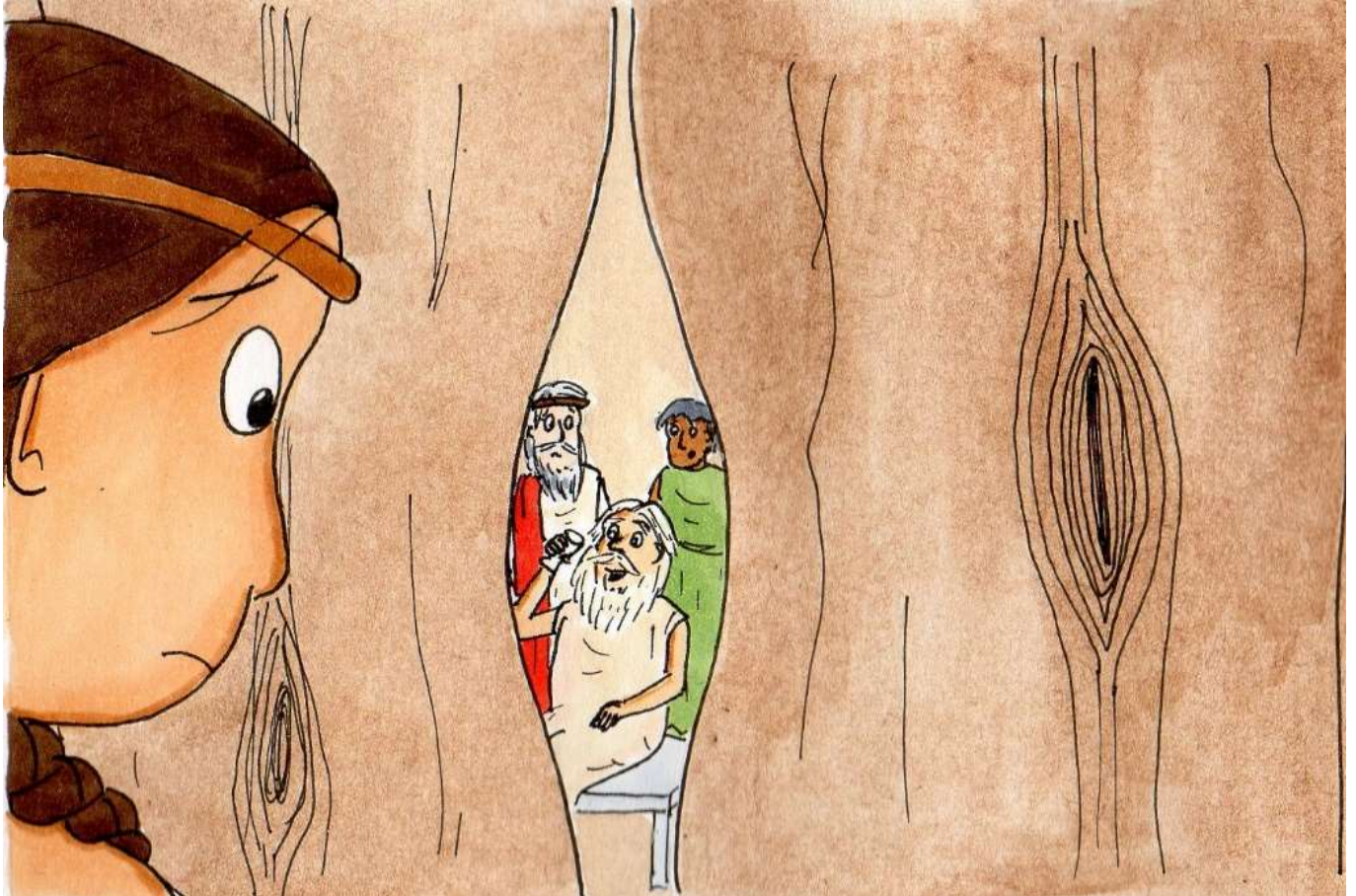


PROLOGUE

DELPHI

Say it like this!
Del-fee



Delphi watched as the old man brought the cup to his lips and hesitated for just a second. The drink was made from something called hemlock. It was a poison, and it would kill him.

But this is a bad place to start a story. True, it was an important moment – a moment that has been talked about for almost two and half thousand years, and probably will be for much longer than that. It was a moment that changed the world after all. It was the beginning of a much bigger story.

However, the story we want to tell isn't really about poison or death sentences, and it definitely isn't really about old men. The story we are going to tell is about the girl who is watching through a crack in a door, trying not to cry, and who certainly shouldn't have been there.

Delphi's story started in lots of places, but one of them is outside the law courts in the city of Athens in Ancient Greece. It is a sunny morning, a month or so before, where she is doing what she does best: arguing.



“What do you mean I can’t come in?”

Picture a stressed looking soldier, who was rather irritated to be shouted at by little girls. He had been on guard duty all morning and was a bit too sweaty for comfort. He banged his spear on the ground threateningly.

“You’re just a child! Of course you can’t come in!”

“Well, why not? What is it about being a child that means I can’t be in the trial?”

The guard sighed. Two gentlemen walked past Delphi without a glance, and the soldier nodded to them as he let them through. Delphi looked daggers into the back of their heads.

“Well?” Delphi demanded, stamping her foot without realising it. “Are you going to let me in? What if I just watch?”

The soldier looked down at her, his helmet catching the early morning sun.

“No! Clear off!”

“But what’s the difference between being a child and being an adult, really? I know stuff! I know loads of stupid adults who you’ll probably let in! Why shouldn’t you let me in?”

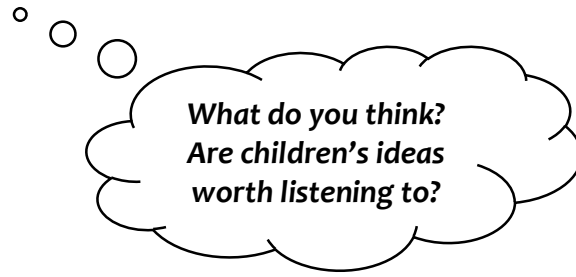
“Not allowed! Now clear off before I lose my temper!”

“But you’re not listening!” Delphi moaned. “Children’s ideas can be just as good as an adult’s! We’re worth listening to!”

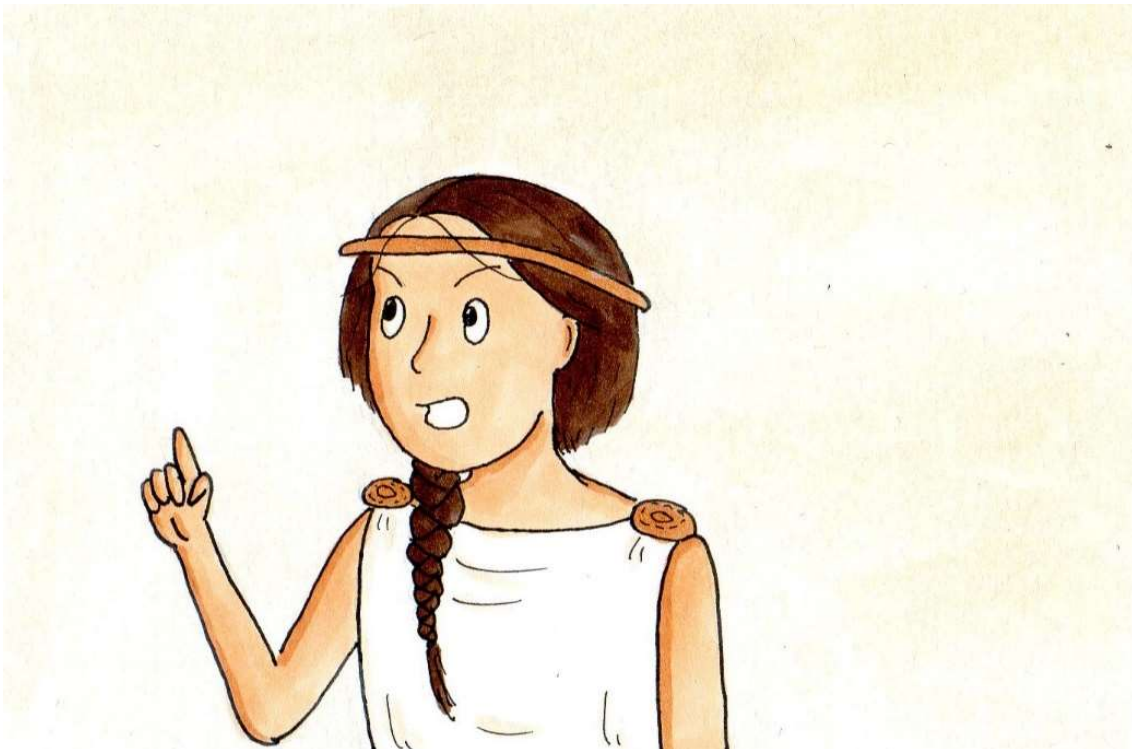
“No, you’re not.”

“Yes, we are!”

Now, Delphi often finds herself in situations like this – and sometimes she just doesn’t know what to think next. It can be hard to think of brilliant ideas by yourself, after all. So she’s going to need your help. When Delphi comes across a problem or a question like this, try to have a think about it yourself. Perhaps you’ll give Delphi a great idea!



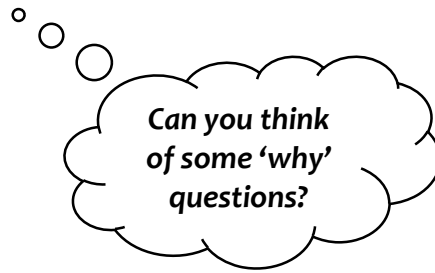
We all know that children's ideas can be brilliant things of course, but Delphi has been having this argument for some time and doesn't seem to be getting anywhere. To start to understand what's going on here, we might need to take a closer look at this fierce looking girl, with tightly bound braided hair and mud on her bare feet.



Delphi was, in many ways, a typical girl of Athens. Like all girls, she didn't go to school or have a job but spent her time at home, learning how to clean, sew, cook and generally look after her father's house. At least, that's what she was supposed to be doing. In fact, what Delphi really did was get out of the house at every possible opportunity and ask questions.

Oh, the questions. Delphi had a fearsome reputation for asking questions. Most children, as they are growing up, go through a stage where they like to ask a lot of questions, and the favourite one is usually: why? Why do I have to eat mushrooms, Daddy? Why is your hair going away Daddy? Why is that dog doing a wee on your foot, Daddy? Delphi's daddy was a patient man, but he was happy to turn a blind eye to Delphi's wanderings outside the house if it only got her away from him, so he could think straight for a minute. Delphi had never got past the age of asking questions, and never seemed to be satisfied with the answers she got either.

There seemed to be no end to the 'why's. Delphi bombarded him with 'why' questions like an attacking army. Her dad often wondered how many more 'why' questions there could be.



When Delphi was two years old, her first word, of course, had been: why? They were in the market at the time, and her father had been asking her to put her clothes back on.

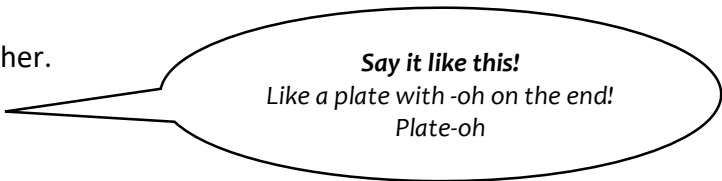
When Delphi was five years old, she had refused to share her toy animals with another child, because they couldn't think of a good enough reason why she should.

When Delphi was seven years old, she had asked a soldier whether her father should be arrested because "he said a rude word when he dropped a jar on his foot."

And now, Delphi is nine years old, and stomping away from the guard like she was treading on a tiny invading army.

"No luck then?" her friend asked her.

"Shut up, Plato," Delphi replied.



The two children stood and watched the queues of men walking into the courtroom. It was a large and impressive building, covered in statues of many of the Greek gods and decorated with bright paint. People had come from far and wide to join the trial today. It was where the people decided whether a criminal was guilty – and what the punishment should be if he was.

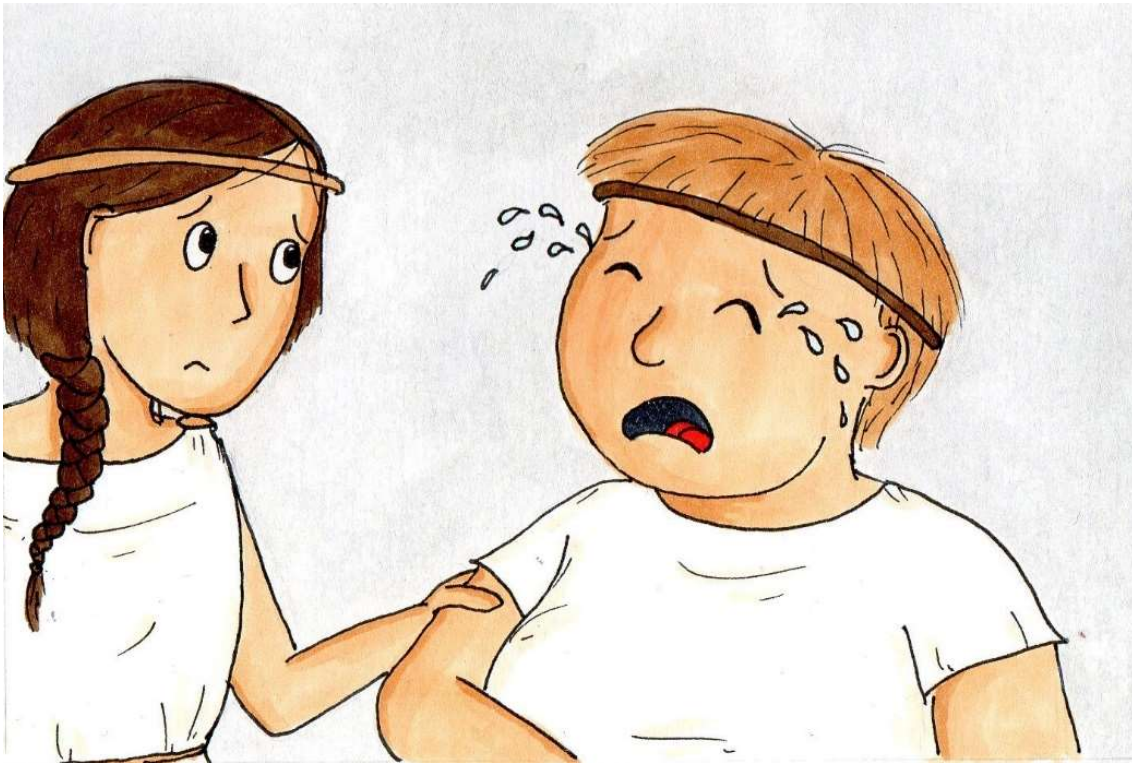
Delphi kicked a stone as hard as she could. It was so irritating! Why couldn't they just let her in?

So perhaps while Delphi wonders what to do next, we should take a look at her friend, who is currently rather nervously hovering behind her. The first thing to note is that despite being perhaps only eight years

old and certainly smaller than Delphi, he is surprisingly wide. He looks like a little barrel on legs and that possibly he's had some trouble getting stuck in doorways in the recent past. You might think that this would make him strong and useful in a fight, but no, look past his thick arms and legs, and notice his wobbling lip, and dripping nose. The best he could do is to force someone into a corner and blow his nose on them.

Delphi turned around to find that Plato was crying in a rather loud, annoying way.

"What's the matter? People are staring at us!" Delphi moved a bit closer to try and comfort him but wasn't prepared for the hysterical wail that she got in response:



"I don't feel very well and they've taken my teacher away and they're putting him on trial and they're going to find him guilty and they'll put him in prison and they might kill him and they won't let us in and I don't know what to do and I don't feel very well!" He seemed to take a deep breath then, and looked like he was gearing up for another good bawl, so Delphi put her hand over his mouth. This had the same effect on him as trying to stop a large burp coming out, and he very nearly exploded.

Why is Plato so upset?

"Quiet!" she said, though not unkindly. "Did you say your teacher's trial lasts all day?"

Delphi the Philosopher

The boy nodded, gulping a few times. Delphi thought for a moment.

“Who is it? On trial?” she asked, but she already knew the answer.

“S... Socrates,” whispered Plato.

Say it like this!
Soh-kra-tees

Delphi nodded. Of course, she had heard of him. Who hadn't?



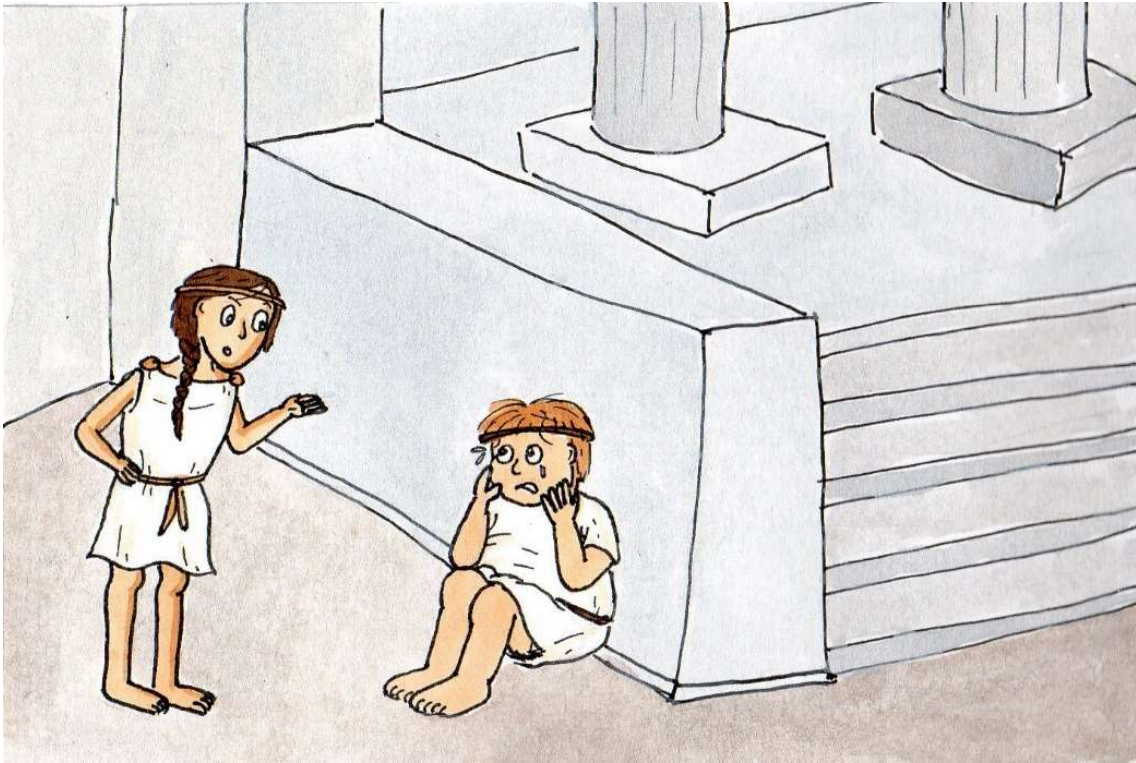
Socrates was one of the most famous men in all of Athens. His life and his story are still famous even today.

He had been around for as long as Delphi could remember, always on the streets or in the marketplace, talking to people. The strange thing about Socrates was that he didn't seem to have a proper job, or work for anyone important, or even do anything particularly important. He would just talk to people as they passed – and he would talk to anyone, about anything. He would ask soldiers about whether they should follow their orders. He would ask slaves what they would do if they were free. He would ask dogs if they preferred being scratched under their ears or on their belly. He would ask everything, to everyone. And when he spoke, people listened.



Delphi remembered the first time she saw him. She had been a little girl then, and she had been shopping with her grandmother. While she was buying all the figs, olives and fruit that they needed, Delphi had spent the time watching this strange man who was speaking with a group of other men gathered round him. The first thing she had noticed was that he was quite horrifyingly ugly. He looked like he had agreed to swap faces with a pig at some point in his life, and hadn't even checked beforehand whether it was a particularly good-looking pig. His white scruffy beard looked like several families of spiders had tried to set up home on his chin. His nose was huge with nostrils like two enormous caves and his cheeks were so puffy and fat he looked like he'd been hit in the face with a dinner plate. In fact, Delphi couldn't take her eyes off him.

She never got the chance to talk to him herself because when she asked her dad about it, he had muttered something about 'corrupting the young' and told her to stay away from him. Not that she stopped being interested. In fact, for several weeks afterwards Delphi had taken to wearing a fake beard and strolling around her house asking anyone who visited difficult questions like what spoons meant. She had eventually lost the beard but had never quite lost the curiosity.



Delphi gave Plato a half-hearted pat on the back. At least the crying was a bit quieter now.

“I can’t believe Socrates has been arrested!” Delphi said, kicking up some dust. “He’s a good person, isn’t he? I’ve never heard of him doing anything bad.”

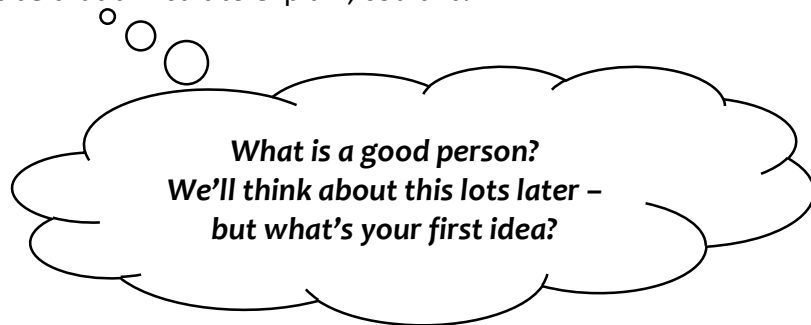
Plato nodded, still fighting back tears.

“I think so. But he never did.”

“What?”

“I mean,” Plato took a deep breath and his voice became a bit less wobbly. “That was what he always wanted to do. Become a good person. But he said he never worked out how to do it.”

Delphi thought about this. It seemed rather odd. She was pretty confident she knew how to be a good person. She imagined what it must be like to be on trial, to have to prove you were a good person to the whole city. It couldn’t be that difficult to explain, could it?



Delphi shook her head. This was getting them nowhere.

“Come on, enough hanging about. Follow me.” Delphi started pacing back towards the law courts.

“Where are we going?” Plato cried, running to keep up with her.

“I’m not hanging around here, not knowing what’s going on! We’re going to break in!”

Delphi the Philosopher

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The details of Socrates' life and trial are drawn from Plato's dialogues *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo* (found in: *The Last Days of Socrates*, Penguin Classics, 2003).

Details of life in ancient Athens are drawn from several sources, most notably *The World of Athens* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). Also invaluable was *The Hemlock Cup* by Bettany Hughes (Vintage, 2011). *Delphi the Philosopher* is fictional but has been written to at least be consistent with historical events and practices. Any errors in that regard are my own.