

Little Owl's Book of Thinking



An Introduction to Thinking Skills
Ian Gilbert

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Crown House Publishing Limited
www.crownhouse.co.uk - www.chpus.com

First published by

Crown House Publishing Ltd
Crown Buildings, Bancyfelin, Carmarthen, Wales, SA33 5ND, UK
www.crownhouse.co.uk

and

Crown House Publishing Company LLC
6 Trowbridge Drive, Suite 5, Bethel, CT 06801, USA
www.chpus.com

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First published 2004. Reprinted 2005, 2007, 2008.

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Enquiries should be addressed to
Crown House Publishing Limited.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue entry for this book is available
from the British Library.

10 Digit ISBN 190442435X
13 Digit ISBN 978-1904424352

LCCN 2004106208

Printed and bound in the UK by
Cambridge Press, Cambridge

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Why?



It's amazing what you can do on a train bound for Exeter. (I wasn't bound for Exeter, the train was. I was going to Reading. Which is ironic given that I wrote a book. A bit like going to Barking to buy a dog. Or Brent for a goose.)

What came out on my journey were the bare bones of the book you are about to read—years of research, teaching and experience about how young people can use their brains more effectively squeezed into seven chapters, two owls, a whole forest of woodland creatures but no very small sheep.

What was in the back of my mind—wherever that is—was the thought of a father reading the book to his child and getting as much from it as his son or daughter. Maybe even more.

There are many good books on the shelves about thinking and learning. Some of them are very good. Indeed some of them are so good they have been written many, many times.

But given the fact that I am trying to encourage a more creative way of thinking in my readers the only way this book could be written is in a way that no-one else has.

As a very wise Roman owl called Horace once said with some irony, “Bis repetita placent”.*

Or as we say where I’m from: “Do things no-one does or do things everyone does in a way no-one does.”

Like a stereo in a lift, this book works on many different levels. There’s no need to worry if not

* Literally translated ‘the more you like it, the more you’ll get it’. And then we’re only one small step away from focus groups.

Why?

everyone gets them all. (Although be slightly worried if no-one gets any.) Above all the book is designed to make you laugh and make you think. But not necessarily always in that order.

Any one of the areas covered can be built on in a conversation with your child or your class. Ask them how they feel about taking responsibility or breaking the rules. What does it mean to them to have such a powerful brain? What do they think about when they think about thinking?

See if they can identify if their preferred way of learning is through their eyes, through their ears or just getting to grips with what it is to be learned.

And what about their different intelligence strengths? For those of you new to education (or who have been in education for a very, very long time) multiple intelligences theory was developed by a wise American owl called Howard. He suggests that we all have strengths and weaknesses across at least eight different sorts of intelligence. Which means there's so much more to intelligence than the you're-

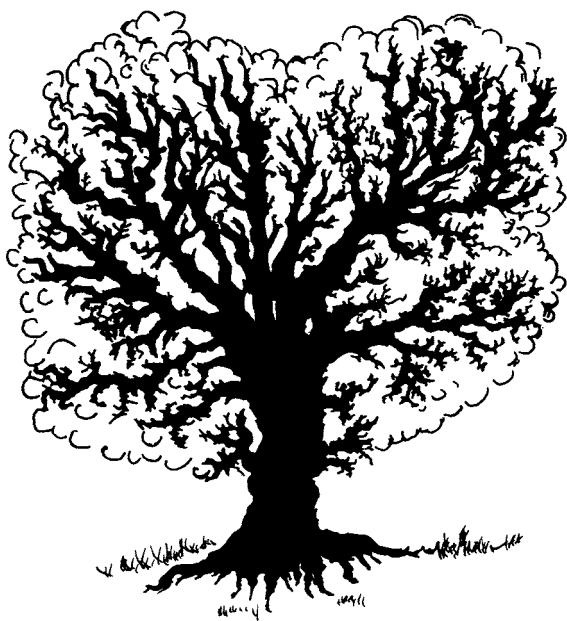
either-clever-or-you're-not IQ approach to things.

Which means that you can ask your child not how smart they are but how are they smart?

Then see what happens.

So, sit back, snuggle up or do whatever it is that you need to do to prepare for a woodland walk that may change the way you think about thinking.

And remember to be careful where a simple train journey may take you. Especially if you are heading north to Ramsbottom.



Oak: The First



“The first oak we shall look at is the broadest one in the forest,” began Big Owl.

Benny looked around to see which one he meant.

“Which one do you mean?” asked Benny.

“The one in the clearing over there that stands head and shoulders above the rest,” replied Big Owl. “This oak represents the awesome power of the thinking brain—your brain. Let me show

you. How many branches does it have, Benny?"

Benny looked but didn't know where to start counting (apart from the obvious starting point, which was "one", although he felt that that might be missing the point).

"Lots, Dad," said Benny in awe.

"Big lots," said Big Owl. "And if there are lots of branches how many twigs are there on those lots of branches and how many leaves are there on those lots of twigs?"

"Lots of lots," replied Benny, who had never really thought about trees in this light before.

"Well," said Big Owl, "let's imagine that this tree is your brain, my brain, everyone's brain. Millions and trillions of branches, growing out to connect and crisscross with other branches. Think of each leaf as a brain cell—the building blocks that make up your brain, and each branch and twig as the connections that link all your millions of brain cells together."

*'How do you do it, Dad?' asked Benny, the owlet.
(For those of you who don't know, an owlet is a little owl,
like a piglet is a little pig, and an outlet is a little out but
not all the way.)*

*'Do what?' said Big Owl, Benny the owlet's dad, who being
grown up didn't need letters after his name.*

'Be so wise and all knowing?'

And so begins the enchanting and fascinating story of how Benny the little owl learns how to think big and think wide under the watchful eyes of his wise old father.

There is something for everyone in this unique little book that will change the way you think about learning, growing up and life with the help of two owls, a whole world of woodland creatures but no small sheep.

"...a book that really makes you think as you are reading. When I mean 'think' I mean REALLY think, in a sort of 'working it out' mode, much like a new discovery or maybe a new feeling or experience... very clever."

Tabitha Fry, aged 12



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Illustrations Virginia Mayo

Children's Fiction UK £6.99

ISBN 978-190442435-2



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