



The Philosophy in Schools Association of NSW invites NSW secondary students to submit an essay to our third annual 2021 Essay Competition, proudly sponsored by the **Royal Society of NSW Southern Highlands**.

This packet contains the competition rules (below), the stimulus material (pages 2-4), the marking criteria (page 5), and submission form (page 6).

1. Submissions will be judged by one or more (unpaid) academic philosophers.
2. The three best will be selected, and plus honourable mentions for up to three more deserving entries.
3. Awards will be presented at the Philosophy Festival to be held at North Sydney Girls High School on 28-29th June, 2021. Further details about the Festival will be provided to schools shortly. Please contact the Philosophy in Schools Association of NSW with any queries: philosophyinschoolsnsw@gmail.com

Competition Rules

1. Entrants must be in Years 10-12 and in full time secondary students at a NSW school (public, private or Catholic). (Students in higher education may not enter.)
2. Each entrant may submit one essay only addressing the set philosophical topic.
3. Essays must not exceed 2000 words.
4. The essay must be entirely the student's own work. Any form of unfair practice (including plagiarism) will disqualify the entrant from the competition.
5. Submissions must be in the form of Word documents in the following format:
 - a. Font size: 12 in a typeset of Calibri, Courier or Times New Roman
 - b. Line spacing: 1.5 between lines
 - c. Italics should be used for foreign/specialist words, bold may be used for emphasis.
 - d. Footnotes should be used, rather than endnotes, if they are required.
6. The submission must be accompanied by a completed Submission Form which must be signed by the entrant, one of their teachers and a parent/caregiver. (The form can be found on Page 5 of this document.) The submission form and essay should be attached separately to a single email, sent to philosophyinschoolsnsw@gmail.com
7. No more than 3 submissions can be made per school.
8. Submissions received after the extended due date (Friday 18th June at 5.00pm AEST) will not be considered.



The Philosophy in Schools Association of NSW
2021 Essay Competition

Essay Question: *What is friendship and what is it to be a good friend?*

Subordinate questions: What are our expectations of friends? Are our expectations justifiable? Are friendships based on similarity between friends or are differences between friends equally important? How should we deal with the conflict that sometimes arises between friends? Can friendships always survive conflict? What might a failure to resolve conflict within friendships imply about the friends involved and about friendship?

Stimulus Material (3 pages; optional resources on p.4)

1. Terrence Moore, August 2003. Young people need to know the true meaning of friendship: <https://ashbrook.org/publications/oped-moore-03-friendship/>
2. Excerpts from Lynch, S., 2005, *Philosophy and Friendship*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Chapter 1.

Friendship: The Fluidity of the Concept

Friendship, Cicero tells us, “is a kaleidoscope and complicated thing”.¹ We might add a fascinating thing; a kind of love perhaps and an enigma to us. Unlike some accounts of the involuntary nature of love, friendship maintains an element of freedom of choice. In common with love, it involves a relationship between two beings and so draws us into the mystery of the difficult notion of the individual in him or herself. The history of the philosophical literature on friendship reveals a changing semantic paradigm in relation to this notion. We are curious about friendship because as social creatures we are born into relation with others and, as Aristotle argues, are naturally constituted to live in company. Aristotle refines his comments to claim that “man is by nature a pairing rather than a social creature”.² The particular kind of pairing that we find in friendship is intriguing since unlike familial relationships the bond between the partners to a friendship is not determined by circumstance but must be created. A case could be made to suggest that friendship relations are a triumphant achievement of our species. When romantic love tempers, it often transforms itself into what Plato would have seen as a higher form of love: that of friendship. Today in modern cities the phenomenon of the “urban tribe” has emerged; the term refers to groups of friends who join forces to provide for each other the support, affection, company and sense of connection that were previously found in familial or marital relations.

¹ Cicero, *De Amicitia* in Michael Pakaluk (ed.), *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), p.111.

² *The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. J.A.K. Thomson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983, pp.304 and 280.

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The word ‘friend’ is derived from the Old English words ‘freon’ – which meant ‘free’ - and ‘freo’ - which meant ‘love’. It is also derived from the Old Teutonic ‘frijōjan’ and the Dutch ‘vriend’ - both of which originally meant ‘love’. (Cicero also draws attention to the similarity between *amor* (love) and *amicitia* (friendship).³ These denotations capture two important aspects of the modern English term. Firstly that friendship involves an emotional bond: a friend is one for whom we have a depth of feeling. The emotional attachment between friends is a mutual and reciprocal one: friends feel deeply toward each other and know that this feeling is reciprocated. A friend is probably aware that her friend also recognises this. Thus friendship involves not just feeling, but knowledge. This knowledge is not simply of each other’s liking, but also of character, personality and general affairs; friends have – or at least aspire to - an intimate knowledge of one another. The depth of feeling between friends and the intimacy of their knowledge puts them in a potentially vulnerable position in relation to one another. This vulnerability draws attention to the role of trust between friends. As Cicero argues, trust is “the foundation of that steadfastness and loyalty for which we are looking in friendship”.⁴ The kind of confident expectation that trust consists implies a commitment that cannot be adequately characterised in terms of its purposes – at least not in a narrowly instrumental way. As such it is a commitment that delivers participants in a friendship both rewards and challenges.

The second aspect that the etymology of the word ‘friend’ reveals is that friendship is a voluntary relationship: it is freely entered into and can be freely given up. This element of choice is crucial in friendship; we cannot make a friend of someone whom we find appealing and we cannot be forced to become a friend. But volition also brings a certain vulnerability and fragility to the relationship. From an etymological perspective, the emotional bond between friends and the voluntary nature of the relationship are central characteristics of friendship, but they are not sufficient to explain the genesis and cultivation of friendship. However, these characteristics are sufficient to permit a contrast with what might be seen as deviant uses of the term “friend”. Some of these are so depersonalised as to be empty formalities. Take for example the barrister’s customary and ironic mode of address to colleagues “my learned friend”. Others indicate a relationship that is suspiciously instrumental. For example, among members of the Mafia in modern Sicily, friendship is viewed as a relationship of equal exchange. Jeremy Boissevain quotes his informant, a professore, offering an explanation of a favour done for him by one mafiosi:

He helped me for *amicizia*, for friendship. Because of our father we have friends all over Sicily. They are not criminals. They are men who make themselves respected. They will help you when you need it, but...when they turn to you for help, you give it or...” and he made the chopping motion that means the application of violence.⁵

Whatever the social importance of friendship in the mafiosi’s sense of the word, it is clearly unlike the relationship of freely entered and affectionate reciprocity that the etymology of the word leads us to expect. There is a bond between the mafiosi; they exhibit commitment to a shared relationship, but not the passion or freedom of choice which are the desiderata of the etymological account. This example reveals that the etymological analysis of the word ‘friend’ does not take account of the kind of activity that friends engage in and which is requisite to the bond created between them.

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The mafiosi are engaged in what could be called alliances. Their relationships are not valued in themselves but serve as a means for satisfying other ends. Seneca would dismiss these kinds of relationships as “bargains”, arguing that “[o]ne who seeks friendship for favourable occasions, strips it of all its nobility”. Cicero expresses similar sentiments: “we do not exercise kindness and generosity in order that we may put in a claim for gratitude; we do not make our feelings of affection into a

³ Cicero in Pakaluk, pp.90 & 115.

⁴ Cicero in Pakaluk., p.103.

⁵ Boissevain, Jeremy *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulations and Coalitions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), p. 26.

business proposition....we are not led to friendship by the hope of material gain”.⁶ Those who form friendships for the sake of utility or advantage destroy goodwill, which is the link in friendship that is most productive of affection on Cicero’s view.

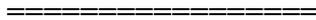
It is not so much what we gain from our friend as the very love of the friend itself that gives us joy, and what we get from a friend gives us joy since it comes to us with love....No, truly: friendship does not follow upon advantage, but advantage upon friendship.⁷



Optional Resources:

The School of Life provides a set of 22 articles dealing with different aspects of friendship. Students may find some of these useful in exploring the topic of friendship. They can be found via the link below.

<https://www.theschooloflife.com/thebookoflife/category/sociability/friendship/>



****A short note** about the value of being specific in using terminology, using “thick” terms and concepts, rather than “thin” ones (from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy):

Evaluative terms and concepts are often divided into “thin” and “thick”. We don’t evaluate actions and persons merely as good or bad, or right or wrong, but also as kind, courageous, tactful, selfish, boorish, and cruel. The latter are examples of thick concepts, the general class of which includes virtue and vice concepts such as GENEROUS and SELFISH, practical concepts such as SHREWD and IMPRUDENT, epistemic concepts such as OPEN-MINDED and GULLIBLE, and aesthetic concepts such as BANAL and GRACIOUS. These concepts stand in an intuitive contrast to those we typically express when we use thin terms such as *right*, *bad*, *permissible*, and *ought*.

....Typically when someone calls an action bad, they evaluate it negatively without committing themselves to much if anything by way of non-evaluative description. This descriptive thinness of BAD makes it more general than SELFISH or CRUEL. Even if calling something selfish evaluates it as bad in some way or respect, not just any bad act can count as selfish; it must also involve the agent giving a certain degree of priority to herself over others.⁸

⁶ Seneca, On Philosophy and Friendship – Epistle IX” in Pakaluk, p. 121 and Cicero in Pakaluk, p.91.

⁷ Cicero, *De Amicitia* in Michael Pakaluk (ed.), *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.), pp.98-99.

⁸ Väyrynen, Pekka, "Thick Ethical Concepts", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/thick-ethical-concepts/>>.



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Marking Criteria

Submissions will be evaluated based on their critical engagement, synthesis of ideas, and written expression using the criteria below:

Range	Criteria
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Outstanding, perceptive and sophisticated response which exhibits coherence and cohesion ● Engages critically with key thinkers, arguments and issues in this field ● Expresses perceptive ideas with clarity / skill / originality
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Effectively explores / discusses the philosophical problem of identity ● Shows understanding of key thinkers, arguments and issues in this field ● Expresses ideas effectively in relation to the stimulus
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provides a discussion and/or description of the problem of identity ● Makes relevant reference to key thinkers, arguments and issues in this field ● Expresses ideas competently
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attempts to discuss the concept of identity ● Shows some awareness of thinkers, arguments and issues in this field ● Expresses ideas in a variable manner
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describes or refers to the topic 'identity' ● Shows limited awareness of relevant thinkers, arguments and issues ● Expresses ideas in a confused or limited manner



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Submission form

School _____ Year group _____

Student name _____

Teacher's name _____

The signatures below constitute a pledge that all of the writing is the student's own work, with the exception of those portions which are properly documented.

Student signature _____ Date _____

Teacher's signature _____ Date _____

We the undersigned give permission for essays to be published by the Philosophy of Schools Association of NSW and/or the Royal Society of the Southern Highlands in print newsletters and/or online.

Student signature _____ Date _____

Student's Parent name _____

Student's Parent signature _____ Date _____

We the undersigned give permission for the student's name and image to be circulated in print newsletters and/or online

Student signature _____ Date _____

Student's Parent name _____

Student's Parent signature _____ Date _____