

Philosophy reading list

Here is a list of suggested reading that will prepare you very well for the A-Level course.

[Sophie's world, Jostein Gaarder](#) –

When 14-year-old Sophie encounters a mysterious mentor who introduces her to philosophy, mysteries deepen in her own life. Why does she keep getting postcards addressed to another girl? Who is the other girl? And who, for that matter, is Sophie herself? To solve the riddle, she uses her new knowledge of philosophy, but the truth is far stranger than she could have imagined.

A phenomenal worldwide bestseller, SOPHIE'S WORLD sets out to draw teenagers into the world of Socrates, Descartes, Spinoza, Hegel and all the great philosophers. A brilliantly original and fascinating story with many twists and turns, it raises profound questions about the meaning of life and the origin of the universe.

[The Puzzle of God, Peter Vardy](#) –

A clear, well-written guide to philosophical thinking about God. Starting with the question of what it means to say we believe in God, and looking at the nature of truth, Peter Vardy goes on to examine ideas about God and their influence on Christian thinking.

Peter Vardy takes the reader through the arguments, using amusing illustrations and analogies. He writes for the lay person or student, not assuming any specialist knowledge, and not imposing any particular view.

[The Puzzle of Ethics, Peter Vardy](#) –

This popular introduction to the subject of ethics poses vital contemporary questions and explores the approach of leading thinkers.

The authors take the reader, step by step, through the complex arguments on issues such as animal and human rights, environmental ethics and the morality of war.

[The Problems of Philosophy, Bertrand Russell](#) –

'Is there any knowledge in the world which is so certain that no reasonable man could doubt it?' Philosophy is the attempt to answer such ultimate questions, not carelessly and dogmatically, as we might deal with them in ordinary life, but critically, after analysing how and why the questions arise and clarifying the assumptions and concepts on which they are based. This classic work, first published in 1912, has never been supplanted as an approachable introduction to the theory of philosophical enquiry. It gives Russell's views on such subjects as the distinction between appearance and reality, the existence and nature of matter, idealism, knowledge by acquaintance and by description, induction, and the limits and value of philosophical knowledge. This edition includes an introduction by John Skorupski contextualizing Russell's work, and a guide to further reading.

[Think, Simon Blackburn](#) –

This is a book about the big questions in life: knowledge, consciousness, fate, God, truth, goodness, justice. It is for anyone who believes there are big questions out there, but does not know how to approach them. Think sets out to explain what they are and why they are important. Simon Blackburn begins by putting forward a convincing case for the study of philosophy and goes on to give the reader a sense of how the great historical figures such as Descartes, Hume, Kant, and

Wittgenstein have approached its central themes. Each chapter explains a major issue, and gives the reader a self-contained guide through the problems that philosophers have studied. The large scope of topics covered range from scepticism, the self, mind and body, and freedom to ethics and the arguments surrounding the existence of God. Lively and approachable, this book is ideal for all those who want to learn how the basic techniques of thinking shape our existence.

[Philosophy: A very short introduction, Edward Craig](#) –

How ought we to live? What really exists? How do we know? This book introduces important themes in ethics, knowledge, and the self, via readings from Plato, Hume, Descartes, Hegel, Darwin, and Buddhist writers. It emphasizes throughout the point of doing philosophy, explains how different areas of philosophy are related, and explores the contexts in which philosophy was and is done.

[The Philosophy Gym, Stephen Law](#) –

Where did the universe come from? Is time travel possible? Are genetically designed babies morally acceptable? If you have ever asked yourself such questions, then you have already begun to think philosophically. This book is for those who want to take the next step. Stephen Law poses questions about some of the most important philosophical issues of today - and of yesterday. Light-hearted questions about whether a pickled sheep is really art rub shoulders with more profound and time-honoured fears about whether God exists. In this radically new way of looking at philosophy, Stephen Law illustrates the problem with a story then lets both sides of the argument battle it out in clear, easily digestible and intelligent prose. And, by separating each issue into a distinct section, it is possible to dip in and out of in any order and at any time you like!