

What's Coming out of the Box presents

Bonhomme



School
Activity
Pack

What's
Coming
Out of the Box. ~

ABOUT WHAT'S COMING OUT OF THE BOX

Based in East Kent, we are a female-led performance and arts company. We serve food for thought dished up as immersive experiences, creating work that relates to audiences in unusual ways. Our innovative performances always have a strong audience participation element and explore immersive possibilities, site-specific and outdoor situations.

Our long-term vision is to contribute to making the world a better place through the Arts: to create a more tolerant, supportive and happy society.

ABOUT BONHOMME

Bonhomme is a family show made with mud and powered on thoughts.

Children are natural philosophers and start to question the world around them very early on. What's Coming out of the Box firmly believes that children's theatre should not shy away from big juicy topics. We enjoy asking big questions to small people.

What makes a good human? This is the philosophical question we examine in 'Bonhomme' with children aged 5-8, using the Golem myth for loose inspiration. This immersive and participatory show seamlessly blends story telling, object theatre, live music and philosophy for children.

As we researched and developed the show, we worked with primary school children and community groups. We ran various workshops and two different types emerged: Philodrama© and Clay and Ideas Modelling©.

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY PACK

This pack will give you ideas about how you can recreate some of these activities at home. Whether that is as a preparation to come and see the show, post show activities or totally independent from the show.

Feel free to pick and mix, follow them to the letter or only use them as inspiration.

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General Advice

None of us at What's Coming out of the Box are philosophy teachers, we are complete frauds. What we are though is debate and ideas enthusiasts. Estelle Rosenfeld, our creative producer likes to call herself a Threepenny Philosopher.

During the research and development of Bonhomme she attended philosophy for children (P4C) training by the '[Philosophy Man](#)'. P4C is about learning to debate and form ideas, it promotes independent thinking and critical skills as well as social skills.

Respect

Philosophy is a place where two reasonable individuals can disagree. Disagreement is encouraged but there is no right or wrong. It needs to be emphasised. Of course you want to respect everybody's ideas and ask the same from all taking part whether they are grown ups or children. This is also a reason to ask for participants to listen to each other.

Be a toddler

Ask why! Question everything! A safe way to avoid stirring the enquiry in a certain direction is to keep to those questions:

- Anchor: keep repeating the main enquiry question (e.g. what makes a good person?).
- Why?
- Does everybody agree?
- Can you give me an example?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- If you had to say it in one word?...

Advice for Working with Clay

We are not ceramicists either and we worked on the project and on this activity pack with [Gillian Farrell](#).

When Bonhomme was devised we had using terracotta clay in mind but you can use any malleable material, e.g. air drying clay, salt dough, or plasticine for the Clay and Ideas Modelling activities

Clay will stick to non-porous surfaces so it's best to have some wooden boards or cloths to work on. Canvas, hessian or even an old tea towel will do

Clay is very soft and easy to model and add texture to when it is in its softest (plastic) state. You can model by making different parts and then joining them by pressing the parts together firmly and then blending the joins with your finger. Alternatively you can roll out a rough slab either by flattening the clay with your hand or bashing or rolling it lightly with a rolling pin and then cut the shape out

You can use lots of different things to push into clay to create texture, e.g. your fingers/nails, bits of Lego, metal bottle tops, modelling tools, screws, shells, keys, etc.

You can add text and writing to clay by scoring or writing on the clay with a tool or if you like you can use alphabet stamps or alphabet pasta (you will need to use a tool to pick them out after if the clay is very soft)

Clay should not be washed off into the sink as it can block the drains. The best way to clean children's hands is to have a bucket of water handy with several sponges, wring these out to wipe hands. This bucket can also be used for cleaning any tools or objects you have used. A fresh bucket of water for final rinsing with a towel nearby is also advised. This dirty water can be thrown onto grass or flowerbeds or down a nearby street drain

The clay is a tool to help explore ideas and isn't going to be fired in a kiln so it can easily be wrapped up in an airtight bag and sprayed with water to keep it fresh between activities.

Health and Safety notice: clay is a natural non toxic material to work with but dust is not good for you if breathed in. Always pick up bits of clay from the floor and dispose of them before they dry off and create dust. Avoid brushing up scraps of clay as this can create dust. It's better to gather bits up and then mop floors and wipe surfaces. Also wash down any surfaces and dry them off with a towel to collect any dust that might settle.

Philodrama



As the name suggests Philodrama© is a blend of philosophy for children and drama games and exercises. It goes through a philosophical enquiry in a similar way that a P4C session would but without the talking circle so makes it more suitable for a home environment and smaller groups. It is more physical and on your feet.

It was a natural step for us as we're coming from a drama background. It's an easy tool to use at home as it requires little material preparation.

Teddies Meeting

What is it?

This is a fantastic way of prompting conversation as it diverts the attention from the persons. It's great for shy people or for 'tricky' subject where we might be more shy to express ourselves.

Possible prior activity

Mime

Who am I?

Number of Participants

2-8

Possible follow-up

Robot programming

Recipe

Seed bombs

Activity

- Everybody picks a teddy to bring to an important meeting.
- At this meeting, teddies are going to discuss whatever is it that you want to discuss. E.g. What is beauty? How do you decide if something is right or wrong? Who do natural resources belong to?
- Ask everybody to think for a minute about their teddy persona: how to they talk? Do they have a deep voice? Are they shy? Are they arrogant?
- Then let the teddies have a conversation. Make sure you role play with a teddy too and talk to the teddies rather than the person.
- Anchor the main question regularly.
- If there is not enough debate, you can ask some teddies to argue one side and some teddies to argue another. E.g. some teddies argue that natural resources belong to the people who leave near them, some teddies argue that the natural resources belong to the companies who exploit them.
- As a wrap up, ask each teddy to summarise their idea in three words.



Who am I?

What is it?

This is a good activity to define concepts. It is very much like a traditional game of 'who am I', except you write concepts/qualities rather than persons. It can be used as an introduction before discussing a question or as follow up once concepts have emerged. For instance, if you just had a teddies meeting discussion about 'what makes a good person', you might want to define 'kind', 'sharing', 'nice', 'caring'. Feel free to simply play it as a one off around the dinner table.

Possible prior activity

Mime

Teddies Meeting

Number of Participants

2-8

Possible follow-up

Teddies Meeting

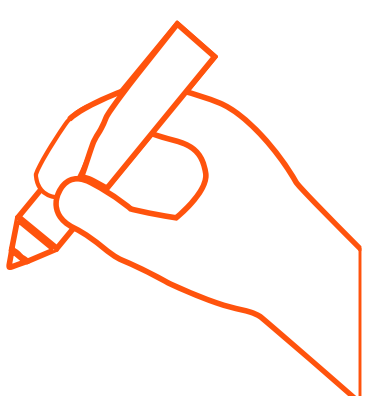
Robot Programming

Seed bombs

Plaques

Activity

- Before you start, you might want to grab a pen and a paper to record answers to create a definition.
- Writes concepts/qualities related to the question you're examining on post it notes. E.g. nice, kind, caring, helpful.
- In turn, participants ask question to find out their qualities. E.g. 'Do I like helping others?', 'Yes'.
- After a while, you can work together to create a definition of each concept.



Mime

What is it?

It's very much like the 'Who am I' activity but in reverse. It can be used interchangeably or to complement each other.

Possible prior activity

Teddies meeting
Who am I?

Number of Participants
2-8

Possible follow-up

Teddies Meeting
Robot Programming
Plaques

Activity

- Writes concepts/qualities related to the question you're examining on little papers. E.g. nice, kind, caring, helpful.
- Each participant picks one up and gets to mime it for the rest of the group.
- Others shout different possibility.
- To avoid it becoming just a guessing game, you might want to facilitate it and ask the participants to justify their 'guess'.
- Once they have guessed, recap the elements that have been said to try to reach some sort of definition. E.g. 'kind' did look a little bit like 'nice', what's the difference between 'kind' and 'nice', what do they have in common.



More sticky notes ideas

What is it?

There are multiple uses of sticky notes beyond 'Who am I?'. Here are just a few ideas of how you could use them.

Possible prior activity

Teddies Meeting

Mime

Who am I?

Number of Participants

2-20

Possible follow-up

Robot programming

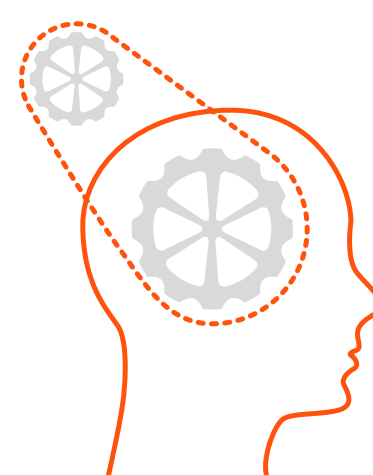
Recipe

Teddies Meeting

Plaques

Activity

- You could have philosophy days at home, when each member of the family wears a question on a sticky note. For inspiration you can check the list of questions included in this pack.
- Or next time you have a party, you could also have a paper on your back with a definition type question and others need to write answers. E.g. What is happiness? Does age define us?
- You could also have a weekly question on a board somewhere and all can contribute leaving sticky notes.



Robot Programming (Philodrama)

What is it?

This is a great activity to do after you've explored concepts. But you could also just jump straight into it.

Possible prior activity

Mime

Who am I?

Teddies meeting

Number of Participants

2-20

Possible follow-up

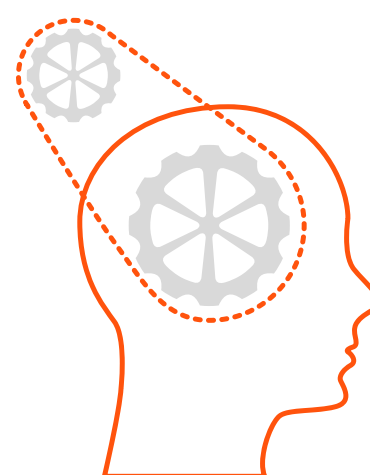
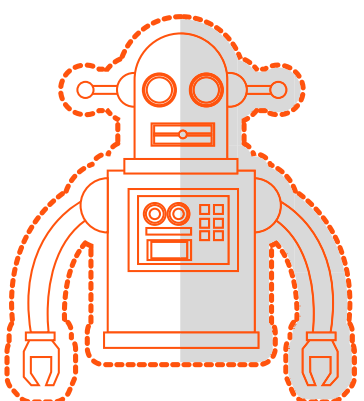
Recipe

Plaque

Bomb seeds

Activity

- Explain the activity: a brand new robot with the latest technology and who can learn has just been created. Now it needs to be programmed.
- The robot's purpose depends on your enquiry question. E.g. the robot has been made to make people happy, the robot has been made to change the world for the better, the robot has been made to become the fairest judge.
- You can choose to be the robot or 'teach' someone else to be the robot. The robot will only ask non-implying questions following up a suggestion. E.g. a participant suggests that to be a fair judge you need to be kind. The robot can follow up with: why is it important to be kind to be a fair judge? What does 'being kind' means? Can you give me an example of what 'being kind' is? What is the difference between kind and fair? Does everybody agree that I need to be kind? How will I know that I am being kind?
- Ideally, you want someone who is not the robot to scribe some of the answers or questions raised by the main question to use in another activity or to wrap up the conversation at the end.



Clay and Ideas Modelling



Similarly to Philodrama©, those Clay and Ideas Modelling© activities can be used independently or combined with others in this pack.

It allows for more informal reflections on the question, you can just gently keep asking the question and talk together about it as you are making. Being focused on what we're making can be very useful too as we become less self-conscious of having to express ourselves.

All of these activities also work really well to capture thoughts and discussion that have taken place in a prior activity.

If you're worried about working with clay, check our 'Advice for Working with Clay' section.

Robot Programming (Clay)

What is it?

The premise is similar to the Philodrama Robot Programming but it's about making more than talking.

Possible prior activity

Teddies meeting

Who am I?

Mime

Number of Participants

2-8

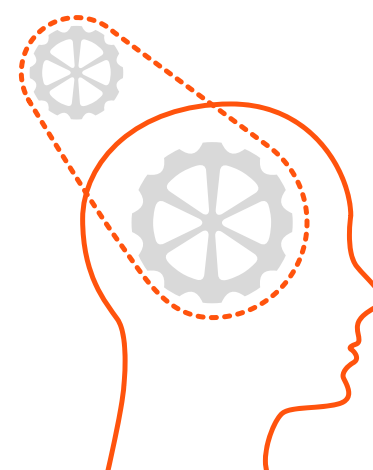
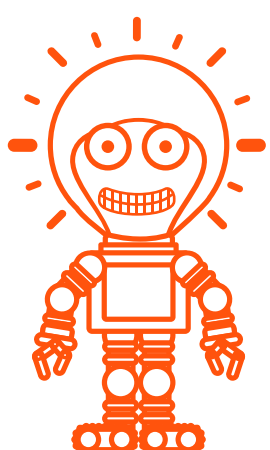
Possible follow-up

Collective Seed Bomb

Plaque

Activity

- Explain the activity: a robot needs to be programmed.
- The robot's purpose depends on your enquiry question. E.g. the robot has been made to make people happy, the robot has been made to change the world for the better, the robot has been made to become the fairest judge.
- You can choose to make individual robots or a group robot.
- As you are making the robots, discuss the different qualities/characteristics they need depending on the topic. Ask them to show it too. E.g. if the robot needs to be generous, how will it show?
- Then it's time to design the motherboard. On a piece of paper, write all the qualities it needs and insert it in the clay.



Handprint

What is it?

This activity works best with themes around identity like ‘if something is part of our identity, is it necessary for our well-being?’, ‘Is there something essential that makes us what we are?’, ‘Would we stop being what we are if we lost part of ourselves?’, ‘Does what we are change over time?’ Then this activity is ideal to capture some of the answers and the essential quality that makes us who we are. Either individually, as a family or as human beings.

‘Handprint’ should be understood in a very broad sense. It can simply be a slab of clay to which you press your hand, or it can be clay that had been grabbed by a hand, a hand pressed object or shape. For inspiration, check the work of [Gabriel Orozco](#).

Possible prior activity

Mime

Who am I?

Teddies Meeting

Number of Participants

2-20

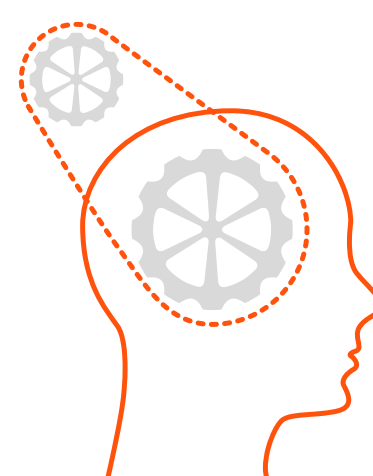
Possible follow-up

Collective Seed Bomb

Collective Plaque

Activity

- Give each participant a lump of clay.
- Ask them to leave their handprint.
- Then they can either write their unique qualities on the clay (see ‘Advice for Working with Clay’)
- or like for the robot, they can write it on a paper that they bury inside.



Recipe

What is it?

Once again this is a good activity to document a conversation that has already taken place or the conversation can take place as they're making it.

Possible prior activity

Mime

Who am I?

Teddies Meeting

Sticky notes

Number of Participants

2-20

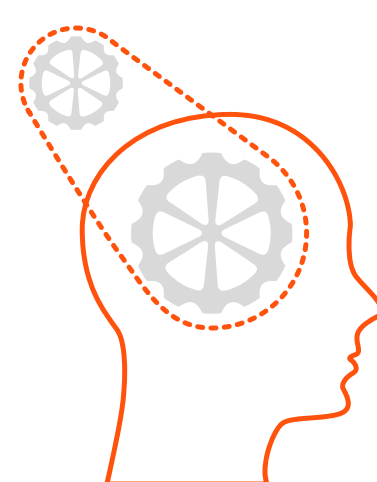
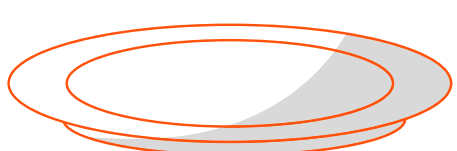
Possible follow-up

Plaque

Philodrama Robot Programming

Activity

- Tell the participant you're going to make a recipe for a particular concept. E.g. a recipe for happiness, a recipe for fairness, etc.
- Depending on their age you might want to give examples of recipes with a particular focus on the ingredient list. The various ingredients you need for your concept is going to be recorded on a clay plate.
- You can choose to make individual or group plates.
- Put some cling film over an existing plate or dish.
- Roll out some clay and shape it over your existing plate.
- Write, draw or model all your recipe 'ingredients' on your plate. For inspiration on writing, check the 'Advice for Working with Clay'.
- You could also decide to do a family dish by asking each participant to make an ingredient and add them to a large collective dish. E.g. one person makes 'kind' shapes (whatever that means to them and how they choose to symbolise it), one person makes 'wisdom' shapes, etc.



Seed Bombs

What is it?

If combined, I would recommend keeping this activity for last. It's a nice way to capture ideas again. It can be used very similarly to the Recipe, each seed being like an ingredient.

Possible prior activity
Robot Programming (either of them)

Teddies Meeting

Number of Participants
2-20

Warning

Do not use air-drying clay as it won't dissolve, and it has fibres that are probably not great for the soil.

Possible follow-up

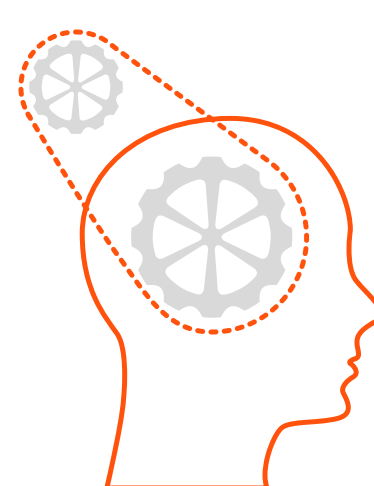
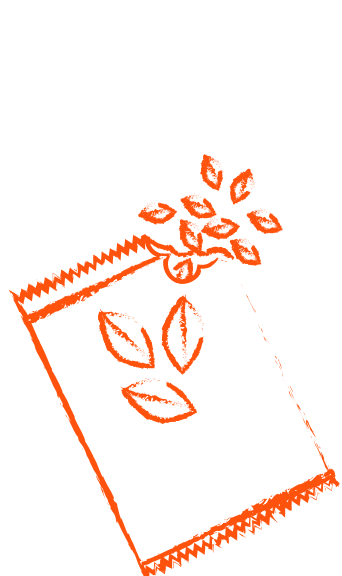
Plaque (if you really really wanted to hammer it home.)

Activity (Individual Seed Bombs)

- Give each participant a lump of clay.
- Let them choose seeds. Each seed symbolises a quality.
- Then choose a place to plant them, or let them dry first.

Activity (Collective Seed Bombs)

- Particularly suitable as a wrap up activity, once you've already talked or had an activity about all the qualities that a particular concept has.
- Create a bowl of seed for each quality/attribute that has been mentioned. Preferably choose different looking seeds.
- Ask each participant which quality do they think, is the most important. E.g. what is the most important attribute for happiness?
- Then ask them to pick a seed from the bowl representing the quality they have chosen and add it to a group lump of clay.
- Then choose a place to plant them, or let them dry first.



Plaques

What is it?

That's probably the only activity I wouldn't suggest doing on it's on as it's very much a way of wrapping up and harvesting what's been said.

Possible prior activity

Almost anything

Number of Participants

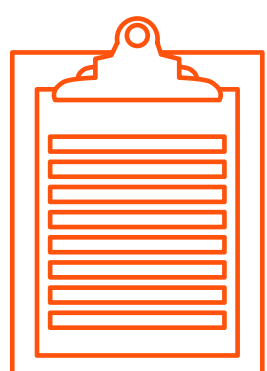
2-8

Possible follow-up

Seed bombs

Activity

- Decide individually or as a groups on a definition, a list of attributes/qualities or a question that has emerged from a previous philosophical activity.
- Create slabs of clay and offer various methods and tools to write on the slab.
- Let them dry. (see 'Advice for Working with Clay')
- Decide on where you're going to display them. If there are several of them, then take time to think about how you're going to arrange them.



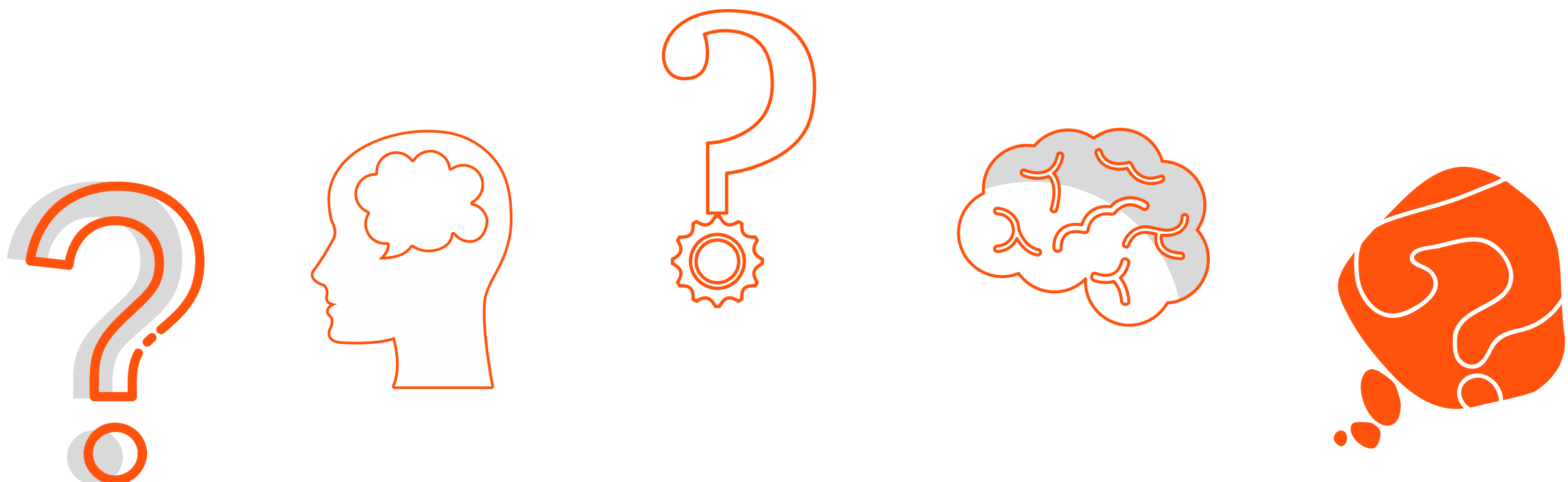
Philosophical Questions

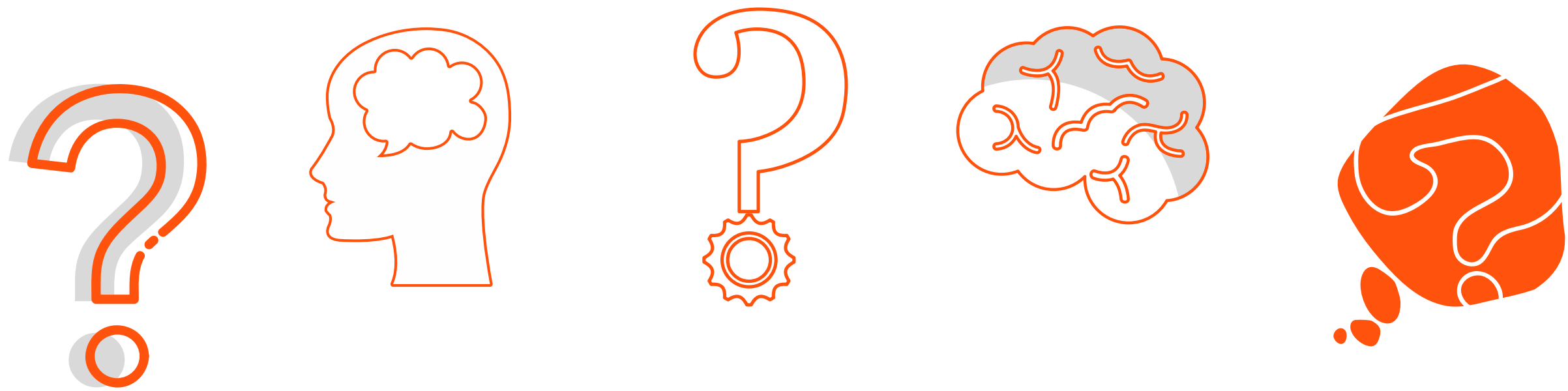
Morality

- How do you decide if something is right or wrong?
- Is it ever okay to steal?
- Is it ever okay to cheat?
- Is fair and equal the same thing?
- What is fairness?
- Is it ever okay to lie? If so, when is it okay to lie?
- Is not telling the truth automatically lying? Is there a middle ground?
- Is war ever justified?
- If you were defending yourself and murdered someone, was your action justified?
- What if there were no rules?

Animals and the environment

- Is it right to sacrifice animals' lives for medical testing?
- Is it right to kill animals for food?
- Do animals have rights?
- Are certain lives more valuable than others?
- What is our responsibility to the environment and to other species affected by human decisions?
- Are we only responsible for the things that we control, or can we be responsible for other things as well?
- Who do natural resources belong to?





Identity and relationship

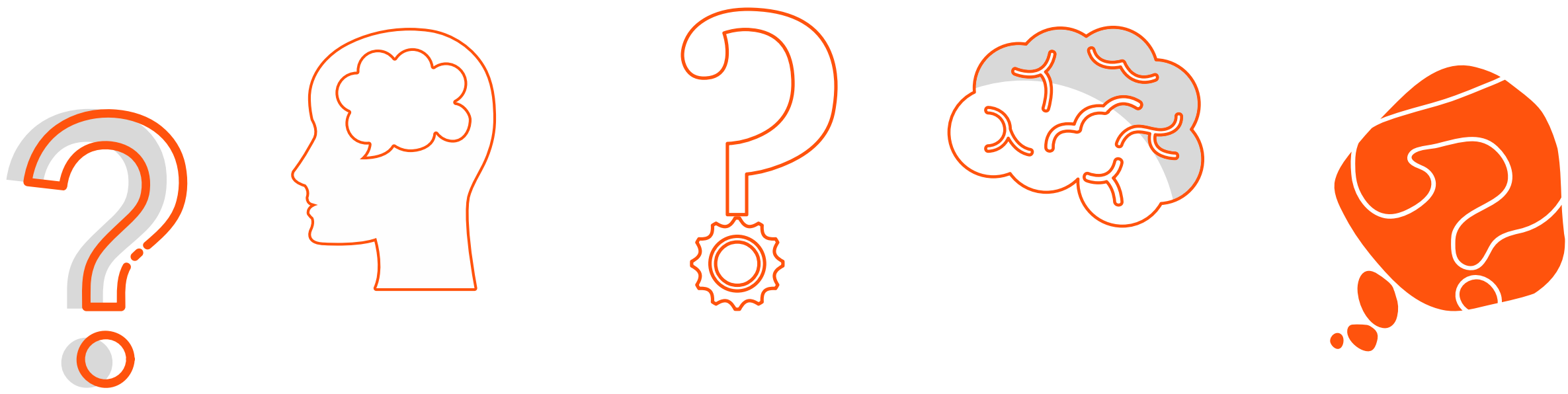
- Does friendship require compromise?
- What is forgiveness? Does forgiveness require forgetting? When does someone deserve forgiveness?
- If something is part of our identity, is it necessary for our well-being?
- Is there something essential that makes us what we are?
- Would we stop being what we are if we lost part of ourselves?
- Does what we are change over time?
- Where do thoughts come from?
- Are our thoughts always true?
- Can a thought hurt you?
- What is happiness?
- What is beauty?

Equality/rights

- Should men and women be treated the same? When should they be treated differently and why?
- Do animals have rights?
- Are certain lives more valuable than others?
- Is fair and equal the same thing?

Life/death and metaphysics

- How was the universe created?
- Would life be life without death?
- Would you drink from the spring of immortality?



Law

- Is war ever justified?
- If you were defending yourself and murdered someone, was your action justified?
- What if there were no rules?
- What does freedom means? Is it possible to be ever completely free?
- Because something is the law, does that mean that it is right?
- If you do not agree with a law should you still follow it?
- Is change possible?

Property

- Just because you find something does that make it yours?
- Who do natural resources belong to?
- What is our responsibility to the environment and to other species affected by human decisions?
- Are we only responsible for the things that we control, or can we be responsible for other things as well?

Truth/reality

- What is belief?
- How do we determine knowledge from belief?
- Do our feelings change what we think/believe?
- Can we ever really know something?
- Do you have to experience something to know it is true?
- Do you have to experience things and get the same result to know it is true?
- Is there a difference between imagining and dreaming?
- How do you know what is real? Can you trust your senses? Can you trust that what other people tell you is real actually is?