



# **Error 404 Activity Pack**

**Dear Teacher/Parent**

**We do hope you enjoyed the show! Here are a few activities for you to do with your children after you have seen the performance. Most of these exercises are drama based and are good for developing speaking and listening skills.**



Polka Theatre's production of Error 404 is for ages 8+. The majority of the games and exercises in this pack are aimed at KS2, but can be adapted for KS3.

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## BEHIND THE SCENES

### A note from writer and performer Daniel Bye:

Polka's artistic director invited me to explore how I could make a show that explored philosophical ideas in an engaging and entertaining way. So I spent the school year 2013-14 as Philosopher-in-Residence at Pelham Primary in Wimbledon, and at Norton Primary in Stockton-on-Tees, creating short stories to tell the children, and asking them philosophical questions arising from those stories. The results were incredible. With little prompting beyond the material in the stories, the children were able to grasp and debate often very complex philosophical ideas. Their engagement with the process of debate, critical thought and consideration of their place in the world was thrilling to witness. The stories that the children at Pelham found most provocative, fruitful and compelling form the basis of Error 404.

It's been one of the most rewarding writing and creative processes I've ever been through.



## WARM UPS

The following games make great ice-breakers and are also good for building confidence. Encourage the children to enjoy the mistakes they make in these games and to laugh at themselves. For games with leaders, you could let other people have a go at leading; that way you can play and the children can enjoy your mistakes too!

Building trust and confidence will help the children to voice their opinions, and listen to others, when talking about philosophy.

### Bing Bong Name:

Ask the participants to stand in a circle, with you in the middle. Point at someone, who must say 'Bing!'. The person on their left then says 'Bong!' and the next person says their own name. Carry on moving around the circle until either a mistake is made or there is a hesitation, at which point the person who made the mistake sits down. As an added level of difficulty to break up the pattern (or whenever you can see there are 3 people left, or multiples of three) change the pattern to 'Bing, Bong, Bing, Name' to keep participants on their toes.

### 1-8:

Participants stand in a circle. Demonstrate a simple 1-8 count with accompanying actions, as follows: Place your hands at waist level, palms down and rising in steps with each count until, by 8, they are above your head. Ask the group to copy. Gradually introduce a new level of difficulty by introducing an action, first on 3 (clap), then also 5 (finger click) and 7 (stamp), that replaces saying the number. Once all four variations have been learned, run it as a complete sequence, first at normal speed and then at breakneck speed.

The final sequence should be as follows:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

1, 2, Clap, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

1, 2, Clap, 4, Click, 6, 7, 8.

1, 2, Clap, 4, Click, 6, Stamp, 8.

### 1, 2, 3 Pairs:

Divide the group into pairs, who stand facing each other. Ask them to count to three together, repeatedly. They should do this by taking it in turns to say a number, as follows:

A) 1

B) 2

A) 3

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- B) 1
- A) 2
- B) 3

And so on.

Next, ask them to do this again but to choose a sound and action to replace number 1 (it can be anything from a simple clap to a short dance move and 'woo', whatever the pairs can dream up!).

Now the sequence would be:

- A) Woo!
- B) 2
- A) 3
- B) Woo!
- A) 2
- B) 3

And so on. Continue to swap out numbers 2 and 3 for sounds and actions too.

Tell the participants that if they make a mistake, they should do an extravagant bow and say 'thank you very much'. Enjoy the mistakes!

### Is there more?:

This game is another confidence builder. This time, it is about supporting your partner and enjoying being silly.

In pairs. Partner A does a very simple, small move. For example, they stick out their index finger and wiggle it. B's job is to be completely, utterly, overwhelmingly impressed by everything that A does. They can praise A's ingenuity, clap, stand back in awe; whatever they fancy. B should keep asking the question, 'Is there more?', at which point A should always say 'yes' and add a new (equally silly) move. Here's an example of how the scene might go:

- A *Wiggles finger.*
- B Oh wow! That's incredible! I can't believe you can do that, it's amazing! Is there more?
- A Yes. *Continues to wiggle finger, also bobs up and down.*
- B Seriously? Where did you learn that? It's the best thing I've ever seen! Is there more?
- A Yes. *Continues to wiggle finger and bob. Also raises leg up and down.*

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B Applauds. You are the most talented person I've ever met. Can I have your autograph to hang on my wall? Is there more?

ETC...

The sillier the scene becomes, the better! The easiest way to explain this game is to demonstrate a scene. Ask a volunteer to be A, whilst you play the part of B. It's important to model the over the top enthusiasm that you're looking for from B or the game will be very flat and stilted!

### GAMES FOR THINKING:

The following games are excellent warm ups for the brain! This will be helpful when you want to start thinking and talking about some of the big questions posed in *Error 404*.

### What's in the Box?:

Ask the group to sit in a circle. One person volunteers to be in the middle. In front of them is an imaginary box. They must pretend to pull items from the box in quick succession, naming each one as they go. Anything can be in the box, and the items don't have to be related. For example, they might say:

An elephant, a teacup, some trousers, a pot of paint, a banana etc...

As soon as they hesitate or repeat a word, everyone else in the group must shout, 'What's in the box? What's in the box?' and the person in the middle should try to carry on. It's harder than you might imagine!

When the person in the middle has had enough, or completely run out of things to say, somebody else can have a go.

### Word Association:

The group stands in a circle. Going round the circle, everyone takes it in turns to say a word. Each word must be somehow linked to the one that has immediately gone before it. For example:

Spaceman, moon, sun, beach, water, kettle, kitchen, dinner etc...

If the group doesn't think somebody's word relates to the one that's gone before it, they are allowed to challenge it. The person who said that word then gets 30 seconds to explain why they think it should be allowed.

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If you want to play competitively, people can be out if they repeat a word, hesitate or if they can't justify why their word relates to the one before it.

You can also play this game in pairs (who remembers 'Mallet's Mallet'?! ) if you want to make it more rapid fire.

### Ask the Bag a Question:

This game is credited to Lisa Naylor, sourced from her Guardian article about philosophy in the classroom (link in the resources section below).

The group sits in a circle. Place an object in the middle of the circle; the example given is a bag. The children take it in turns to ask the bag a question. For example:

Bag, how old are you? Bag, do you like being a bag?

The exercise encourages the children to think about abstract questions and concepts, as well as giving everyone a chance to voice a question.



## SOME BIG QUESTIONS

### Exercise:

Allow the group some time to come up with a list of questions, inspired by their visit to see *Error 404*. This could be an individual writing exercise, or done in pairs or small groups. Help the children to look at their questions critically to ascertain:

Have they made any assumptions in their questions?  
Are there any bigger concepts in their questions? (for example, friendship, truth, reality).

Ask each individual, pair or group to pick one or two questions that they find the most interesting. You can share and explore these later.

### Error 404:

As a reminder, here are some of the themes and questions in *Error 404*. I'm sure your groups will come up with more!

How do you know you're really awake, not dreaming?

Are you real? How do you know?

How do we know anything?

If you use science to change someone's personality, are they still the same person?

Can the events that happen to you turn you into a different person?  
(In the play, Dan asks whether the boy is a different person now because of what happened to his best friend).

Can a robot be a real friend?

What questions would you ask to find out whether you're talking to a robot or a human on your computer?

Can you 'kill' a robot?

Does Simon really come to life again?

Is feeling emotion what makes us human?

Are emotions felt in your body in your body as well as your mind?

'Is remembering being born a thing that makes you a person?'

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How do you know things (like when you were born) if you don't remember them happening?

Does it feel the same to lose a robot friend as losing a human one?

Can a computer have a personality?

If you bring someone's personality back in a body that looks like them, is it really them?

Is being alive the same if you can reboot every time something bad happens?

Does a 'bad' person become 'good' if you use science to change their personality? (Even if the old personality is lurking underneath?)



## EXPLORING THE QUESTIONS:

The following exercises are great ways to express and justify opinions and ideas in an active way. These could be a springboard for further discussion, and used as a way to explore the questions your group has come up with.

### Anyone Who?:

The group makes a circle of chairs, with one person standing in the middle who does not have a chair. The person standing must say 'Anyone who...' followed by something that is true about them. For example:

'Anyone who likes chocolate.'

Everyone to whom this also applies must then stand up and move to a new seat. The person in the middle has to try to sit down before all the seats are taken. This leaves someone new in the middle and the process is repeated.

The game can start as above, but when the group is accustomed to it you can add the rule that all the 'anyone who' statements must be opinions about *Error 404* (and still true for the person who says them). For example:

'Anyone who thinks you can be friends with a robot?' or 'Anyone who thinks you can feel emotions in your body.'

### Opinion Circles:

Place a chair in the centre of the room (or hula hoop or similar if a chair is not safe for your group). The children take it in turns to stand on the chair and express an opinion about *Error 404*.

The rest of the participants move to show the extent to which they agree with the statement; the more they agree, the closer they stand to the chair. If they wildly disagree, they should stand right at the edge of the room. Those who are unsure can stand somewhere between those two points and so on.

Pick a few people to explain their choices. It's really important that they can give reasons for where they have chosen to stand, so encourage them to do this.

### Opinion Lines:

Very similar to the above exercise, only this time the questions are posed by you, the teacher. This can be a more helpful approach with younger groups, or groups in which the participants are shy to voice their opinions.

Place two signs 'agree' and 'disagree' at opposite sides of the room. Tell your group to think of this as a line; it is a sliding scale. Explain to your group that when you say a statement, they should find a place to stand on the line to show how much they agree or disagree with what you've said.

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Choose a few people to explain why they've chosen to stand where they have. Encourage them to give as many reasons as they can.

You are likely to find that the children's reasons spark new statements to try.

**Extension:** Instead of asking participants to explain their own position on the line, ask them to justify somebody else's position. For example, if child A strongly agrees ask them to give you reasons on behalf of child B, who strongly disagrees. This is an excellent way to encourage your group to look at all sides of an argument and to try to understand other people's ideas. They will probably find this difficult but it's worth persevering!

### **Experts:**

Choose a question or theme that has especially interested the group. For example, can a robot really be your friend?

Ask the group to think about whether there are any assumptions or big concepts in the question. For example, do we know what a 'friend' is? What is friendship?

Divide the group into pairs, labelled A and B. A is an expert in a relevant field (robot friendship studies). They know everything there is to know about this subject.

B is a television interviewer.

Ask each pair to act out their TV interview. Give the expert a strong position to defend, for example, robots can never be real friends. The interviewer's job is to get the expert to say as much about this opinion as possible; the expert must think of lots of reasons why this is the case (they are the world leader on this subject after all).

When the interview is over, swap roles. This time the new expert should defend the opposite point of view (robots make the best friends ever).

Watch some of these performances together and ask the group to feed back their thoughts.



## RESOURCES

Here are a few interesting resources that you might find useful.

Daniel Bye's website: [www.danielbye.co.uk](http://www.danielbye.co.uk)

Lisa Naylor Guardian article (including 'Ask the Bag a Question'):  
[www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/may/07/philosophical-enquiry-primary-classroom](http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/may/07/philosophical-enquiry-primary-classroom)

The Philosophy Man (with free resources for philosophy in school):  
[www.thephilosophyman.com](http://www.thephilosophyman.com)

Philosophy for Children (lots of free resources and offer training for teaching philosophy in school): [www.p4c.com](http://www.p4c.com)

Site that offers training, with interesting blog and links: [www.philosophy4children.co.uk](http://www.philosophy4children.co.uk)

The Philosophy Foundation: [www.philosophy-foundation.org](http://www.philosophy-foundation.org)