. What is your view of the analogy of the cave? Do you agree with Plato?

3. Crash Course Philosophy: Introduction to Ethics

Watch [this video](#) and then answer the questions below (in full sentences & as much depth as you can)

1. What do we mean by the term "good"?
2. Do you think that there is such a thing as moral facts, or are ethics all subjective? Why?

3. What is the grounding problem in ethics? (you may have explained this in your previous answer – if you have, you don't need to do it again!)
4. In your opinion, what makes something good or bad? The action itself? The consequences? The person's motivation? The person's character? A combination of all of these things? Why?
5. Do you think that it's possible to make moral progress? Why?

Optional Activities:

Wider reading – Books Beyond those on the exam board resource list:

[History of Western Philosophy a book by Bertrand Russell. \(bookshop.org\)](#)

[Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy a book by Simon \(Professor of Philosophy, Professor of Philosophy, University of Cambridge\) Blackburn. \(bookshop.org\)](#)

[A Little History of Philosophy a book by Nigel Warburton. \(bookshop.org\)](#)

[Philosophy: The Basics a book by Nigel Warburton. \(bookshop.org\)](#)

[Analytic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction a book by Michael \(Professor of History of Analytic Philosophy, Humboldt-Universitat zu Berlin, and Professor of Philosophy, King's College. \(bookshop.org\)](#)

Revision Websites:

<https://philosophyalevel.com/>

<https://alevelphilosophyandreligion.com/philosophy/>

Podcasts:

[BBC Radio 4 - In Our Time, Philosophy](#)

<https://thepanpsycast.com/>

Youtube Channels:

[Welcome to Crash Course \(youtube.com\)](#)

General Resources:

[British Philosophical Association \(BPA\)](#)

[Internet encyclopaedia of philosophy](#)

[Stanford encyclopaedia of philosophy](#)

[Philosophy Now | a magazine of ideas](#)

Interesting Novels:

A great list of philosophical novels can be found [here](#). We would recommend all of the top twenty and would add that Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* is one of Jack's favourite novels: [Foucault's Pendulum by Umberto Eco | Goodreads](#). Jack would also recommend reading *War and Peace* several times throughout your life, although it can take up a lot of your

time so maybe do that over a summer holiday or after A Level exams and get a nice hardback edition as it is an investment for life: [War And Peace \(penguin.co.uk\)](http://penguin.co.uk) . Finally, another recommendation from Jack who says “I have to mention my favourite author Neal Stephenson, all of his books are thought-provoking, knowledgeable and fun. Anathem is a particularly philosophical one [Neal Stephenson - Books](#)”

More than anything, take some time this summer to really try to get thinking – think critically about what you’re seeing and hearing... do you think people’s arguments are convincing? If so, why, and if not, why not?!

Have a lovely summer, and we look forward to seeing you in September!