



The Philosophy in Schools Association of NSW invites NSW secondary students to submit an essay to our fourth annual 2022 Essay Competition, proudly sponsored by the **Royal Society of NSW Southern Highlands**.

This packet contains the competition rules (below), the stimulus material, the marking criteria, and submission form.

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 Ethics Explorations Day, 27 May at Rosebank College

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 due date (2 May at 5.00pm AEST) will not be considered.



The Philosophy in Schools Association of NSW
2022 Essay Competition

Stimulus:

In the preface to his 1986 text *Knowledge of Language*, Noam Chomsky writes,

For many years, I have been intrigued by two problems concerning human knowledge. The first is the problem of explaining how we can know so much given that we have such limited evidence. The second is the problem of explaining how we can know so little, given that we have so much evidence. The first problem is what we might call “Plato’s Problem,” the second, “Orwell’s problem”...

In reflecting on these problems in a (2014) paper, Azabdaftari writes,

Chomsky’s questions resonate with a similar quest by Bertrand Russell: “How comes it that human beings, whose contacts with the world are brief and personal and limited, are nevertheless able to know as much as they do know?”

Critically respond to one of the two problems identified above, as discussed by Chomsky.

Useful resources for further reading:

Azabdaftari, B. (2014). 'The Source of Human Knowledge: Plato’s problem and Orwell’s problem', *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 2(6), pp 11-18. Available here:

http://jfl.iaun.ac.ir/mobile/article_557462_3987c7c8853cec6b531fd210a75b55f5.pdf

Chomsky, N. (1986). *Knowledge of language: Its nature, origin, and use*. New York: Praeger. ([Here is a link to the full preface](#))

[Chris Knight’s blog on Chomsky](#) (for further discussion of both problems)

Orwell, George. 1984. New York: Signet Classic, 1950.

https://archive.org/details/1984novel00orwe_1 (free download)

Plato’s *Meno* <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/meno.html>



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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 _____