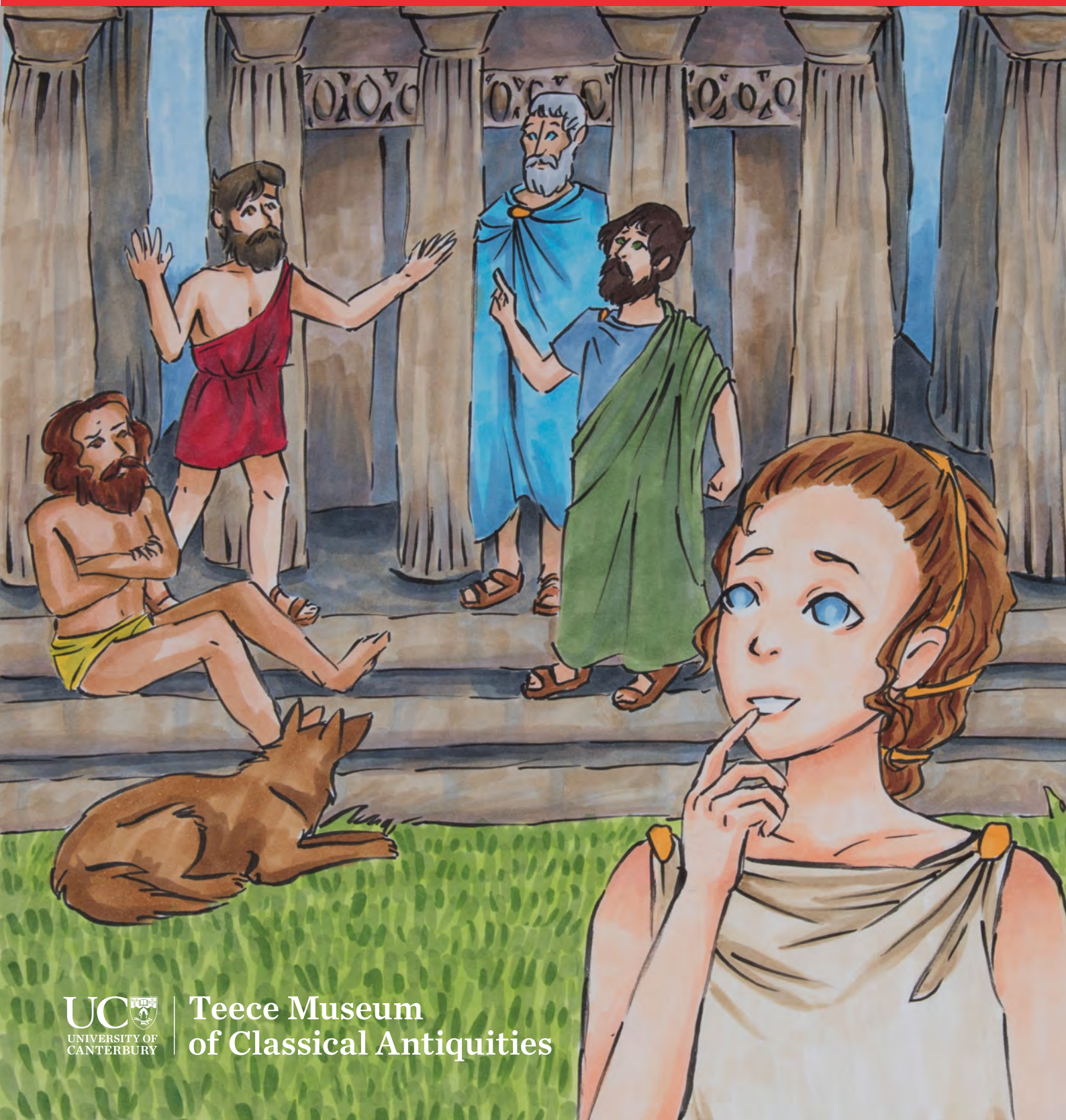


# Sophia and the Philosophy Club Competition





# **Sophia and the Philosophy Club Competition**

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# Sophia and the Philosophy Club Competition

Welcome to ancient Athens! Today is an exciting day for you to have arrived in town. There are four different philosophy clubs competing in the city and trying to gain members – and you get to decide which one you think is best! These rival groups call themselves the Stoics, Epicureans, Cynics, and Skeptics. Each club is run by a wise philosopher.

Members of these philosophy clubs think very, very hard. They are all trying to answer the same question: how can people live their best lives? Each club has different ideas about how we should live – whether we should always do the right thing, just have fun, challenge society, or just believe in nothing!

Yet, they all agree that philosophy – which just means thinking deeply about big questions – has the power to change our beliefs, emotions, and actions for the better. Philosophy, they think, is a key ingredient to living the best life.

Lots of people have already joined these clubs. They want to share their ideas with as many people as possible and attract new members so that they can have the biggest, most popular club in all of Greece!

Meet Sophia, a young Greek girl living in Athens. She is intrigued by these new clubs, and is wondering what they are all about. Join her as she explores each one and find out which philosophers she decides to join, or if she will disagree with them all and create her own club instead!

# Who, Where, When?

## Who:

*What are the clubs? Who are the philosophers? How do I say their names?*

The Stoics (stoh-iks) and their leader, Zeno (zee-noh)

The Epicureans (ep-i--kyoor-ee-uhs) and their leader, Epicurus (ep-i-kyoor-uhs)

The Cynics (sin-iks) and their leader, Diogenes (dye-oj-uh-neeZ)

The Skeptics (skep-tiks) and their leader, Pyrrho (pir-oh)

## Where:



- ★ You are here!
- ★ Diogenes' Birthplace
- ★ Zeno's Birthplace
- ★ Pyrrho's Birthplace
- ★ Epicurus' Birthplace

## When:



Stonehenge is constructed  
c.3000–2000 BCE



Athens during the Golden Age  
449–431 BCE



The Viking Age in Europe  
793–1066 CE



Captain Cook sails to New Zealand  
1769 CE



The Iron Age  
c.1000 BCE



**300 BCE**  
**You are Here!**



Arrival of Māori in Aotearoa  
ca.1300 CE



World War One  
1914–1918 CE



## Sophia Meets the Stoics

The first philosophy club that Sophia decided to visit was the Stoics and their teacher, Zeno. It didn't take her very long to find them. The Stoics were known to meet up together daily and listen to Zeno talk at the Stoa, a large painted porch which was part of the bustling agora (marketplace) of Athens.

When Sophia approached the Stoa, she was greeted by Zeno himself. Sophia was surprised to see that even though he was rich and famous, he was dressed in a plain old cloak.

'Good morning, young woman!' he said, 'What wisdom can I offer you?'

'I would like to know how I can live the best life,' Sophia said.

'Well, you have certainly come to the right place!' Zeno responded.

'Here's what I think: Be virtuous!'

'What does virtuous mean?' asked Sophia.

Zeno replied 'A virtuous person is someone who acts according to virtue. A virtue is a good character trait or quality – something that you like about yourself or admire in others, such as honesty, kindness, or courage. So, the virtuous person tells the truth, acts kindly and shows bravery. They also avoid vice, which is a bad quality like dishonesty, cruelty, and cowardice. If we are virtuous – honest, kind, and brave – we will live good lives.'

### Who was Zeno?

Zeno lived from around 334 – 262 BCE. He was born in Citium, on the Greek island of Cyprus.

As a young man Zeno was a wealthy merchant. After surviving a shipwreck, he moved to Athens to become a philosopher and founded the school of Stoicism.

One ancient story claimed that Zeno died from holding his breath after tripping down some stairs and breaking his toe!

Sophia thought for a moment. She agreed that virtue was very important for living well. 'But aren't other things also important for living a good life? What about money? Or being healthy? Or having lots of friends?' she said.

'I don't think these things are as important as they seem,' said Zeno. 'They are nice to have and they can be used for good. For example, if I had lots of money, I could be generous and give it all to the poor. But money can also be used for bad – I could spend all of it on sweets and eat them all myself, which would be greedy and selfish. We don't need to be rich, healthy, or popular to live well – the thing that matters is how we choose to act with what we have.'

'And this is very good news!' Zeno continued. 'It means that living the best life is possible for everyone, no matter their situation. Often, we are born into unfortunate circumstances or things go wrong. But even if we are unlucky, we can still live a good life by being virtuous. I could become homeless, get a painful disease, and lose all of my friends. But this wouldn't stop me from still being kind, brave, and honest.'

'I see,' said Sophia, 'so even though we can't control the world, we can control our own response to it'.

'Exactly!' exclaimed Zeno.

*I wonder...*

*Imagine you had no possessions, friends or family. Do you agree with the Stoics that you could still live a good life? Or do you think some things matter in addition to being virtuous?*

With the morning sun beating down, and feeling hungry from all her thinking, Sophia bought an ice cream from a nearby store in the market. Suddenly, a fight broke out in the agora - a shouting shopkeeper ran after a beggar who had stolen his bread.

Zeno shook his head and sighed. 'That shopkeeper lacks virtue. To live the best life, I believe that we must learn to strictly control our emotions and aim for *apatheia* – an absence of emotions.'

'What?!' Sophia protested 'But surely emotions must be part of living a good life...?'

'Emotions are very dangerous!' Zeno replied. 'Feelings like anger can lead to vice and violence – just look at that poor man being beaten for stealing a loaf of bread! By controlling our feelings, we will have a cool head and be more kind, forgiving, and wise.'

'Most people get emotional about things which don't really matter at all,' continued Zeno. 'People value expensive houses and fashionable clothes, and so they get upset when they don't have them. That silly shopkeeper is angry because he cares about money and someone has stolen from him. He doesn't realise that wealth isn't important, and we have no reason to be annoyed if we lose it! Even if we lose health, or the people we love, we should try to control our emotions and not get upset – these things seem sad and serious, but we don't need any of them to live the best life as long as we remain virtuous! Once we recognise that virtue is the only thing that truly matters, we will not get so worried about unimportant things and will live a calmer life.'

Suddenly, the beggar ran past Sophia and knocked her ice cream to the ground. She gasped, and Zeno looked at her expectantly. 'Time to put ideas into practice. How should you react? You can complain and throw a tantrum, or you can say 'oh well' and stay calm. Choose wisely.'

Sophia took a deep breath and calmed herself - after all, ice cream was not worth crying over! Yet she could not help thinking that some things were worth getting upset about...

*I wonder...*

*Is it ever good or fair to feel angry or sad? What about sadness at the death of a loved one, or anger at injustice? Think of a time you were angry or sad about something that didn't really matter. Now, can you think of a time you were angry or sad about something that did matter?*

## STOIC CLUB RULES

Philosophy should be done in our everyday lives, not just in the classroom! If you want to be a Stoic, you should follow our club rules.

- 1 Be Virtuous** – act bravely, loyally, kindly, fairly, and honestly.
- 2 Keep Calm and Carry On** – control your emotions and don't worry too much about things that you can't control.
- 3 Train Your Mind** – practice 'thought exercises' to help you remember Stoic ideas.

### Stoic Ideas in Action

#### 1 Be Virtuous

In the ancient world, many famous Stoic philosophers were known to be very virtuous. For example, the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, who lived from 121 to 180 CE, studied Zeno's ideas and put them into practice. People admired him as kind, patient, and fair. Even in times of war, Marcus didn't get angry, avoided excessive violence, and acted with mercy and forgiveness (unlike the very 'un-Stoic' emperor Caligula, who was famously prone to fits of rage and murdered many of his enemies!).

#### 2 Keep Calm and Carry On

Good Stoics controlled their emotions and did not worry too much about things beyond their own character. Marcus Aurelius' life was filled with tragedy – his wife and 6 of his children died before him. Yet he was able to overcome his grief, keep calm, and carry on with his life.

He said 'It's unfortunate that this has happened. No. It's fortunate that this has happened and I've remained unharmed by it—not shattered by the present or frightened of the future. It could have happened to anyone. But not everyone could have remained unharmed by it.'

Marcus couldn't control his unlucky circumstances, but he could control his reaction to them.

#### 3 Train Your Mind

The Stoics took part in regular meditations or 'thought exercises'. Zeno and many others set aside time in their day to do these activities, which were ways of training the mind to think and behave like a Stoic. One of these exercises was 'Breaking things Down'. It helps us to avoid getting too attached to or fond of objects we own by showing that deep down, they are not really very important. Why don't you give it a go yourself?



## Activity: Breaking Things Down

Zeno thought that we can become too attached to material things like jewellery, fancy cars, and expensive phones. This can stress us out and distract us from what really matters.

The Stoics suggested that when we find ourselves attached to objects, we should try to think about all the different things they are made of and break them down in our heads. For example, Marcus Aurelius pointed out that a lavish banquet of roasted meat and red wine is actually just a dead pig and grape juice. If we remember that material things are only objects, then the Stoics thought this would help us not to get so upset if we do not have them.

Here is an example of a valued object from the ancient world, a large vase called a krater. It is elaborately decorated and something you might want to show off. One can imagine the owner would have been sad or angry if someone damaged it. But let's break it down.



### Breaking it Down:

- 1: The vase is made of orange clay mined from the earth by a workman.
- 2: The decorations are just black paint made from a mixture of clay and water (called slip);
- 3: and white paint made from pigments found in nature.



### Breaking it Down:

- 1:
- 2:
- 3:

The Stoics would ask: 'Should we really care about some clay, water, and paint? This seems silly.'

Now you try the activity with an object you care about, like your phone. What are three materials you think it is made of? Consider these materials - are they really that important? Should you get upset if you lost them?

## Another way of looking at things

Are the Stoics right? We might disagree and argue that some objects shouldn't be dismissed so easily as silly or unimportant. The physical parts of objects are not the only things we value – we care about things like what we can use the object for and how it makes us think and feel.

For example, the krater is more than just a vase made from clay and paint. Its purpose was to mark the grave or hold the ashes of a young man, who likely died in battle (he is shown wearing armour in the middle of the vase). Below, we have listed three reasons why someone in the ancient world might have valued this vase beyond the materials which it is made from.

Your phone is made of things like metal, glass, and plastic, but it also has more value than this. List three things you think really matter about your phone.



### Why should we value this object?

- 1: It has a useful practical purpose  
– it marks the grave or holds the ashes of a young man who has passed away.
- 2: It has emotional value  
– it would remind the young man's family of the deceased and honour his memory as a great warrior.
- 3: It is beautiful and creative  
– the vase is skillfully made by a sculptor and painted in detail by an artist.



### Why do I value this object?

1:

2:

3:



## Sophia Visits the Garden of Epicurus

Sophia thanked Zeno for teaching her about his Stoic club. He had given her a lot to think about, and although she didn't agree with everything he said, she thought some of his ideas would be very useful for helping her to live well.

She decided to go for a walk on the outskirts of the town to think about what she had learnt. As she wandered, she left the boundaries of the bustling city and its hectic hive of activity, and found herself in the countryside, surrounded by lush green trees, cool streams, and chirping birds. Suddenly, she stumbled upon a large gate, with a sign saying:

'Garden of Epicurus: Welcome to the land of happiness.'

'I like the sound of that!' thought Sophia. 'Let's see what this club has to offer.' She walked inside.

She saw men and women in white cloaks happily tending to a vegetable garden, standing in groups talking about philosophy, and lying on grassy banks enjoying the sunshine. A friendly group of people introduced themselves to her as 'Epicureans', members of Epicurus' philosophy club.

'I am learning about how to live the best life. Could you tell me what your club thinks?' Sophia asked.

### Who was Epicurus?

Epicurus was born in 341 BCE on the Greek island of Samos.

Epicurus first started teaching philosophy in Mytilene, but people objected to his controversial ideas and he was forced to leave. He moved to Athens and founded his Garden in 306 BCE.

Epicurus was treated like a hero by his followers. The Epicureans even made their own merchandise! They had cups and rings with Epicurus' face engraved on them, which helped to remind them of their leader's ideas as they went about their daily lives.

On Epicurus' birthday, the whole Garden would celebrate with a shared feast. After his death, the Epicureans continued the banquets each year in his memory.

Epicurus died sometime around 270 BCE (aged about 72) from a kidney stone.

‘Come with us and you’ll see, our great leader Epicurus is about to give a speech!’ they said.

Epicurus, a dignified old man with kind eyes, faced the gathering crowd. Everyone stopped talking and paid close attention.

‘Hello, my dear followers! Remember that living a good life is very simple - the only thing we need to do is seek happiness and avoid stress. True happiness is not intense joy or excitement, it is ‘ataraxia’, a calm and peaceful contentment.’

‘We Epicureans think that it’s easy to live a good life. All we have to do is meet our basic needs – like our need for food and drink, shelter, and company.’ He pointed to a pair of rabbits which were eating carrots from the vegetable garden. ‘We should follow the example of animals like those rabbits, who are satisfied when they have a full stomach, a warm place to sleep, and some friends. They understand the key to happiness! Nature provides us with everything we need.’

‘Society, on the other hand, corrupts us,’ Epicurus continued. ‘It makes us want things which are not good for us – like wealth, reputation, and power. Lots of people dream about winning glory as a war hero, becoming a king, or having a job that pays them lots of money. But do these things really bring happiness? I don’t think so!’ the philosopher exclaimed. ‘Unlike food, warmth, and friends, they are hard to get, and so hoping for them will make us sad and disappointed when we do not achieve them. And even if we do have them, they bring us more stress and worry than happiness! We should forget what society says we should want, and enjoy the simple pleasures that nature offers us - swimming in the lake on a summer’s day, enjoying dinner with friends, smelling the flowers.’

‘So, unlike other philosophy clubs, we turn away from city life and live in this Garden together. Safe from the outside world - from war, politics, and luxuries – we avoid temptation and have nothing to fear. We have simple food, shelter, and companionship, and live content lives – what else could we need?’

The Epicureans nodded and murmured in agreement. ‘Don’t worry, be happy!’ chanted Sophia’s Epicurean friends.

*I wonder...*

*Is happiness always good and stress always bad?*

*Can you think of a time when it is good to be sad, stressed, or frustrated? Or a time when it is bad to feel calm and happy? Do you think it is possible to be happy and worried at the same time?*

Epicurus’ speech had come to an end, and Sophia joined her group of new Epicurean friends for a swim in the lake. She was looking forward to enjoying the simple pleasures of nature with them and trying out their ideas for herself.

The group laughed and played in the shallow water. Then, Sophia spotted a large branch hanging over the other side of the lake and had an idea. ‘Let’s climb up that tree and jump into the water!’ she said excitedly.

Her Epicurean friends looked at each other ‘Ohh... we don’t think that would be a good idea... It is too dangerous - what if the branch broke, or you fell? No, it is best to stay here in the shallow water where we are safe and calm,’ they said.

‘Oh, come on!’ said Sophia, ‘It’ll be fun!’

‘But will it bring the ataraxia we want? No, it will be scary! It will make our hearts pound, we will be excited and nervous. We don’t want that. Those emotions aren’t part of the best life.’

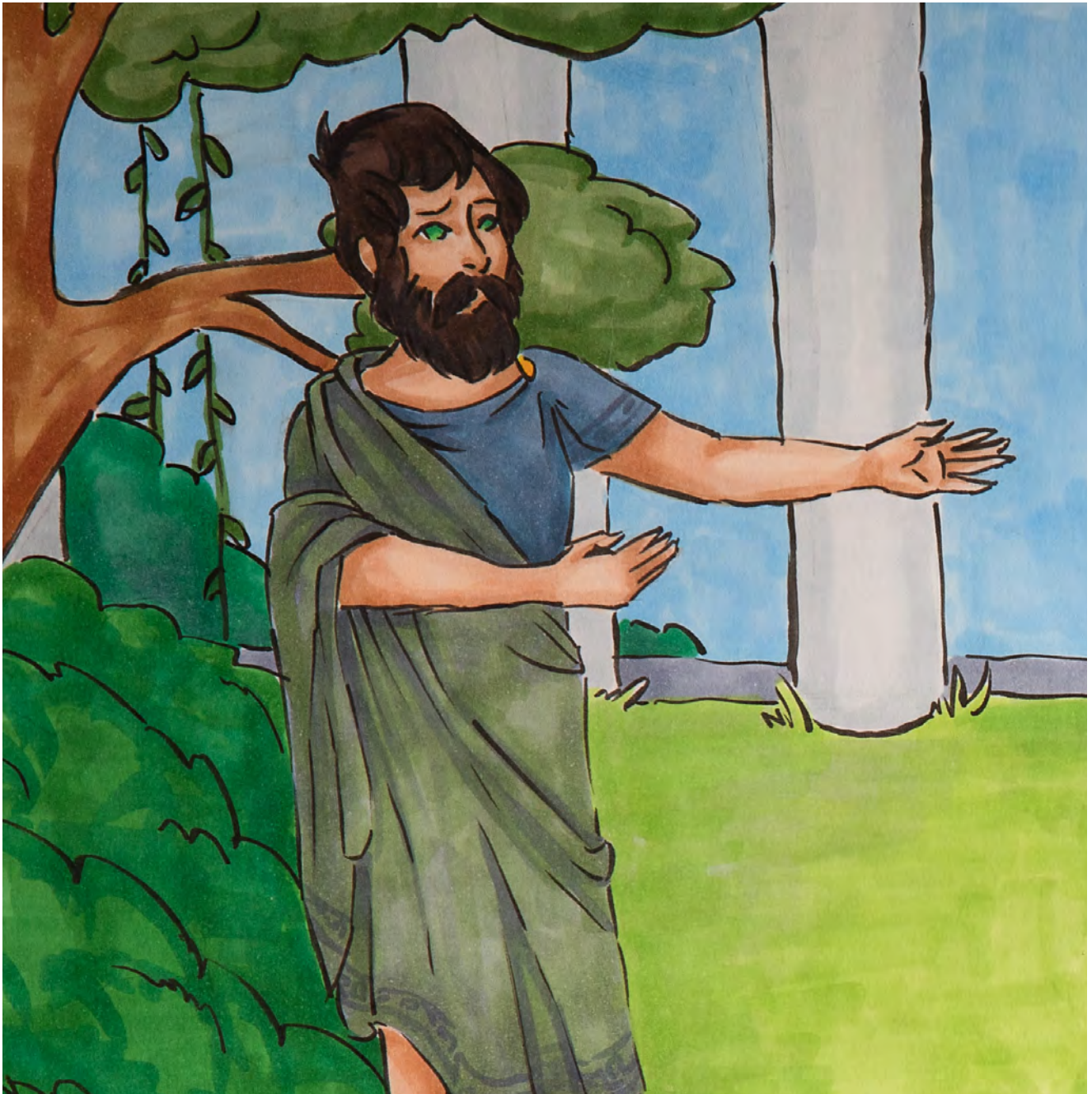
‘Well, I disagree,’ Sophia said, and swam over to the branch alone. She nervously climbed it and jumped into the water, splashing the others. She resurfaced laughing and gasping.

'I think that sometimes we need to take risks and feel a bit scared to do things that will bring us the most happiness! We can't have a great life without some bad feelings!'

Sophia considered some of the things she was most proud of achieving. She thought of the times she came first place in a singing competition, learnt how to ride a horse, and hand-raised a stray puppy that she saved from the streets. She felt very nervous up on stage singing and being judged. She fell off her horse many times and got lots of scrapes and bruises. And looking after the puppy was sometimes stressful and frustrating. But these things gave her happiness that was very different to the calm contentment she got from sitting in the sun.

I wonder...

Think of the things you are most proud of in life - what feelings did they involve? Did they involve any feelings of stress, fear, and excitement? Or only ataraxia?



## EPICUREAN CLUB RULES

A good Epicurean must not only think and feel, but also act in accordance with ideas.

### **1 Live in Nature with Friends**

– abandon the city for the pleasures of nature and companionship.

### **2 Live Simply**

– gain happiness by satisfying your basic needs, not your endless desires.

### **3 Be Happy, Avoid Stress**

– do things that make you feel calm and peaceful, and avoid things that make you vulnerable to suffering.

## Epicurean Ideas in Action

### **1 Live in Nature with Friends**

The Epicureans lived together on the outskirts of Athens in a garden community – a bit like modern-day hippies. There, they talked about philosophy, dined, worked, and relaxed together. They avoided the stress of city life and tried to gain ataraxia with this peaceful and natural lifestyle.

### **2 Live Simply**

There was a rumour started in the ancient world (likely by one of Epicurus' philosophical rivals who was trying to give him a bad reputation!) that the Epicureans lived immoral lives of excess and luxury – seeking as much pleasure as possible by gobbling up lavish food, getting drunk every evening, and playing in the garden.

In fact, the Epicureans lived very simply. For example, Epicurus was content to eat only plain bread and drink only water, with a little pot of cheese as an occasional treat!

### **3 Be Happy, Avoid Stress**

Epicurus himself was a model of peaceful ataraxia. At the end of his life, he got a painful disease. However, as he was dying he didn't get scared and stayed very calm. He thought of the happy memories of discussing philosophy with friends to bring him happiness. He wrote to a friend:

'On this blissful day, which is also the last of my life, I write this to you. My continual sufferings...are so great that nothing could stop them; but over against them all I set gladness of mind at the remembrance of our past conversations.'

## Activity: Heroic Lives

The Epicureans might have lived a peaceful life in their garden, safe from danger, worry, and fear, but can we live the best life without challenging ourselves and feeling some negative emotions?

Heroes we admire in stories often accomplish great feats by doing things that are scary and challenging. The mythical Greek hero Herakles (also known as Hercules) is a good example of this. Herakles had to complete 12 labours - difficult and dangerous tasks - given to him by the king Eurystheus. These included slaying the Hydra, a water monster with nine snake heads; defeating man-eating birds with beaks made of bronze and feathers made from metal; and capturing the cattle from an evil giant called Geryon. Read about Herakles' ninth labour below:

For his ninth labour, a king called Eurystheus told Herakles to capture a herd of cattle from the monster Geryon. Geryon was a very mean and very strong giant with three bodies, six arms, and three heads. He lived on an island.

To get to the island, Herakles had to cross the burning hot desert. The Sun was impressed by Herakles' courage, so he gave Herakles a magical large golden bowl. Herakles used the bowl to sail across the stormy sea to Geryon's island.

When he arrived on the island, Herakles defeated the fearsome two-headed hound Orthos who was guarding the cows. Then Geryon appeared, angry and ready to fight. Herakles battled the giant, and bravely shot him down with his bow and arrow.

He triumphantly sailed away with the cattle. Herakles eventually made it back home and gave the cows to the king. He was proud and overjoyed that he had achieved his ninth labour!

Just like us, the ancient Greeks told stories of heroes through art and images. For the ancient Greeks, the painted pictures on pots were like story illustrations or photographs which captured the action.



## Herakles the Epicurean vs. Herakles the Adventurer

Using a phone, Ipad, or camera, take a series of photographs which retell the myth of Herakles and Geryon - with a twist! Leave out anything that happens that is challenging, dangerous, or scary. Think about ways to change the story to keep Herakles as calm and peaceful as possible (maybe Herakles would safely walk across a bridge to Geryon's island instead of sailing across stormy seas; maybe Geryon is not an angry giant but a tiny mouse; or maybe Herakles would just stay safe at home and refuse to defeat the monster and capture the cattle!).

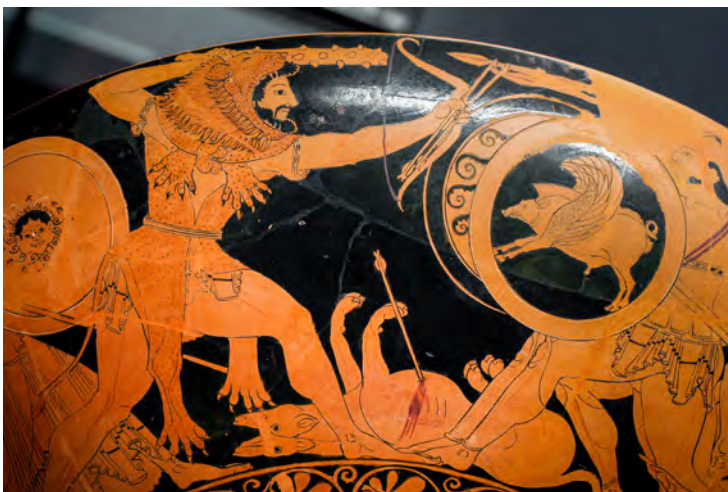
Try not to include any events that would make Herakles feel emotions like fear, stress, or excitement.

Now, take another series of photographs which capture the story of 'Herakles the Adventurer'. Retell the same myth, but this time include everything that happens - both good and bad!

Include things that are difficult, risky, and frightening, and let Herakles feel the whole range of emotions - from fear and stress to excitement and pride.

Now, compare the two stories and think about these questions:

- Which story is more interesting and why?
- Which Herakles (the Epicurean or the Adventurer) do you think lives a better life? Why do you think this?





## Sophia Visits Diogenes the Cynic

Sophia said goodbye to the Epicureans and walked back towards the city. She decided it was time to visit the club called Cynicism. She had heard lots of rumours about the club's leader, Diogenes. He seemed like a very strange philosopher - people said he lived in a barrel in the agora!

She asked some Athenians where she could find the man living in a barrel, and they pointed her in the right direction.

She found Diogenes wandering the marketplace in broad daylight with a lantern, as if he were searching for something. Sophia did not think he looked very much like a philosopher - he was dirty and smelly, with long scraggly hair and a worn cloak. 'What can I learn from such a strange man?' she thought.

Sophia approached him, trying not to laugh. 'Excuse me, what are you doing?' she asked. Diogenes turned and stared at her 'Isn't it obvious? I am looking for a wise person. But all I can find in this city are fools and rascals!' 'Oh...' said Sophia. 'Well, what about that judge over there - he must be quite wise.'

'HA!' snorted Diogenes. 'I don't think he is wise at all. He is just like a sheep who follows along with the flock. He acts according to nomos (custom) and just does what is normal or what society expects him to do. Most people just follow the rules, go to work, make money

### Who was Diogenes?

Diogenes was born in about 412 BCE in Sinope. He moved to Athens after being exiled from Sinope for meddling with the city's coinage.

The name "Cynic" comes from the Greek word kynikos, which means 'dog-like'. People thought that Cynic philosophers like Diogenes were like wild dogs as they lived in nature, ignored human customs, roamed the streets, and did their 'business' wherever they wished.

At one point in his life, Diogenes was captured by pirates and sold into slavery.

He died in 323 BCE from an infected dog bite. When asked how he wished to be buried, he left instructions that his body was to be thrown outside the city wall so wild animals could feast on it.

and do the same things as everyone else. They never even think for themselves or question nomos. They don't ask 'this is normal, but is there a better way?'. But custom is often wrong.'

'I think so too!' said Sophia 'just because something is normal or popular doesn't mean it is right – like keeping slaves'.

'Exactly', exclaimed Diogenes. 'Instead of just doing the same thing as everyone else, we need to be philosophers and think deeply about what is right. We should all criticise nomos. I think that free speech is an essential part of the good life. We should say what we believe, and not be afraid to challenge popular opinion or authority.'

'Right!' said Sophia. 'So how exactly do you think we should live?'

'I think we should live very simply and naturally, like a wild dog!' said Diogenes. 'Most people, like that rich judge over there, believe that having lots of things - like nice clothes, a big house, delicious food, and servants - will help us to live well. But I disagree – owning stuff distracts us from what really matters: virtue! That is why I act against custom. I choose to live in a barrel and have gotten rid of all my stuff. These rags are enough to clothe me, my barrel shelters me, I eat the scraps I find in the marketplace, and I do everything for myself.'

I wonder...

Can you think of any custom or rule that is normal but wrong? Does your school have a rule that you think is wrong and you would like to challenge?

Sophia was baffled. 'How can someone live that way?!' she thought. 'I agree that we should challenge custom and speak freely, but I'm not sure that living in a barrel and throwing out everything will lead to the best life!'

'Why don't you come and see how I live? You can give it a try!' suggested Diogenes. Sophia agreed and followed the philosopher. They came to large barrel with a few dirty old sacks inside and some straw for bedding. Some stinky stray dogs were scavenging nearby. They ran up to Diogenes and Sophia, and Diogenes introduced them as his friends.

Diogenes sat down on a pile of rags beside the barrel and Sophia joined him. Suddenly, one of Sophia's friends, Helen, walked past with her parents, who were very popular and powerful. They were dressed in spotless expensive clothing and wore glittering gold jewellery.

'Sophia...? Is that you?!' said Helen. Helen and her parents stared, turned up their noses, and laughed at Sophia and Diogenes. 'Nice house, you dog!' Helen's father jeered at Diogenes.

Sophia blushed, ashamed to be seen by her friend. But Diogenes stayed cool. He looked at Helen's family and said 'You may own lots of things, but your character is poor – you are greedy, selfish, and refuse to think for yourself. Living simply and virtuously makes me the richest man of all!' Helen and her parents walked away, snickering and whispering to each other.

Diogenes turned to Sophia. 'You have no reason to feel embarrassed. If you have thought long and hard about what you should do, and you believe in it, you should not let other people make you feel ashamed. Just because those people have power does not mean they are right, and just because I am different doesn't mean I am wrong or stupid. As philosophers, we should be brave and stand up for our beliefs.'

I wonder...

Should we always challenge nomos, or are there some rules or customs that are good to follow? What would happen if everyone at your school stopped turning up on time? Or if people decided to stop following the road rules because they disagreed with them?

## CYNIC CLUB RULES

A good Cynic must think, feel and act in accordance with these ideas.

- 1 Get Rid of All your Stuff!** – live only with what you need.
- 2 Challenge Custom** – don't be afraid to think and act differently to what is 'normal'.
- 3 Stand up to Authority** – have courage to question those in charge if you think they are wrong.

### Cynic Ideas in Action

#### 1 Get Rid of all Your Stuff!

Diogenes lived in a large barrel (used for storing wine) without any possessions. He walked around barefoot, wore rags, didn't care about his appearance.

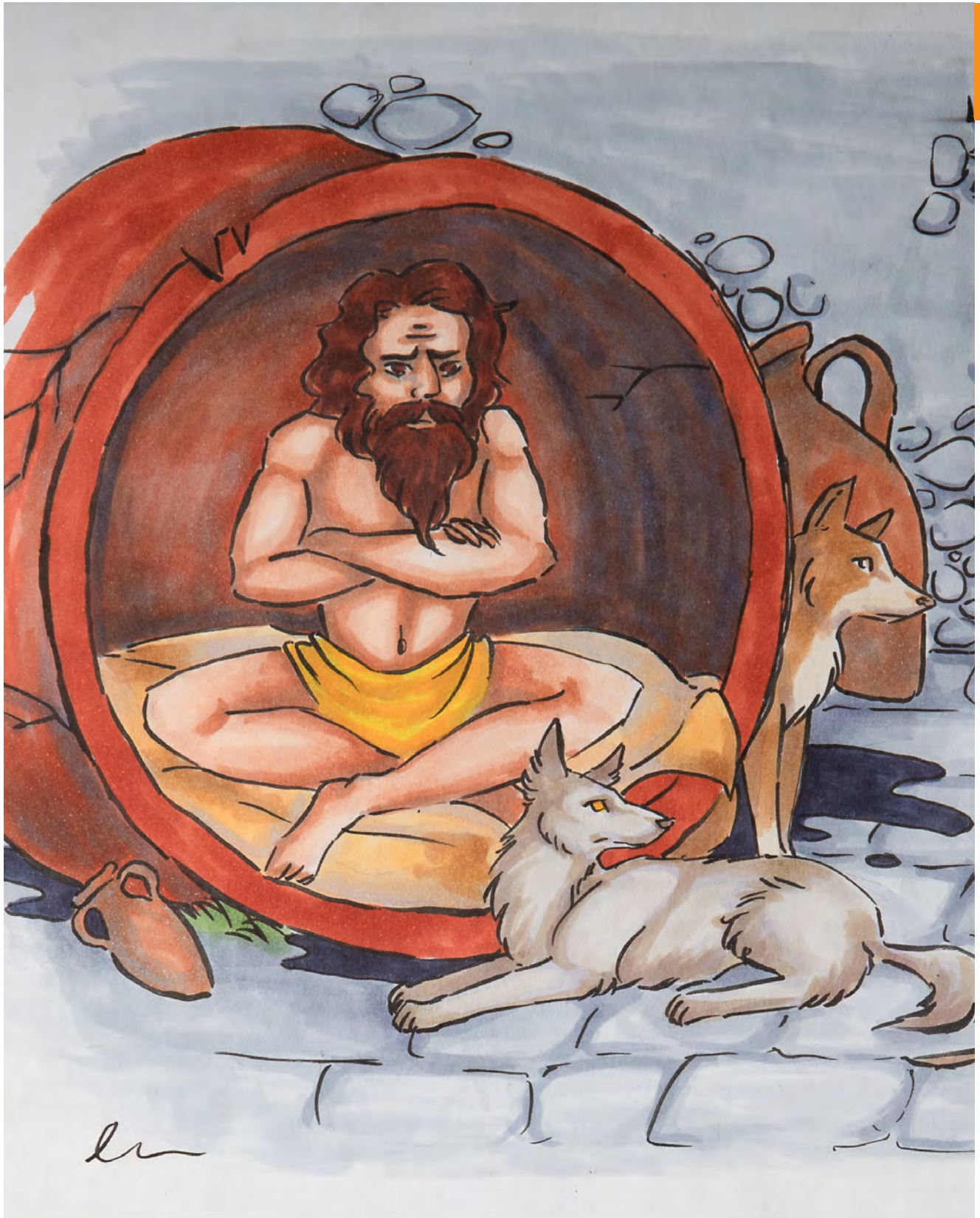
One ancient story claims that Diogenes threw away a bowl, the one thing he owned, when he saw a child drinking from a river with his hands. 'A child has beaten me in simplicity of living!' he exclaimed, and realised he was foolish to be carrying around something he did not actually need.

#### 2 Challenge Custom

Diogenes questioned social customs and did not follow the rules. He ate, slept, and did his 'business' wherever he liked. He was smelly and could be quite rude. Most Athenians thought he was very strange. But Diogenes didn't care what others thought of him – he refused to feel shame or embarrassment for doing what he believed was right.

#### 3: Stand up to Authority

Diogenes famously stood up to authority by challenging one of the most powerful men in the world, Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great was a military general and king who had heard about Diogenes and decided to visit him. When the king approached the philosopher, Diogenes was relaxing in the morning sunlight. Alexander, surrounded by adoring crowds, asked Diogenes if there was anything he could do for him. Diogenes, unimpressed by Alexander's wealth and power, simply replied with 'Yes, stand out of my sunlight.' He was willing to bravely speak his mind.



## Activity: Diogenes in Today's World

The story of Diogenes meeting Alexander the Great is one of the most well-known from the ancient world. Diogenes' courage to challenge authority and question custom has inspired many artists – the story of their meeting has been a very popular subject for paintings.



Why do we still remember the story today? Courageously standing up for what we believe in and questioning customs and authorities (people in positions of power) is very important. Many people have improved society by following in Diogenes' footsteps and challenging the rules.

Martin Luther King Junior stood up against racism and fought for black civil rights. Greta Thunberg stood up against her country's government by striking for climate change.

## Recreate a Masterpiece

Imagine you had a time-travel machine and brought Diogenes into today's world. Draw a person or group of people from today who you think Diogenes would disagree with (they could be your classmates, your teacher, your parents, the people who run your country). What would Diogenes say to them? How would they reply?





## Sophia Meets Pyrrho the Skeptic

Sophia was surprised to find that she had learnt a lot from Diogenes - he was wiser than he looked! She still wanted to visit the last of the clubs though, so she said goodbye to him and his dogs and set off to visit the last philosophy club in Athens – the Skeptics.

She found the Skeptics in the agora discussing philosophy. She approached a man sitting by himself deep in thought. He looked happy but also a bit confused, as if he were lost in a daydream. Sophia introduced herself to him and he replied 'Hello! I am Pyrrho, leader of the Skeptics, the best philosophy club in all of Greece!'

'I'm happy to meet you!' said Sophia 'Could you tell me about your club? How do you think we can live the best life?'

'Of course,' said Pyrrho. 'I think that to live the best life possible, we must stop believing things.'

'Stop believing things...?' said Sophia, confused. 'What on earth do you mean?'

'Believe nothing!' Pyrrho exclaimed excitedly. 'We can never prove that our beliefs are correct and we can never know anything for sure. Different people and different cultures have different opinions. What is the best way to live? The Stoics think we should be virtuous, the

### Who was Pyrrho?

Pyrrho was born in Elis in around 360 BCE. Before he became a philosopher, he was a painter. He travelled to Persia with Alexander the Great's army.

Pyrrho, like the Stoics, Epicureans, and Cynics, viewed philosophy as a 'way of life'. For the Skeptics, putting their ideas into action was more important than writing them down. Pyrrho did not produce any written works – we only know about him through other people's writings.

Pyrrho died around 270 BCE.

Epicureans think we should seek happiness, the Cynics think we should challenge society. Some people think brussels sprouts are delicious, I think they are gross! Some people believe that blue is the most beautiful colour but I like the colour red. We cannot know the right answer. Searching for truth is pointless – it is better not to believe anything at all.'

'Big questions like 'how should I live?' are complicated, and you're right that everyone has different tastes,' said Sophia. 'But surely we can know some things.' Sophia looked up and pointed, 'I know the sky is blue - why can't I believe that?'

'How can you prove it?' said Pyrrho. 'Every belief needs proof.' 'It just looks blue! It is obvious,' said Sophia.

'It might seem obvious to you,' replied Pyrrho. 'But things look different from different points of view. When you are far away from a mountain, it looks small, and when you are close it looks big. When you put a stick in a glass of water it looks bent, but when you take it out it looks straight. To a colourblind person the sky looks gray, but to you it looks blue. How do you know that your eyes aren't just tricking you and telling you the sky is blue when it really isn't?' said Pyrrho.

'We cannot have confidence in the way things seem. We should always remember that we could be wrong.'

I wonder...

Do you think it is possible to have no beliefs? Think of something that you believe (there is a wall in front of me, the grass is green). Now try to stop believing it. Can you?

'If you become a member of my club, you will be freed from all of your false beliefs,' said Pyrrho. 'But that's not all – you will be truly happy! Like the Epicureans, we aim for ataraxia - a calm and peaceful feeling.'

'Beliefs only get in the way of this. If we believe that something is good, we will be sad when we don't have it. If we believe something is dangerous, we will be scared! And constantly trying to work out the truth can be quite frustrating! Getting rid of beliefs will bring you ataraxia!'

Suddenly, Pyrrho started to walk onto the busy road, straight into the path of a horse and cart which was quickly approaching. 'Stop!' Sophia yelled, panicking. Pyrrho whistled happily, as if he hadn't heard. She quickly grabbed his cloak and dragged him back to safety.

Sophia sighed with relief. 'You could have really hurt yourself!' she said. Pyrrho laughed – 'Maybe I would have, maybe I wouldn't have, who knows? Maybe the horse and cart don't exist. Maybe you don't exist! By believing nothing, I never feel scared, or stressed, or annoyed. I am always happy.'

I wonder...

Imagine you woke up in the morning with no beliefs – you didn't believe in clothes, you didn't believe your school existed, you didn't even believe you existed!

What would you do? Would you be able to do anything?

What would you feel? Do you think your life would be calm, or quite scary?

## SKEPTIC CLUB RULES

As a Skeptic, we must think, feel, and act in accordance with our ideas.

**1 Believe Nothing** – get rid of all your beliefs!

**2 Be Tolerant** – remember that things can be understood from different perspectives and don't assume that your way of seeing things is the only way.

**3 Don't Worry About Things** – they might not be what they seem!

### Skeptic Ideas in Action

#### 1 Believe Nothing

Ancient stories say Pyrrho lived out his ideas and didn't believe anything. He led quite a dangerous life – one ancient source says he did not try to move out of the way of carts, or avoid cliff edges or savage dogs. But his friends followed him closely and kept him out of harm's way.

#### 2 Be Tolerant of Other Beliefs

Pyrrho realised that what we believe will differ from what other people believe and was tolerant of the customs of different cultures. He knew that the same thing can be seen as beautiful by some and ugly by others, good by some and bad by others, true by some and false by others. He also pointed out that there are many different perspectives on religion and different people believe in different gods.

#### 3 Don't Worry About Things

Stories tell us that Pyrrho achieved calm ataraxia. One ancient writer says that once, Pyrrho was travelling on a ship during a violent storm. The other passengers were very scared but Pyrrho kept calm and confident. He pointed to a little pig in the ship that carried on eating, and told the other passengers that the wise man should follow the pig's example and stay calm.



## Activity: Different Points of View

Pyrrho thought that since things can always be understood from different points of view, we cannot know for certain what is really true.

Consider this object, the Logie Cup. Historians think it was a cup used to drink wine at parties in ancient Greece.



But what else could it possibly be used for? It might be used as a fruit bowl, a trophy, a frisbee, or a shield. You could wear it as a mask or a hat. It might even be a bed for a cat!

How do we know what the item really is? Is one answer more right than all the others? Should we stop believing that the item is really a cup?

## What's your View?

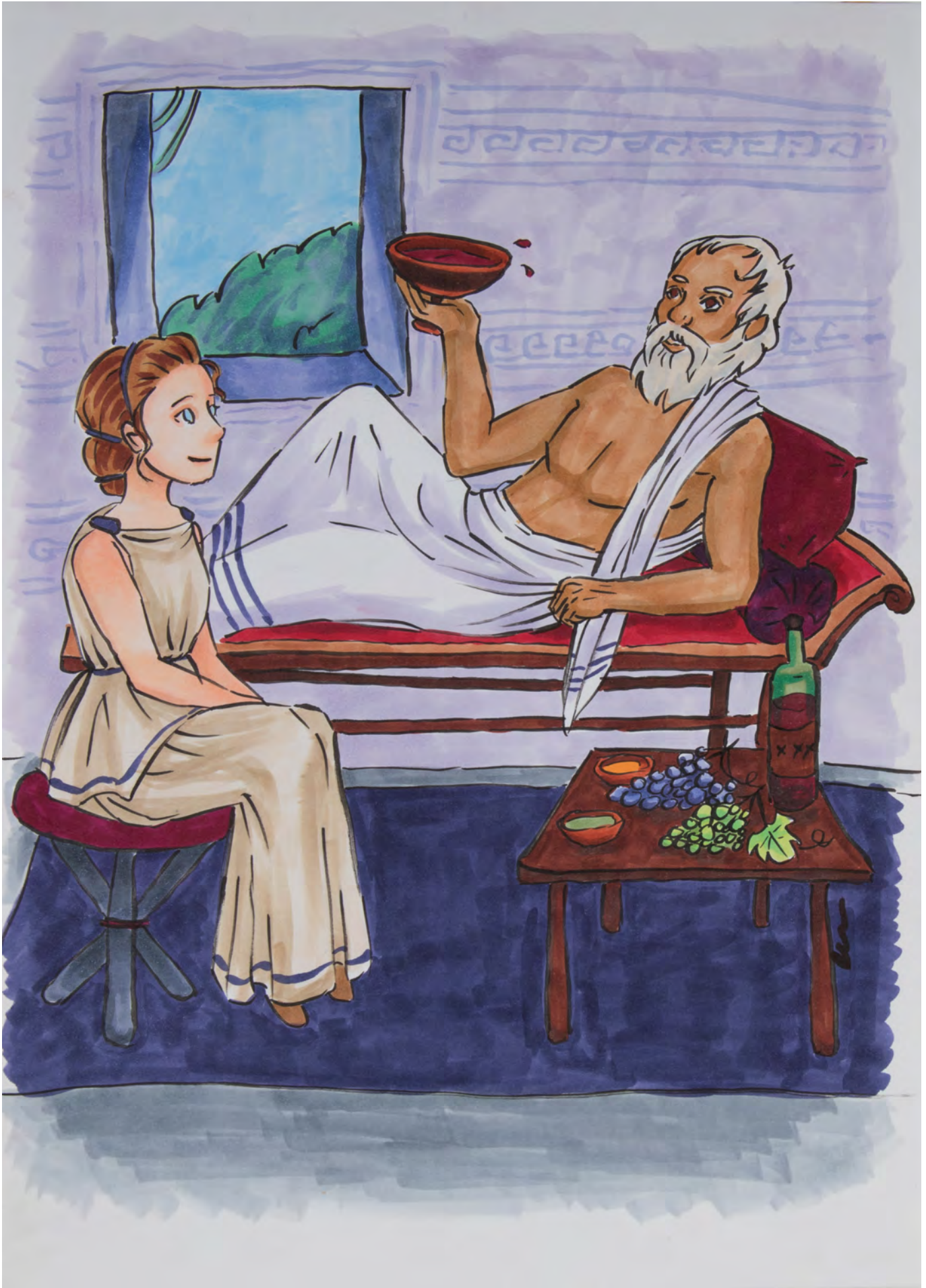
Try this activity with an object you find in your home or classroom – for example, a fork, a pencil case, a shoe, a lamp, or a book.

Write down everything you can imagine using the item for. Be creative and think outside of the box!

Imagine yourself in different scenarios and think from different perspectives: What could you use the item for if you were with your friends? How would you use it if you were stranded on a desert island? What about if you were a tiny ant or a huge giant? What would an alien who came to earth think the object was?

Once you have finished your list, answer these questions:

- How do we know what the item really is? There are lots of different ways of looking at the same object – is one answer more right than all the others? Why or why not?
- Do you think that an item can be three, ten, or even one hundred things at once? Why or why not?
- Could our beliefs about what the item is be wrong? Should we stop believing anything about the item? Why or why not?



# The Party!

The sun was about to set, and Sophia headed home, excited about everything she had learnt from the philosophers. She had a lot to think about – which club would she join? The Stoics, Epicureans, Cynics, or Skeptics? Who was right about how to live the best life? Should we be virtuous, be happy, challenge custom, or believe nothing?

After some hard thinking, Sophia had made up her mind and chosen a club. She decided to throw a big party the next day and invite all of the philosophers she had met around to her house to reveal her decision. She sent out invitations.

But the next evening, none of them showed up! Zeno didn't care for cake or balloons and thought it would be more virtuous to stay home. Epicurus thought attending would disturb his peacefulness and decided to remain safe in his Garden. Diogenes believed that going to a party would be following a silly custom so refused to join in. And Pyrrho read the invitation but did not believe that the party or Sophia even existed!

Sophia started to have second thoughts about joining one of the philosophy clubs. She agreed with the Stoics that we should act virtuously. She agreed with the Epicureans that happiness was important. She agreed with the Cynics that we should challenge society and stand up for ourselves. And she agreed with the Skeptics that we should question our beliefs. But she disagreed with them all too – the Stoic life was too strict, the Epicurean life was too boring, the Cynic life was too lonely, and the Skeptic life was just too confusing! And none of them would turn up to her party!

Sophia, her family, and friends laughed at how silly the philosophers were and enjoyed the food and fun themselves. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. A funny little man with large eyes, a big nose, bald head, and round belly walked in.

'Hello, I'm Socrates I'm a philosopher. I heard you were having a party! I wanted to talk to you about how we should live,' he said.

'Hi Socrates! Are you a Stoic, Epicurean, Cynic, or Skeptic?' asked Sophia.

'I don't belong to any of those clubs!' replied Socrates 'I have some very different ideas...'

As Sophia chatted with Socrates into the night, she discovered that there were many more philosophers to meet and many new ideas to learn about. Sophia decided to continue her search for the truth and keep discussing philosophy with her friends, family, and any new people she met. After all, the question of how to live the best life couldn't be answered in one day – it would need a lot more thinking over!

# Glossary of Names, Places, and Terms

**Agora** – An ancient Greek word meaning public gathering place or marketplace.

**Alexander the Great** – A king of the ancient kingdom of Macedon who lived from 356 to 323 BCE. One of the world's greatest military generals, he created a large empire that stretched from Macedonia to Egypt and from Greece to part of India.

**Apatheia** – An ancient Greek word meaning an absence of passion or emotion. The Stoics aimed to reach apatheia.

**Ataraxia** – An ancient Greek word meaning a feeling of calmness and peacefulness. The Epicureans and Skeptics aimed for ataraxia.

**Athens** – Athens was a powerful and rich city in ancient Greece, famous for its philosophy, art and architecture. Today, Athens is the capital city of modern Greece.

**Athenian** – A citizen of Athens.

**BCE and CE** – CE stands for 'common era' – anything from the current year 2021 all the way back to the year 1. BCE stands for 'before the common era' – anything before the year 1. So, if it is currently 2021 CE, the year 300 BCE would be 2321 years ago! Sometimes, the letters BC and AD are used instead of BCE and CE to mark the same dates.

**Cynic** – a member of a school of ancient Greek philosophy called Cynicism. The Cynics challenged convention and authority and lived very simply. Diogenes, who lived in a barrel, is one of the most famous Cynic philosophers. Cynicism was most popular from 300 to 200 BCE in Greece. It also gained popularity in Rome in 1 to 100 CE.

**Cyprus** – An island nation in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Cyprus was settled by Greeks between 1000 and 2000 BCE. It was the birthplace of the Stoic philosopher Zeno.

**Diogenes** – Diogenes was a famous Cynic philosopher. (See Page 16.)

**Epicurean** – A member of the ancient Greek school of philosophy called Epicureanism, founded in Athens by Epicurus. The Epicureans believed that the best life was one of ataraxia – calm and peaceful happiness.

**Epicurus** – an ancient Greek philosopher and founder of the school of philosophy called Epicureanism. (See page 10.)

**Ethics** – an area of philosophy which discusses questions about how we should live and what we should do. Someone who studies ethics asks things like 'what is good and bad?', 'what is right and wrong?', 'what things have value?', and 'what should we care about?'. The Stoics, Epicureans, Cynics, and Skeptics were all interested in ethics.

**Eurystheus** – According to Greek mythology, Eurystheus was the powerful king of a Greek city called Tiryns. He gave the hero Herakles his 12 labours to complete.

**Geryon** – In Greek mythology, Geryon was a giant with three bodies who lived on an island called Erytheia. For his 10th labour, the hero Herakles had to defeat Geryon and take his cattle.

**Herakles (Hercules)** – Herakles (often known today by his Roman name, Hercules) is a famous hero of Greek mythology. He was the son of Zeus, the king of the Olympian gods. Herakles is described in stories and art as being very strong, wearing a lionskin, and holding a large club. Herakles famously had to complete 12 labours (difficult tasks), which included slaying the Hydra, defeating the giant Geryon, and capturing the three-headed dog Cerberus.

**Krater** – A type of ancient Greek pot used for mixing wine with water.

**Kynikos** – A Greek word meaning ‘dog-like’. The word ‘cynic’ comes from this word – Cynic philosophers, who often lived on the streets and ignored custom, were described as kynikos.

**Marcus Aurelius** – Marcus Aurelius was a Roman emperor from 161 CE to 180 CE. He was also a Stoic philosopher. Marcus was respected as a great leader and ruled the Roman empire in an age of peace and stability.

**Mytilene** – An ancient city on the Mediterranean island of Lesbos. The Greek philosopher Epicurus taught philosophy here.

**Persia** – A large empire based in Western Asia. The Persian empire was founded by a king called Cyrus the Great in 550 BCE. Persia was larger than any previous empire in history, making up a total of 5.5 million square kilometres! Alexander the Great had conquered most of Persia by 330 BCE.

**Philosopher** – Someone who does philosophy!

**Philosophy** – The word ‘philosophy’ comes from Greek and translates to ‘love of wisdom.’ Philosophy involves thinking very deeply about big questions about ourselves and the world around us – like ‘what is good and bad?’, ‘how should we live?’, ‘what is real?’, and ‘how do I know what is true?’. People who do philosophy try to answer these important questions by thinking carefully and discussing their ideas. They use reasons and arguments to find the truth.

**Plato** – A very famous philosopher who was born about 428 BCE and died around 348 BCE. He lived in Athens in ancient Greece. Plato founded the Academy, the first university in the Western world!

**Pyrrho** – Pyrrho was a Greek philosopher and the founder of Skepticism (See page 22).

**Samos** - Samos is a Greek island in the east Aegean, close to modern-day Turkey. It was the birthplace of the philosopher Epicurus.

**Sinope** – A city in modern-day Turkey and the birthplace of the philosopher Diogenes.

**Skeptic** - A member of the ancient Greek school of philosophy called Skepticism, founded in Athens by Pyrrho. The Skeptics believed that we should believe in nothing in order to achieve ataraxia.

**Socrates** – Socrates was a very important Greek philosopher from Athens. He lived from 469 to 399 BCE. He is often described as the founder of Western philosophy. He taught Plato and many other philosophers.

**Stoa** – The Stoa was a colourful painted porch in the Athenian agora where the Stoic philosopher Zeno and his followers discussed their ideas.

**Stoic** – A member of the ancient Greek school of philosophy called Stoicism, founded in Athens by Zeno. The Stoics believed that we could live the best life by being virtuous and controlling our emotions.

**Virtue and Vice** – A virtue is a good character trait or quality (like kindness, honesty, bravery, and loyalty). A vice is a bad character trait (like cruelty, dishonesty, cowardice, and disloyalty). The ancient philosophers often focussed on virtues like wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance (self-control).

**Virtuous** – A word to describe someone who has virtues and acts according to them.

**Zeno** – Zeno was the founder of the ancient Greek school of philosophy called Stoicism. (See page 4).

# Credits and Acknowledgements

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Heracles fighting Geryon, Eurytion and the dog Orthros. Attic red-figure kylix, attributed to Euphronios, ca. 510–500 BC. In the collection of the Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich. Catalogue No. Munich 2620. File:Euphronios ARV 16 17 young rider - Herakles and Geryoneus (12).jpg - Wikimedia Commons. ArchaiOptix, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

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### Pg 26

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