

Philosophy and Surrogacy

Philosophy Smash with Henry!

Lesson plan

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Introduction for teachers.

This is a discussion of a topic in family ethics and the philosophy of reproductive rights. It concerns the ethical issues surrounding surrogacy. It aims to promote discussion and awareness of the ways in which philosophy can have something to say about the nature of families.

It can be used at Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3, and it can also be used for philosophy lunchtime clubs in schools.

The lesson is designed to be done with the help of the *Philosophy Smash with Henry!* video on the same topic, as well as the handout. Both of these are available at the website at the top of this lesson plan.

The lesson should take approximately 60 minutes, depending on the age and ability of the class.

Content note.

This lesson plan touches on potentially sensitive issues concerning couples who are unable to have a child, and rights over babies. Teachers are reminded to use their judgement in the best way to approach these issues in the classroom.

Learning Outcomes.

Emerging:

Explain what surrogacy is, and why people may need to use a surrogate to have a baby.

Explain some of the ethical difficulties around surrogacy, and why it may lead to conflicts of interest.

Expected:

Engage in a sophisticated philosophical discussion regarding surrogacy. Take a position on some of the ethical questions around surrogacy and respond to criticism.



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Be respectful to other views, and recognise alternative ways of looking at philosophical questions, whilst at the same time supporting one's own view with evidence and/or argument.

Exceeding:

Take a position on some of the ethical questions around surrogacy, respond to criticism. Engage in respectful critique of others' opinions and views. Alter own views in response to criticism, if appropriate.

Ground Rules.

Start by setting some ground rules for discussion. These can be varied based on the style and ability of the group, but they might include:

- 1) Remember to always be respectful of other people's opinions. Everyone's opinion is equally valuable.
- 2) You can give your own beliefs and opinions if you like, but you don't have to. If you don't have an opinion on the question, then just think about what a sensible opinion might be, and think about why someone might hold that.
- 3) Try not to just give 'yes' or 'no' answers, remember always to back up your opinions with reasons and arguments.
- 4) It's fine to disagree with other people!
- 5) It's fine to change your mind! Changing your mind when someone else makes a good point is a sign of maturity, and good thinking.

Sentence stems:

Depending on the ability and age of your group, you may like to use the following sentence stems to encourage children to think:

Questions:

'Why do people think...? '

'Does anyone disagree that....?'

'Do people from other cultures think that....?'

Statement of views:

'I think that... because...'

'One view I think is wrong is ... because ...'

'Someone else might think ...because ...'

'Someone in my group thinks ..., but I think that ...'

'It's difficult to know the answer to this question because....'

'I think there's another sensible view, which is...'

'In order to answer this question, we would need to know....'

Changing your mind:

'On reflection, I've now realised that...'

'At the beginning, I believed...., but now I'm not sure. I now think that...'

'I'm not sure about... because of....'

Teaching Activities.

This lesson has two teaching activities: an initial Q and A, and then a debate. It also has a potential assessment: an essay.

The video is an interview between a presenter and an expert in the field of surrogacy. The presenter is Henry Taylor, and the expert is Herjeet Marway, a philosopher at the University of Birmingham. The video is available at the link on p.1 of this lesson plan.

Teaching activity one: introduction and initial Q and A

Start off by watching the first few minutes of the video. The presenter will outline the main topic of the interview, and then ask the children what they think about the question. There will then follow a cartoon and the 'What do you think?' wording. Pause the video at this stage.

At this point, do a round of Q and A to ensure that the class understands the issue. Specifically, it is important that children understand the three points that are summarised in the box below.

Key surrogacy points for children:

- 1) Why people might use a surrogate. For example, this includes:
 - a. Some gay couples who may not be able to carry their own child.
 - b. Single people who do not have a partner but want a child.
 - c. Straight couples who (for medical reasons) cannot carry their own child.
- 2) What surrogacy is: it is when a person (the surrogate) carries a child for another person (or couple) (the intended parent(s)), with the agreement that the child should be given to the intended parent(s) to raise after birth.
- 3) That there may be a conflict of interests, such as if the surrogate decides that they do not want to give up the child after birth, or if the intended parent(s) no longer want to raise the child.



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It may be useful for teachers to look over [the following government document](#) before the lesson, to brush up on how surrogacy is legally defined.

After you are confident that children understand these three ideas, ask them if they have any other questions. Then, ask them for their individual opinions about the third issue: should the surrogate be forced to give up the baby, or should they be allowed to keep the baby?

Note:

One fact about surrogacy that may be confusing for children is that sometimes the surrogate is not genetically related to the baby. In other words, in this case, the pregnant person *does not share DNA* with the baby that they are pregnant with.

In other cases, the surrogate may be genetically related to the baby. In other words, in this case, the pregnant person *does share DNA* with the baby that they are pregnant with.

Equally, the intended parents might, or might not, be genetically related to the baby. That is, the intended parents may or may not *share DNA* with the baby.

These are different cases of surrogacy. Teachers should exercise their judgement about whether introducing these ideas would be too much information for their class at this stage.

Teaching activity two: debate.

Watch the rest of the video, including the 45 second summary of the topic by the interviewee, the subsequent discussion between the presenter and the interviewee, and the ‘goodbye’ section by the presenter.

Then, distribute the handout for the lesson (available at the link on p.1 of this lesson plan). These summarise the main ideas, in case children have forgotten them, or if they naturally learn better with written text than a video. Give the students a few minutes to remind themselves of the main opinions given in the video, and do a round of Q and A.

Break the class into small groups and distribute the ‘Philosophy and Surrogacy’ activity sheet, available at the link on p.1 of this lesson plan. The activity sheet describes a case where a surrogate changes their mind and wants to keep their baby. The text is reproduced on the next page of this lesson plan, for reference. Ask each group to decide what they think should be done in this case.

After 15-20 minutes’ small group discussion, bring the class back together, and go round each small group one by one, gathering their opinions. It may be helpful to write each one on the whiteboard, to help with memory.



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Philosophy and Surrogacy

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Activity Sheet.

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This activity should be used with the 'Philosophy and surrogacy' video, available at the website above.

Break off into small groups. Read the description in the box below and the three opinions in the box. As a group, decide what you think, and give reasons for your opinions.

Sam and Jay are a couple, who want a baby. They cannot have their own, for medical reasons. Tess is a friend of theirs, who offers to be their surrogate. Tess agrees that she will give the baby to them after it is born. They have a successful medical procedure, and Tess gets pregnant, using a sperm and egg from donors. Eventually, Tess gives birth to a baby girl, but by then she has changed her mind: she has decided that she doesn't want the baby to be given to and raised by Sam and Jay after all, and that she wants to keep it.

What should we do? Read the three opinions below and the arguments for them. As a group, decide which one you think is right.

- 1) The baby should be taken away from Tess.

Argument for this opinion: Tess agreed to give the baby to Sam and Jay. She can't change her mind later, after she made an agreement. Sam and Jay will be heartbroken to not have the baby, after expecting her for 9 months.

- 2) Tess should be allowed to keep the baby.

Argument for this opinion: Tess has been pregnant for 9 months with the baby. 'Growing' the baby involves a huge amount of time and effort for her. She did agree to give the baby to Sam and Jay, but she should be allowed to change her mind.

- 3) Tess, Sam and Jay should all have a relationship with the baby.

Argument for this opinion: They should work out a relationship where all three of them can see the baby and be in its life. If you agree with this opinion, think about what this relationship would look like: do Sam, Jay and Tess all have to live together? And who would have responsibility for the baby?



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Potential Assessment: Essay.

The potential assessment for this lesson is an essay.

1) Essay

As the children to write an essay (approx. 1-2 pages of A4) summarising what surrogacy is, and the question of what should happen if the surrogate changes their mind. They should also give an opinion on this question and (preferably) back it up with argument.

Additional Resources

Here are some extra things you can use to make this subject more accessible to your children. [This article](#) is by the expert from the video. It may be too advanced for your class, but will provide helpful background for teachers:

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