

Lesson Plans 10: Reflecting on wisdom, philosophy; general and specific

The Civic Knowledge Project: Winning Words

Time: 1 hour

Abstract: Reflect on things studied so far, express sources of confusion, brainstorm some “big ideas,” and

Course reflections (20 minutes)

Ask students to spend 10 minutes writing in their notebooks about the course so far. Encourage reflection generally on new ideas learned, confusing topics so-far covered, and students’ opinion on the nature of wisdom, and what it might mean to “love” wisdom. Ask students to share a few ideas, and collect notebooks in order to read responses. This is useful partly also as a writing diagnostic, allowing you to predict the extent to which they will be able to work in small groups or independently on final presentation content.

Big idea brainstorm (15-20 minutes)

Pair students up and write the basic Socratic question format (“what is ___”) on the board. Ask students to brainstorm “big ideas” to fit into the blank. Talk as a class about what makes a big idea big. Perhaps talking about the products of induction will assist in this task—a general idea will often be applicable in all sorts of scenarios, real-life situations, and hypotheticals. If students run into trouble, offer them some examples (evil, kindness, beauty, love, etc.)

Word of the day: *deduction, general and specific* (20 minutes)

Switch around student pairings, and ask new pairs to assist in the creation of diagrams depicting the process of induction, showing progress from specific ideas and hypotheticals, to general, “big” ideas. Ask students to come up with some original way of depicting this process, perhaps asking one student to first demonstrate the concept by drawing a kaleidoscopic “swarm” of bees on the chalkboard, flowing to a generally representative large “bee.” Be sure that students label their creations with *general* and *specific*, and make note of these in their notebooks.

Deduction. My students were unable to derive this process on their own, but it might be worthwhile to ask your class to attempt it. What is the opposite of induction, given our chart? What assumptions can be made about the bees in the swarm if we only know about the large, general “bee”? Ask students to make some general statements about their big ideas. A useful example: “What is a school?” “Schools have teachers, principals, and students.” “Schools are buildings with classrooms.” What, if we know these general ideas, can ***deduction*** tell us about *our* school? What can it tell us about a school we have never visited before?

Closing

Tell students that, even though Socrates never referred to deduction and induction, he nonetheless used them all the time, but, in a sense, disguised them as questions. For this, his midwifery, tell the students, he was sentenced to death. Next week, they’ll read some important quotes from Socrates.