

## 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

- You should listen to your mind, not your heart.
- Human nature never changes.
- Knowledge is power.
- Anything can be solved through logic and reason.
- Happiness should be one’s goal in life.
- Everyone has the ability to become a better person.
- Everything happens for a reason.
- Morals are absolute.
- We are a product of our environment.
- You can never be 100% certain of anything.
- Power should be shared, not held by one person.
- Humans all share a basic goodness.
- Vengeance can be justified.
- Life is full of trials.
- Nothing can prepare you for life’s trials.
- Chivalry is dead.
- Weathering a storm together is always better than going it alone.
- Happiness is around every corner.
- Those who are true and faithful will always be rewarded.