

A Level Religious Studies Transition Materials: Year 11 - 12

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Suggested Reading List

Brief Introductory Reading:

Blackburn, S. *Think*, OUP 2001

Craig, E. *Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*, OUP 2002

Law, S. *The Philosophy Files*, Orion 2002; *The Outer Limits*, Orion 2003; *The Philosophy Gym*, Hodder Headline 2003

Nagel, T. *What Does It All Mean?*, OUP 1987 (reprinted 2004)

Warburton, N. *Philosophy: The Basics* (5th ed.), Routledge 2012

Philosophy:

Gaarder, J. *Sophie's World*, London : Phoenix House 1995

Davies, B. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, OUP 1993

Annas, J. *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (particularly Chapters 9-10), OUP 1998

Ethics:

Vardy, P. *The Puzzle of Ethics*, SCM Press 1999

Norman, R. *The Moral Philosophers*, OUP 1998

Religious Thought:

McGrath, A. *Christianity: An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing 2015

Reading List Tasks:

For each of the texts you read, summarise the key points in one of the following ways:

- Write a review of the book, outlining which were the most useful sections and whether you enjoyed the book/why/why not.
- List any key terms from the text in a vocabulary list, researching their meanings (if not clear from the text) and recording these.
- Create a picture mind-map of the key ideas. Use doodles and images to illustrate these. For a guide to mind-mapping, see this short video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLWV0XN7K1g>

Video Resources and Tasks:

Watch the videos below, choosing one to focus on for your task. Write a list of discussion points/questions it raises. Choose (at least) one of your questions and draft at least three possible answers that might be given.

https://www.ted.com/talks/kwame_anthony_appiah_is_religion_good_or_bad_this_is_a_trick_question/transcript#t-22290 Ted Talk by Kwame Anthony Appiah -- Is Religion Good or Bad? (This is a trick question)

https://www.ted.com/talks/damon_horowitz/transcript Ted Talk by Damon Horowitz – We Need a Moral Operating System

https://www.ted.com/talks/tom_honey_on_god_and_the_tsunami/transcript Ted Talk by Tom Honey – Why Would God Create A Tsunami?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8MzPmkNsgU> Debate: Atheist vs Christian (Christopher Hitchens vs William Lane Craig)

Films/ TV:

Watch *The Matrix* (film). Note down your thoughts on the themes of truth, perception and reality.

Watch *Lost* (TV series). What moral and ethical points does this raise?

Watch *Sliding Doors* (film). Do you think your life is pre-destined (set out for you) or can you control your own fate?

Audio Resources:

Listen to 'The Moral Maze' on BBC Radio 4. (Available programmes vary over time)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qk11>

Note down the key points of argument. Create a flow chart of the main points of discussion.

Listen to this episode of 'In Our Time'. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01mwx64>

Based on these arguments, is it possible to argue that God necessarily exists?

Listen to this episode of 'Thinking Allowed'. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b099ypqf>

How should we help people who are dying?

Listen to this podcast from 'Philosophy Now'

- https://philosophynow.org/podcasts/Free_Will_and_the_Brain To what extent can we exercise free will? List ten examples of choices you have made in the last seven days. For each one, consider what factors influenced your choice (habit, parents, media, friends, consideration of consequences, etc).

Thought Experiments:

<http://www.philosophyexperiments.com/fatman/>

<http://moralmachine.mit.edu/>

<https://io9.gizmodo.com/9-philosophical-thought-experiments-that-will-keep-you-1340952809>

Carry out some of the above activities.

Write a written reflection of the moral questions that each one raises, and how you might respond to these.

Try to list your own "moral code" or "rules for life". Include 5-10 elements.

Can you imagine any exceptions to your own "rules"?

Written/ Reflection Tasks:

1. Consider your definitions of the following terms:

- Truth
- Reality
- Good
- Evil
- Moral
- God
- Time

For each concept, try to argue against your own definition. Can you see any flaws in your ideas? How might they be criticised? What conclusions can you reach about *how* we define these concepts?

2. List *five* facts that you *know* to be true. For each one, explain *how* you know it to be true. Are any of your “facts” uncertain? What would have to happen to prove them irrefutably (without question)?
3. Create a picture collage, poem, song, mind map or vision board which illustrates the idea of “God”. Explain your choices of words, images and concepts. If you can, explain where these have originated.
4. Create a fact file of the philosophers Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas. Include pictures, key facts and a brief outline of their philosophical ideas.
5. Choose a story from the news that includes one of the following themes:
 - Abortion
 - Euthanasia
 - Capital punishment
 - Humans’ treatment of animals

Write a response to the story, considering several different points of view. To help with this, you could consider the points of view of:

- An atheist (someone who fervently believes there is no God)
- An agnostic (someone unsure about religion and faith in God)
- A committed Christian
- A dying man
- A child

Essay Questions

A. Write your own response to the following question:

“How should we decide the right thing to do?”

In your answer you should:

- Include a range of different opinions
- Conduct your own research to find possible answers from different fields of thinking (philosophy, psychology, sociology, religion, etc.)
- Justify your answer with a range of reasons
- Include examples to illustrate your point
- Reach a justified conclusion
- Include a bibliography to demonstrate your own research

B. Write a response to the following question:

“Should people believe in God?”

In your answer you should:

- Demonstrate understanding of several different viewpoints
- Show evidence of having discussed the question with at least three other people, and analyse their comments, including similarities and differences
- Give clear reasons for each perspective
- Give examples to justify your answer
- Reach a clear and justified conclusion
- Include a bibliography, if required