



Humphrey, Sandra McLeod. *If You Had to Choose, What Would You Do?* Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995. 115 pages.

———. *It's Up to You . . . What Do You Do?* Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1999. 115 pages.

———. *More If You Had to Choose, What Would You Do?* Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1999. 110 pages.

These three books by Sandra McLeod Humphrey and illustrated by Brian Strassburg offer parents and instructors an appealing way to discuss ethical situations and decision making with their children. Each book is a series of 25–26 short story styled situations that always focus on one child as the main character caught in a dilemma. Rather than state what the main character ultimately does, McLeod Humphrey encourages the young readers to think about what they would do if they were in the same situation. Each story is followed by a series of questions pertaining to the reading, which encourage discussion about the details of the situation and why one response may be more appealing than another. They also encourage empathy and mental flexibility by suggesting the reader look at the situation from several standpoints.

The books are designed to allow children and their parents to read together and for children to read the story on their own and then discuss the questions listed at the end of the story with an adult or peer group. The stories always deal with situations that are relevant to children, but some children may find some of the situations no longer apply to them or connect with what they have to deal with after a certain age. Some of the topics covered are: how to respond when a new kid joins your class, cheating in school, stealing, how to handle money, dealing with a friendship that is undergoing changes, sportsmanship, interacting with children who are different, working toward a goal, dealing with a new strict teacher, gossip, bullying, peer pressure, sibling rivalry and boundaries, and being assigned a position or task that is not desirable. Although all children benefit most by working through the questions and issues with an adult, younger children will probably need to read the stories with an adult as well.

The books note the age ranges for whom they are appropriate. Generally, the reading difficulty and subject relevance is best suited for children between 7 and 11 years old, but some of the books list the age of the audience as 8 to 12 years while another lists 6 and up. I did not always find that these followed the appeal of the content and the relevance to the ages listed. The topic may be generally relevant, but some of the older children for which the books are intended may find the stories overly simplistic or not written for them. For example, some of the children are depicted as being in second or third grade. This is not a concern for the younger children, but the older children may read this as something that does not speak to them. The large text and brevity of the stories may also signal to some that these books are really written for younger children. They may also want to know more of the context and story before they can conclusively respond to the question that defines the series. Older children could still benefit from the situations by relating it to some other story or experience with which they are familiar.

As an adult who may want to use this with children, one of the difficulties I experienced was discerning the subject matter from the title of the story. In the first two books published, *If You Had to Choose, What Would You Do?* and *It's Up To You . . . What Do You Do?* the stories each have unique titles, such as “Easy Come, Easy Go”, which are clearly organized in the table of contents, but which make it difficult to determine the subject matter in each story without reading it first. This problem was acknowledged and corrected in the third book *More If You Had to Choose, What Would You Do?* by including the moral issue and sometimes the topic/context in parentheses next to the official title.

McLeod Humphrey's series is a valuable resource for parents and educators to use with the young people in their lives. These books service an overlooked niche in children's literature. They promote moral understanding, imagination, empathy, reasoning skills, and work toward developing and refining the child's own belief system. Moreover, they are educational without being overly didactic or rigid.

Elizabeth Mauritz

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We have received the following texts for review:

Burgan, Michael. *Alexander the Great: World Conqueror*. Compass Point Books, 2007.

Cooper, Sharon Katz. *Aristotle: Philosopher, Teacher, and Scientist*. Compass Point Books, 2007.

Dell, Pamela. *Socrates: Ancient Greek in Search of Truth*. Compass Point Books, 2007.

Doak, Robin S. *Thucydides: Ancient Greek Historian*. Compass Point Books, 2007.

McKinley, Cheryl. *The Mouse in the Bathtub*. Author House, 2005.

———. *The Secret of the Boat*. First Books, 2004.

Phillips, Christopher. *Ceci Ann's Day of Why*. Tricycle Press, 2006.

———. *The Philosophers' Club*. Tricycle Press, 2001.

White, David A. *The Examined Life*. Prufrock Press, 2005.

———. *Philosophy for Kids*. Prufrock Press, 2001/

About the Contributors:

Elizabeth Gyori will be a junior this next academic year at Watchung Hills Regional High School in Warren, New Jersey and is interested in journalism, politics, and philosophy.

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Elizabeth Mauritz is a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy at Michigan State University. She specializes in environmental philosophy and has taught for the Lyman Briggs School of Science at MSU.

Greg Smith graduated from York College of Pennsylvania in 2007. He is currently working various odd-jobs in the American West while he continues his work in art and writing.

Ben Thompson is a high school senior attending Berwick Academy in South Berwick, Maine.

Steve Wood co-founded the High School Philosophy Seminar in 2004. He completed his B.A. in Philosophy at the George Washington University in 2006.

John Zillmer lives, works and writes in Minneapolis, and hopes soon to earn his Ph.D. in philosophy from Michigan State University.