

## *Does a Fly Have a Mind?*

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*Connecting Concepts: Thinking Activities & Students*

Clinton Golding

Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 2003

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*reviewed by Phil Cam*

**D**oes a fly have a mind? What about an unborn baby? How about a nation? Would you place them under HAS A MIND, under NO MIND, or under ??? What are your reasons (or criteria) for placing them there? This is the starting point for what Clinton Golding calls a concept game. In his very usable book, *Connecting Concepts*, Golding explains how to set up and run classroom discussion using a range of such more or less problematic cases to engage students in the analysis of concepts. And he provides systematically constructed materials for a dozen really meaty concepts - those of racism, justice, intelligence, mind, responsibility, rules, science, culture, art, violence, knowledge, and reality - to get you started.

Once teachers and students have become familiar with the general idea, any number of games dealing with other concepts could easily be devised to extend this activity to all kinds of subject matter. Effective use of these games would promote students' speaking and listening skills, develop their reasoning abilities, supply them with tools for attaining greater clarity and precision in dealing with ideas, and give them a deeper understanding of subject matter in just about any area of the curriculum.

Concept games are adapted from the Community of Inquiry method that is associated with Philosophy for Children, and *Connecting Concepts* will certainly appeal to teachers who are already familiar with that method. Prior acquaintance with the Community of Inquiry is by no means essential in making good use of Golding's concept games, however, as he makes the purpose of the activity clear, sets out the standard procedures in ways that can be easily understood by both teachers and students, runs us through a sample of classroom discussion, and gives the teacher much sound advice. In any case, concept games focus on one kind of intellectual activity - conceptual exploration - that makes for a very manageable introduction to the broader framework of the Community of Inquiry.

Golding provides suggestions for varying the procedures, as well as extension questions and activities for each of the concept games included in the book. For those who would like to explore this territory more deeply, he also provides a brief outline of different kinds of definition at the end of the book, together with

a couple of very useful tools for conceptual exploration that could be taught to students. One is the Aristotelian distinction between *genus* and *differentia* and the other is the distinction between necessary and sufficient conditions. The connection of the former with thinking in terms of all and *only*, and of the latter with thinking in terms of both then conditional if... *then* and the bi-conditional *if and only if*, could be made use of by the more adventurous or experienced teacher to provide a beginning for a much needed but neglected focus on reasoning in our educational programs.

I highly recommend this book. In *Connecting Concepts*, Clinton Golding has taken a simple and powerful idea and developed it into a manageable, enjoyable, and rewarding activity that would be suitable for the middle and upper primary and secondary school. Once they start to work with it, most teachers and students are going to get hooked.

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