

Zhuangzi and the butterfly

This puzzle comes from a book called, 'Just Think', by Philip West.

Each puzzle in the book starts with an argument between twins, Philip and Phoebe. They rarely agree on anything and always believe themselves to be correct.

From learning about the 4Cs, we know to be caring when our opinions differ. Read or listen to their argument, think about their disagreement, and make up your own mind.

The other day, Phoebe was reading the story in a book of Chinese philosophy:

Once upon a time a Chinese philosopher called Zhuangzi, tired out from all his thinking, sat down in his garden in the warm sun and started to doze. Soon he was fast asleep and dreaming.

He dreamed he was a beautiful butterfly, visiting flowers in the sunlit garden and sucking their nectar. Eventually, he grew tired from all his flying, so he settled down on a nice green leaf in the warm sun and started to doze.

Soon he was fast asleep and dreaming. He dreamed he was a human philosopher called Zhuangzi, sitting in his garden.

Zhuangzi woke up feeling really confused. He did not know who he was! Was he really the human philosopher Zhuangzi who had dreamed of being a butterfly? Or was he really a butterfly dreaming about being Zhuangzi?

'Silly man!' said Philip. 'I never get confused about whether I'm dreaming or not. Dreams are totally different to real life.'

'No, they aren't, retorted Phoebe. I often can't tell I'm dreaming until I wake up. Anyway how can you be sure you aren't dreaming

at the moment? Maybe you'll wake up in a minute and you'll still be tucked up in bed!

'Right! So, I suppose you can't tell whether this room is real or not? It looks real enough to me. See! If you tap the walls, they're solid.'

'Maybe not,' said Phoebe thoughtfully. 'Perhaps the room is just part of my dream. If so, when I wake up it'll disappear.'

'Sisters!' muttered Philip in despair, wandering off to play with his computer.

- Who is right Philip or Phoebe?
- Is there any way you can be *absolutely sure* you're not dreaming at the moment?
- Is there any way you can be *absolutely sure* the world you see around you is real?
- What other questions are you thinking about?