

The Use of Mert Arık's Books in Philosophy Studies with Children

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Abstract

Philosophy education for children holds a significant place in the acquisition of 21st-century skills. Within the existing material framework, philosophy plays a significant role in cultivating individuals who can question, generate ideas, evaluate, compare, and engage in discussion. Consequently, individuals can develop their critical and creative thinking abilities as well as their problem-solving behavior. Considering that inquiry skills should be practiced during early childhood, philosophy education with children should also be started at an early age. Therefore, demonstrating how educators can implement such practices is necessary. This study was designed to serve as a resource for educators seeking to apply philosophy in their teaching. This study employed the document analysis technique, which is a qualitative research method. Several books by Mert Arık—one of the most widely read contemporary authors among elementary school students—were examined: *Ayvayı Yedik Müzesi*, *Benim Zürafam Uçabilir*, *Bu Kadar Tantana Yeter*, *Çantamdan Fil Çıktı*, *Dinozorunun Saklandığı Yer*, *Naneyi Yedik Lokantası*, and *Uzaya Giden Tren*. The storybooks were read and summarized by the researchers, and both text-based comprehension questions and questions suitable for philosophy education with children were identified. The findings revealed that the examined storybooks support children's philosophy studies.

Keywords: philosophical questions, elementary school students, storybook

Introduction

The importance of philosophy education for children has increased considerably in recent years. Offering philosophy education only at the high-school level indicates that the development of individuals' thinking skills begins too late. Therefore, it is believed that philosophy education should start in childhood (Kızıltan & Dombaycı, 2020). "The word 'philosophy' has entered Turkish from the Greek term *philosophia*. In philosophy, which means 'love of wisdom,' wisdom is above all kinds of knowledge—it means not being content with possessing knowledge, but by

engaging with it, reaching a higher understanding about the meaning and value of life” (Yılmaz Bilican, 2022, p. 26). Koç (2009) emphasized that, besides satisfying material needs, philosophy also fulfills human spiritual needs such as curiosity, doubt, learning, and the desire to understand the universe, one’s place within it, and one’s own value.

It should be acknowledged that philosophy serves as a formative path in one’s character development. Therefore, children should be introduced to philosophy as early as possible. A mind disciplined by philosophy from an early age filters social prejudices and stereotypical ideas like a sieve, guiding individuals toward truth and authenticity. Through such early mental training, philosophy cultivates ethical and aesthetic attitudes in children (Dirican, 2017).

The sense of curiosity inherent in philosophy, along with the human desire to understand the world, encourages individuals to generate questions (Özkan, 2020). Innate characteristics of children include curiosity, inquiry, the search for answers, and the desire to understand. Doing philosophy with children means guiding them in transforming their questions into conceptual discussions and deepening their reflections (Yılmaz Bilican, 2022). Following the questions they generate, refining those questions, and thinking within the established framework are essential elements of doing philosophy with children. Matthew Lipman institutionalized the “Philosophy for Children” (P4C) movement in the 1960s, based on the idea that philosophy should begin at an early age (Boyacı, Karadağ, & Gülenç, 2018; Özkan, 2020; Yılmaz Bilican, 2022). The purpose of doing philosophy with children is to help them develop thinking skills. In today’s world, education should move beyond transmitting fixed knowledge found in curricula and instead aim to nurture children as active learners who know how to think (Lipman, 2003).

Lipman’s main concern was that education in thinking skills was not being provided early enough. From the perspective of our country, it is either introduced too late or taught inadequately. Although this topic began to attract academic interest in the late 1960s, its importance has only recently been widely recognized (Tunç, 2017, p. 50). On the other hand, results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)—which measures not only science, mathematics, and reading skills but also higher-order thinking skills such as critical reasoning, synthesis, and analytical thinking—have shown that students in Turkey struggle with questions that require drawing inferences (Tunç, 2017). This finding provides a significant clue regarding the state of “thinking education” in Türkiye. Philosophy serves as a powerful tool for developing such education. Moreover, philosophy education with children plays a crucial role in fostering 21st-century skills such as critical thinking and problem solving (Tozduman Yaralı, 2023).

Philosophy offers children the opportunity to explore concepts, develop ideas, comprehend the world, and understand what is valuable, thereby allowing them to perceive themselves differently (Cin Şeker, 2022). Engaging in philosophy with children stimulates their curiosity and develops reasoning skills (Tozduman Yaralı, 2023). This method provides a practical, engaging, and inspiring way to awaken their sense of curiosity (Boyacı et al., 2018). For children to do so, they must be guided by a facilitator. The teacher’s role is not to transmit knowledge but to function as a guide who encourages inquiry through questions. According to Özdemir (2021), the method requires teachers who are competent in conducting philosophy sessions with children. Such an approach nurtures individuals who understand the modes of thinking specific to a discipline and can grasp its future topics and problems. Critical thinking, in this sense, involves thinking about one’s own thoughts in short, reflective thinking.

During philosophy sessions with children, teachers should avoid labeling students' views as right or wrong, allow sufficient time for reflection, pose follow-up and probing questions, reveal alternative perspectives, provide feedback, and ensure that the discussion remains focused. They should encourage students to comment on one another's ideas, promote questioning, assess the discussion, clearly articulate conversational rules, and establish a democratic learning environment in which everyone can express their thoughts freely (Akkocaoğlu Çayır, 2021; Tunç, 2017).

Studies conducted in Turkey based on this approach have examined the effects of philosophy education for children on students' social skills, cognitive and affective development, scientific inquiry, critical thinking, question generation, and creative thinking (Akan, 2022; Akkocaoğlu Çayır, 2015; Karadağ, 2023; Okur, 2008; Türksoy, 2020). In addition, several guidebooks have been published as a result of philosophy workshops with children, such as *Kaygıdan Kaçılır mı?* (Özdemir, 2019), *Öfkelenmemek Elde mi?* (Özdemir, 2019), *En İyisini Yapmak Mümkün mü?* (Özdemir, 2018), and *Kavga Çare Olur mu?* (Özdemir, 2018). Considering that philosophy education can begin in preschool, only a limited number of studies have explored the use of storybooks as a tool for philosophy education with elementary school children. Examples include research conducted using *The Little Prince* and Leo Lionni's storybooks (Demir Çelebi, 2017; Tozduman Yaralı, 2020).

In this context, the present study aims to provide a practical model for incorporating "Philosophy for Children" into the storybooks of Mert Arık—one of the most popular authors among today's elementary school students. This study, which will serve as a guide for classroom teachers, is considered significant in raising awareness of the importance of philosophy for children. Accordingly, sample questions will be developed for storybooks that can be used in philosophical activities with children. The study is expected to contribute to the field by offering a practical example of implementation that will enhance future philosophy-for-children studies. Furthermore, it has been determined that only a limited number of undergraduate and graduate-level courses on philosophy for children are currently available in Turkish higher-education institutions (Tozduman Yaralı, 2023). The findings of this study may therefore serve as a resource for such courses in higher education.

More research on philosophy with children is needed in Türkiye (Durmuş Çalışkan, 2022). Within this framework, the aim of the present study is to provide a practical model for integrating the storybooks of Mert Arık—one of the most widely read authors among elementary school students—into "Philosophy for Children" practices.

Purpose of the Study

In line with this aim, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What questions can be asked in Mert Arık's *Ayvayı Yedik Müzesi*?
2. What questions can be asked in *Benim Zürafam Uçabilir?*
3. What questions can be asked in *Bu Kadar Tantana Yeter?*
4. What questions can be asked in *Çantamdan Fil Çıktı?*

5. What questions can be asked in *Dinozorunun Saklandığı Yer?*
6. What questions can be asked in *Naneyi Yedik Lokantası?*
7. What questions can be asked in *Uzaya Giden Tren?*

Method

Research Model

This study employed document analysis technique, one of the qualitative research methods. Document analysis involves examining written materials that contain information about the phenomenon or phenomena under investigation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p. 187). Since this study aimed to examine Mert Arık's storybooks within the scope of Philosophy for Children, document analysis was used.

Data Source

Within the scope of the study, the following books by Mert Arık were analyzed: *Ayvayı Yedik Müzesi*, *Benim Zürafam Uçabilir*, *Bu Kadar Tantana Yeter*, *Çantamdan Fil Çıktı*, *Dinozorunun Saklandığı Yer*, *Naneyi Yedik Lokantası*, and *Uzaya Giden Tren*. Permission was obtained from the author to examine these books. The selection of the author's books was based on the criterion sampling method. The main principle of criterion sampling is to study all cases that meet a pre-determined set of criteria (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p. 112). The criterion in this study was the storybooks most frequently read by elementary-school students. To determine this, the best-selling storybooks on the website *Kitapyurdu.com* were reviewed. Mert Arık's storybooks were found to rank among the top seven best-selling children's storybooks (Kitapyurdu, 2024).

Data Collection Tool

To formulate the questions, previously published works within the field of Philosophy for Children were examined (Özdemir, 2019; Özdemir, 2021; Özdemir, 2022a; Özdemir, 2022b; Özdemir, 2023). The dialogues related to these questions were analyzed. In generating potential questions, Worley's (2010) method of posing "hidden" and "open" questions was used. The *hidden question* refers to the philosophical question intended to be explored throughout the session, whereas the *open question* carries traces of the hidden question. Based on the framework of the generated questions, possible answers that children might give were anticipated, and subsequent questions were prepared accordingly (Erdoğan, 2021).

In this study, summaries of the storybooks were first prepared. Considering the main idea, the key concept around which each story's plot was built was identified. Based on these concepts, philosophical questions were developed. For example, philosophical questions prepared in relation to the book *Ayvayı Yedik Müzesi* are presented below.

The book *Ayvayı Yedik Müzesi* tells the story of a protagonist who generates various ideas with a quince and explores the outcomes of these ideas.

Key Concept: Generating ideas.

Hidden Question: What is an idea?

Open Questions:

1. If you were in the character's place, what could you do with a quince?

Possible answers: (jam, dessert, rice ...)

2. What makes an object stand out from the ordinary?

Possible answers: (producing creative ideas, being attention-grabbing ...)

3. What do you mean by a "different idea"?

Possible answers: (something never created before something unique ...)

4. Why are other people's thoughts about our ideas important?

Possible answers: (they can contribute to our ideas; we can achieve better results ...)

5. Does every idea lead a person to success?

Possible answers: (if we reach our goal, it leads to success; if not, it does not ...)

6. What factors led the protagonist to success?

Possible answers: (thinking, consulting others, being organized ...)

Data Analysis

In document analysis, units such as words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, characters, themes, and content are examined (Baş & Akturan, 2013). In this study, the storybooks were read and summarized by the researchers, and both text-based comprehension questions and questions to be used in Philosophy for Children education were identified.

Validity and Reliability

Miles and Huberman (1994) classified the data analysis process into three stages: data processing, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data processing stage, the researcher reviews and codes the preliminary data. While coding, the researcher identifies and codes the concepts and themes relevant to the research problem. The resulting data set—simplified and aligned with the research focus—is then visualized in the second stage through various graphs, tables, and figures. In the final stage, the concepts, themes, and relationships that emerge are interpreted, compared, and verified. In this way, it becomes possible to ensure the meaningfulness and validity of the research findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p. 223).

In the data processing phase of this study, the researchers read the storybooks, and summaries of the books were prepared. Key concepts were identified, and questions were developed accordingly. In the second stage, the questions were written down, interpreted, compared, and verified. Questions on which consensus could not be reached were removed from the set. Subsequently, the remaining questions were submitted to an expert who teaches the undergraduate course *Philosophy with Children*. Revisions were made to the questions based on the expert's feedback.

Results

1. Ayvayı Yedik Müzesi (The Museum of the Quince We Ate)

The book *Ayvayı Yedik Müzesi* illustrates the outcomes of the protagonist's ability to generate various ideas. It shows what a student, encouraged by their grandmother, can accomplish.

Summary: The protagonist lives in the town of Sarıkayalar with his mother, father, sibling, and grandmother. His grandmother, a retired teacher, is industrious, active, and creative. She has engaged in various activities such as collecting spoons, writing books, knitting, and running a business. One day, she decides to take a train trip around the world, a journey that will unfold without a set plan. Before boarding the train, she gives her grandchild a quince and asks him to think of ideas about what could be done with it. After she departs, the protagonist tries to generate ideas about how the quince could be used, seeking hints from his mother and grandmother but finding none. Eventually, he eats the quince and decides to open *The Museum of the Quince We Ate* using its seeds. He invites people to send the seeds of the quinces they have eaten along with ideas about what could be done with them. This initiative quickly attracts attention, and many people respond. Among the submissions, a pianist writes that they would give a concert at the museum about the quince, a writer says they would write a book, and a teacher suggests sending an activity, among others. When the grandmother returns two years later from her travels, she is delighted with her grandchild's success. She also donates the seeds from the quince she ate and suggests planting all the seeds from the museum in the ground.

To assess whether students have understood the story, the following comprehension questions can be asked:

1. What kind of personality does the protagonist's grandmother have?
2. What did the grandmother ask the protagonist to do before setting out on her world tour?
3. What steps did the protagonist take to fulfill his grandmother's request?
4. Was the protagonist successful in accomplishing what his grandmother asked? Please explain.
5. How did other people contribute to the protagonist's museum project?

To continue the discussion, the following questions can be used:

1. If you were in the protagonist's place, what could you do with a quince?
Possible answers: (jam, dessert, rice ...)
2. What makes an object stand out from the ordinary?
Possible answers: (creating innovative ideas, being attention-grabbing ...)
3. What do you mean by a "different idea"?
Possible answers: (something never created before something distinct from others ...)
4. Why are other people's thoughts about our ideas important?
Possible answers: (they can contribute to our ideas; we can achieve better results ...)
5. Does every idea lead a person to success?
Possible answers: (if we reach our goal, it leads to success; if not, it does not ...)
6. What factor led the protagonist to success?
Possible answers: (thinking, consulting others, being organized ...)

2. Benim Zürafam Uçabilir (My Giraffe Can Fly)

The book *Benim Zürafam Uçabilir* offers children ways to explore what they can accomplish when they push the limits of their imagination. In this story, we clearly observe what a student can achieve when supported and motivated by their teacher.

Summary: The story begins when a teacher asks the students to draw a picture of a giraffe. As the author notes, what matters is to imagine, to draw, and to take action. Although the teacher asked them to draw a giraffe, Moni could not draw anything. In fact, Moni loves to draw and enjoys playing with colors, but for some reason could not manage to draw a giraffe. Seeing how upset Moni is, the teacher tells her that how she draws does not matter—that everyone’s imagination and drawings can be different—and that she is free to draw her giraffe in any way she likes. Excited by this encouragement, Moni begins drawing multiple giraffes. Her drawings become so popular that they even appear in the news. There are giraffes that can fly, giraffes that travel to space, and even giraffes that pilot airplanes.

To assess whether students have understood the story, the following comprehension questions may be asked:

1. How does the story begin?
2. What picture does the teacher ask the students to draw?
3. Why was Moni unable to draw the picture her teacher asked for?
4. How did the teacher encourage Moni to draw?
5. What kinds of giraffes did Moni draw?
6. If you were to draw a giraffe, what would it look like?

To extend the discussion, the following questions can be used:

1. Can an animal be drawn in only one way?
2. Is something that looks beautiful to us also beautiful to everyone else?
3. Does the idea of beauty vary from person to person?
4. What does it mean to be talented?
5. Can we improve our talents?
6. When we think we cannot do something, is it right to give up?
7. What did the teacher do to help Moni succeed?
8. How can someone be encouraged to achieve something?

3. Bu Kadar Tantana Yeter (Enough of This Fuss!)

The book *Bu Kadar Tantana Yeter* is a story aimed at developing children’s imagination. The author seeks to convey the concept of the fictional world, doing so through the act of reading itself. Addressing mental activities such as imagination, the world of fiction, and thought, the book lends itself to evaluation from the perspective of the philosophy of mind. The story depicts the excitement of a child learning to read and embarking on a journey with a flying dinosaur. From the moment the child opens the book, their friendship with the dinosaur continues throughout the story, taking them to different places and introducing new friends.

Summary: Atlas, who has just learned to read, begins reading his first book with great excitement. When he opens the cover, he immediately accepts the idea of embarking on adventures with a

dinosaur, though he has no idea how these adventures will unfold. His friend Dino tells him about the world of fiction, explaining that in this world anything is possible and that it is far more boundless than he can imagine. Together, they begin this adventure-filled journey. After crossing mountains and hills, they dive into the sea, where even an octopus sings songs. In the world of fiction, Atlas realizes that animals can talk, colorful creatures exist, and even an octopus can give a concert. After his journey with Dino, he eagerly looks forward to the new adventures awaiting him.

To determine whether students have understood the story, the following comprehension questions may be asked:

1. Which living creatures are mentioned in the story?
2. Which of these animals actually exist in our world today?
3. How did the child's friendship with the dinosaur begin?
4. What kind of place is the fictional world described in the story?
5. What places did the child visit and which creatures did he speak with?

To continue the discussion, the following questions can be used:

1. Does a "world of fiction" really exist? What kind of place might it be?
2. Which is more captivating—fiction or reality? Please explain.
3. What is the difference between fiction and reality?
4. What are the benefits of fiction?
5. Can fiction overlap with reality?

4.Çantamdan Fil Çıktı (An Elephant Came Out of My Bag)

The book *Çantamdan Fil Çıktı* shows children that they can create and play various games using their imagination. It also encourages them to make their actions more enjoyable by turning them into games.

Summary: The teacher comes to class with a game bag and asks the students to guess what is inside. The students brainstorm and give various answers such as pencil, notebook, book, and apple. The teacher then asks them to use a concept to generate ideas. For example, using the word *apple*, the students come up with phrases like *apple cookie*, *apple jam*, and *apple juice*. The teacher asks them to design a game for the end of the year using their imagination. One student says that an elephant came out of their bag and begins pretending to walk, run, and drink water like an elephant. Other students also use their imagination to turn their ideas into games—reading while jumping, reading with funny voices, reading like a rap singer, playing snowball without snow, playing basketball without a ball, playing football without a ball, and jumping rope without a rope. By turning everything, they do into a game, they have fun together. They decided to hold an *Inter-School Basketball Without a Ball Tournament*. Using their creativity, students invent games, play them repeatedly, and become skilled at them. As they master the games, they begin improving them by adding elements from their imagination. Later, they decide to organize an event called the *Imagination Olympics*, where every child can participate with a game of their own creation. These games can be modified versions of existing games, games with new rules, or completely original ones that have never been played before.

To assess whether students have understood the story, the following comprehension questions may be asked:

1. What did the teacher bring to class?
2. What answers did the students give when the teacher asked what might be inside the game bag?
3. What kinds of games did the students create?
4. What was the name of the tournament they organized, and what did it include?

To continue the discussion, the following questions can be used:

1. Does imagination have any limits?
2. What are the benefits of imagining things?
3. Can games be changed through imagination?
4. Is playing a game an activity with fixed rules?
5. What are the advantages of changing a game's rules?
6. What higher-order skills do children demonstrate while playing games?

5. Dinozorunun Saklandığı Yer (Where My Dinosaur Hid)

The book *Dinozorunun Saklandığı Yer* is a story that aims to develop children's imagination and creative thinking skills. By pushing the limits of imagination, the book can be evaluated in terms of the philosophy of mind, particularly around the question, "Is the mind separate from the body?" The story begins with a teacher surprising their students. The author explores what children, who are in the process of learning to read and visiting the library for the first time, can imagine.

Summary: At the İncir Çekirdeği School, a teacher tells the students one morning that there will be a surprise awaiting them. The teacher explains that once they learn to read, they will encounter something that will make them very happy. They will be able to go anywhere they wish—to the poles, the deserts, outer space, or the oceans—and while living out their dreams, they will not be alone but accompanied by friends of their choosing. Learning that they will meet elephants, dinosaurs, penguins, giraffes, and various other creatures, the students eagerly await the day of the surprise. Motivated by this excitement, the class continues working for months and finally learns to read in January. When the teacher takes them to the place of the surprise, they see a sign that says *Library*. The teacher introduces them to the library, explaining that through books they can travel anywhere, make new friends, and have new adventures with every reading. After explaining the surprise, the teacher leaves them alone with the books. Atlas, who will make his first dinosaur friend in the story he chooses, begins his adventure with great excitement.

To determine whether students have understood the story, the following comprehension questions may be asked:

1. What is the teacher's surprise?
2. What is the teacher's purpose?
3. Did the teacher achieve this purpose?
4. What aspect of the library did the teacher aim to highlight?
5. What place names are mentioned in the story?

To extend the discussion, the following questions can be asked:

1. Is it possible to learn about a place without visiting it?
2. What are the differences between visiting a place and learning about it by listening, watching, or reading?
3. Would you be more excited to see a dinosaur or to learn about one?

4. Who knows more—the one who travels a lot or the one who reads a lot?

6. Naneyi Yedik Lokantası (The We're in Trouble Restaurant)

The book *Naneyi Yedik Lokantası* offers children ways to nourish their enterprising spirit through imagination. The author seeks to show what can be achieved with the resources at hand, aiming to open new perspectives for children with the message: “For eyes that can truly see, nothing is ordinary.” The story tells what Güneş was able to create with a handful of mint given to her by her grandmother.

Summary: Before leaving for a world tour, Güneş’s grandmother gives her a bunch of mint as a gift. Realizing that her grandmother, who had previously given her sister only a quince for a purpose, must also have a reason for this gift, Güneş begins to wonder what she can do with the mint. Her sister suggests that she recall her memories with their grandmother, as inspiration may arise from them. Güneş’s grandmother is a very creative person who always comes up with unique ideas. One day, with the help of a dog trained by a truffle expert, she opens a mushroom restaurant. She begins finding mushrooms with the dog and serving them in the restaurant, which soon attracts more customers. The grandmother continually revitalizes the restaurant with new ideas, such as “hot meals with cold jokes.” Reflecting on these memories, Güneş recalls another of her grandmother’s ideas—her game of renaming people with different, funny names. This memory gives Güneş an idea. The next day, she goes to the restaurant with a bunch of mint and eats it. Realizing that idioms can have different meanings, she explains her idea—*we’re in trouble* (literally “we’ve eaten the mint”)—to her mother. She decides to rename the restaurant *Naneyi Yedik Lokantası (The We’re in Trouble Restaurant)* and gives the dishes creative names, such as “Beans with Mint and Uranus Sauce.” She writes a letter inviting everyone to the restaurant to eat a bit of mint and rename the dishes. Thanks to her idea, the restaurant regains its popularity. When her grandmother returns from her world tour, she expresses how much she loves her granddaughter’s idea, saying that they should take this new restaurant to every corner of the world and invite everyone to share their table.

To determine whether students have understood the story, the following comprehension questions may be asked:

1. What gift did the grandmother give to Güneş?
2. What was the grandmother’s purpose?
3. What did Güneş do with the gift she received?
4. What clue did Güneş’s sister give her to help her find an idea?
5. Did the grandmother achieve her goal?

To continue the discussion, the following questions can be asked:

1. Is it possible to come up with new ideas despite limited resources?
2. Is it necessary to have all the resources to succeed?
3. Does guiding others toward a goal lead to success?
4. What are the duties of a leader?
5. What responsibilities did the protagonist take on to achieve success?
6. What can leaders do to fulfill their responsibilities?

7.Uzaya Giden Tren (The Train to Space)

The book *Uzaya Giden Tren* encourages children to use their creativity and demonstrates that great results can be achieved through teamwork. The story begins when a teacher asks the students to write a story. When some struggle, the teacher encourages them, explaining that by working together and cooperating effectively, they can create a beautiful story in which everyone contributes.

Summary: The story begins when a teacher asks the students to write a story. The teacher assures them that everyone can write and offers a starting point: *train*. Seeing that the students are struggling, the teacher suggests that they view the task as teamwork and collaboration. The students come together and start sharing ideas. Many ideas emerge, but they especially like the one about a train going off the rails—and even better, a train traveling to space. After deciding on this, the students go on a word hunt, collecting and storing words from everywhere they can think of. To improve their writing, they start following a list of practice activities—such as writing short stories using five unrelated words. Once they finish their practice, they search for inspiration. Finally, their story ideas are ready. They imagine a journey composed of different stories, like the cars of a train. Anyone can add their own story or get off at any stop. Those who add their story to the train will win a ticket to space. The first story about boarding the *Train to Space* will be written by Moni’s class, and thus a long train journey begins, one to which everyone can contribute their own story.

To determine whether students have understood the story, the following comprehension questions may be asked:

1. What places are mentioned in the story?
2. What did the teacher ask the students to do?
3. Why did the teacher describe this as teamwork?
4. What was the condition for winning a train ticket?
5. How did the idea of a train going to space come about?

To continue the discussion, the following questions can be asked:

1. What can be done to accomplish a task?
2. Should a task be completed individually or collaboratively?
3. What are the characteristics of tasks that require cooperation?
4. What should be considered when working collaboratively?
5. If conflict arises, does cooperation end?

Discussion

Mert Arık’s storybooks fall within the scope of epistemology (the philosophy of knowledge) because they invite the protagonists to reason and form ideas about specific topics. According to Özdemir (2021), the word *idea* is used to refer to the mental representation of reality, and the way this representation is formed constitutes one of the fundamental debates of epistemology.

In Philosophy for Children (P4C) practices, various materials such as children’s literature and works of art are often used (Tozduman Yaralı, 2020). In a study conducted by Çiner and Erginer (2023), it was observed that the children’s books examined frequently addressed topics that approached the problems of the world with sensitivity. These topics were broadly interpreted as

transforming human beings into living creatures that respect all forms of life; creating a planet free of war, environmental destruction, and child death; imagining a world without racism, xenophobia, religious or gender discrimination, violence, or terrorism; and building a livable world based on justice, equality, and happiness. In this study as well, Mert Arık's books can be used in Philosophy for Children activities through the questions designed to foster the development of students' 21st-century skills.

Conducting philosophy sessions in the classroom allows students to express their own ideas and evaluate the perspectives of their peers. In this way, students gain experience comparing different viewpoints and participating in discussion. In this regard, Tunç (2017) notes that doing philosophy in the classroom provides students with discussion experience at an early age, helps them share responsibility, and teaches them to respect differing opinions. According to Özdemir (2021), the philosophy-for-children process aims to develop children's inquiry, reasoning, and conceptualization skills by focusing on concepts and questions that are open to discussion. Indeed, Mert Arık's storybooks also provide opportunities for children to generate diverse ideas.

Both theoretical and practical studies have shown that philosophical activities conducted with children are highly beneficial from multiple perspectives. These benefits include the development of critical thinking, social skills, and language skills (Cin Şeker, 2022; Akkocaoğlu Çayır & Akkoyunlu, 2016; Dirican, 2023; Karadağ & Demirtaş, 2018; Tunç, 2017). Similarly, Özkan (2020) points out that philosophy for children helps students think collaboratively, avoid copying others' ideas, generate their own thoughts, question and defend them, develop tolerance toward new perspectives, enhance critical thinking skills, foster emotional growth, stimulate creativity, and deepen their relationships with peers and adults. Dirican (2017) further states that philosophy enables the child to gain a sense of free will, distinguish between right and wrong, maintain the mental faculties necessary for critical thinking, and feel empowered to confront whatever hinders their existence and self-formation.

As the importance of developing 21st-century skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving grows, philosophy-for-children courses are increasingly being incorporated into educational processes ranging from preschool to graduate levels (Tozduman Yaralı, 2023). The protagonists in Mert Arık's stories are also children. These books center on children's free thinking, imagination, and creative activities such as developing ideas and inventing games. Therefore, their content can contribute to the development of skills such as idea generation, inquiry, and critical and creative thinking within philosophy-for-children practices.

Other skills examined in studies on philosophy education for children include cognitive and affective skills. In a study by Akkocaoğlu Çayır and Akkoyunlu (2016) conducted with third-grade students, cognitive improvements were observed in understanding philosophy, philosophical questions, and the characteristics of philosophers; in relating concepts to daily life; in identifying relationships among concepts; in recognizing errors in reasoning; and in thinking from different perspectives. In the affective domain, students developed an appreciation for philosophy and an increased awareness of philosophical concepts. Similarly, Mehdiyev and Tozduman Yaralı (2020) found that the philosophy-for-children program positively influenced seventh-grade students' attitudes toward human values. In Mert Arık's storybooks as well, there are no elements that contradict human values. Instead, the stories portray the successes of reflective, thinking individuals and treat these with tolerance and admiration.

Conclusion and Suggestion

This study was designed to serve as a resource for educators seeking to apply philosophy in their teaching. Several books by Mert Arık—one of the most widely read contemporary authors among elementary school students—were examined: *Ayvayı Yedik Müzesi*, *Benim Zürafam Uçabilir*, *Bu Kadar Tantana Yeter*, *Çantamdan Fil Çıktı*, *Dinozorunun Saklandığı Yer*, *Naneyi Yedik Lokantası*, and *Uzaya Giden Tren*. The storybooks were read and summarized by the researchers, and both text-based comprehension questions and questions suitable for philosophy education with children were identified. The findings revealed that the examined storybooks support children's philosophy studies.

Certain issues within the current education system—such as rote memorization and the overuse of multiple-choice testing—have weakened student-centered learning. Philosophy can make a positive contribution to overcoming these deficiencies (Koyuncu & Demircan, 2022).

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations can be made:

- In this study, questions were developed that can be used in philosophy education for children through Mert Arık's storybooks. Future studies can implement philosophy-for-children activities using these books and the questions developed here, and the effects of such implementations can be investigated.
- The philosophical questions developed in this study can be administered to elementary school students, and the students' responses can be used to revise and refine the questions.

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