

Philosophical Chairs

Active listening, critical thinking, and respectful dialogue (even when we disagree about something) are learned skills. Everyone can learn them, and no one can perfect them without practice. Philosophical Chairs is designed to help us develop these skills while also learning about the opera.

You might find these statements challenging—and you might find it challenging to talk with someone who has a different answer from your own. That’s okay! Take your time with each statement, embrace uncertainty, and know that changing your mind when you learn new information is a sign of strength, not weakness. Before you begin your discussion, take some time to review the rules of engagement:

Be sure you understand the statement. If something is unclear, ask!

Face each other. Body language helps show that you’re listening carefully and respectfully.

Only one speaker at a time. Everyone will get their turn to speak.

Think before you speak. Be sure that what you’re going to say is what you really mean.

Summarize the previous person’s comments before adding your own.

Address ideas, not the person. Challenging ideas or statements is good only if we respect the individuality and inherent value of the person who expressed them.

Three before me. To make sure everyone’s voice is heard, you may not make another comment until three others have shared their thoughts.

The Statements

- One’s crush must be kept a secret.
- A secret crush is charming.
- Everyone has a duty to protect their homeland, above all else.
- There is no crime worse than treason.
- Deceit is harmless.
- Everyone longs for affection.
- Love can be tamed.
- You choose who you love.
- Jealousy is an innate human emotion.
- A grieving heart cannot be consoled.
- You must listen to your heart.
- The heart tells no lie.
- Nothing in life can separate true love.
- Whom we love, and how we love, is deterministic.
- Love is rational.
- Everyone has a destiny.
- You can change your fate.
- Love is at the core of a life well lived.
- At its core, every story is a love story.