

# Sophie`s world by jostein gaarder

Philosophy



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The book review that I will be doing is about the book Sophie's World (Norwegian: Sofies verden), a 1991 novel written by Norwegian writer Jostein Gaarder. According to the book itself, Sophie's World is Gaarder's first book to appear in English because he is a Norwegian. . It was originally written in Norwegian and became a best seller in Norway. The novel was later translated into fifty-three languages, with over thirty million copies in print. It follows the events of Sophie Amundsen, a teenage girl living in Norway and Alberto Knox, a middle aged philosopher who introduces her to philosophical thinking and the history of philosophy.

### **Summary:**

Sophie Amundsen is fourteen years old when the book begins, living in Norway. She begins a strange correspondence course in philosophy. Every day, a letter comes to her mailbox that contains a few questions and then later in the day a package comes with some typed pages describing the ideas of a philosopher who dealt with the issues raised by the questions. Although at first she does not know, later on Sophie learns that Alberto Knox is the name of the philosopher who is teaching her. He sends her packages via his dog Hermes.

Alberto first tells Sophie that philosophy is extremely relevant to life and that if we do not question and ponder our very existence we are not really living. Then he proceeds to go through the history of western philosophy. Alberto teaches Sophie about the ancient myths that people had in the days before they tried to come up with natural explanations for the processes in the world. Then she learns about the natural philosophers who were concerned

with change. Next Alberto describes Democritus and the theory of indivisible atoms underlying all of nature as well as the concept of fate.

At the same time as she takes the philosophy course, Sophie receives a strange postcard sent to Hilde Moller Knag, care of Sophie. The postcard is from Hilde's father and wishes Hilde happy birthday. Sophie is confused, and more so when she finds a scarf with Hilde's name on it. She does not know what is happening but she is sure that Hilde and the philosophy course must somehow be connected. She learns about Socrates, who was wise enough to know that he knew nothing. Then Alberto ends her a video that shows him in present day Athens and somehow he seems to go back in time to ancient Athens. She learns about Plato and his world of ideas and then about Aristotle, who critiqued Plato, classified much of the natural world, and founded logic and our theory of concepts. Then, as Sophie's education continues, the Hilde situation begins to get more complicated. She finds many more postcards to Hilde, and some of them are even dated on June 15, the day of Sophie will turn 15. The problem is that June 15 is still over a month away.

She discovers some of this with her best friend Joanna, and one of the postcards tells Hilde that one day she will meet Sophie and also mentions Joanna. Strange things are happening that the girls cannot figure out. Sophie's relationship with her mother becomes somewhat strained as she tries both to cover up the correspondence with Alberto and to practice her philosophical thinking on her mom. Meanwhile, Alberto teaches Sophie about Jesus and the meeting of Indo-European and Semitic culture. She learns about St. Augustine, St. Aquinas, and the christianization of Greek philosophy <https://assignbuster.com/sophies-world-by-jostein-gaarder/>

that occurred in the Middle Ages. By this time, Sophie has met Alberto and he begins hinting that the philosophy is about to get extremely relevant to the strange things that are happening to her. Sophie learns about the focus on humanity in the Renaissance and the extremes of the Baroque and then Alberto focuses on some key philosophers. Urgently, he teaches her about Descartes, who doubted, and by doing so knew at least that he could doubt. They move on to Spinoza as it becomes clear that Hilde's father has some awesome power over them.

Then Sophie learns about the empiricists. Locke believed in natural rights and that everything we know is gained from experience. Hume, an important influence on Kant, showed that our actions are guided by feelings and warned against making laws based upon our experiences. But Berkeley is most important to Sophie because he suggested that perhaps our entire lives were inside the mind of God. And Alberto says that their lives are inside the mind of Albert Knag, Hilde's father. At this point the story switches to Hilde's point of view.

On June 15, the day she turns fifteen, Hilde receives a birthday gift from her father entitled Sophie's World. She begins to read and is enthralled. We follow the rest of Sophie's story from Hilde's perspective. Hilde becomes certain that Sophie exists, that she is not just a character in a book. Alberto has a plan to escape Albert Knag's mind, and they must finish the philosophy course before that can happen. He teaches Sophie about the Enlightenment and its humane values and about Kant and his unification of empiricist and rationalist thought.

Things in Sophie's life have become completely insane but she and Alberto know they must figure out a way to do something. It will have to occur on the night of June 15, when Hilde's father returns home. They learn about the world spirit of Romanticism, Hegel's dialectical view of history, and Kierkegaard's belief that the individual's existence is primary. Meanwhile, Hilde plans a surprise for her father on his return home. They rush through Marx, Darwin, Freud, and Sartre, desperate to come up with a plan to escape even though everything they do is known by Hilde's father.

Then at the end of Sophie's World, the book that Hilde is reading, while at a party for Sophie on June 15, Alberto and Sophie disappear. Hilde's father comes home and they talk about the book, and Hilde is sure that Sophie exists somewhere. Meanwhile, Sophie and Alberto have a new existence as spirit—they have escaped from Albert Knag's mind but they are invisible to other people and can walk right through them. Sophie wants to try to interfere in the world of Hilde and her father, and at the end of the book she is learning how to do so.

### **Proper Book Review:**

The day that this book was handed to me, I thought it was boring at all because it's about philosophy. But then, when I started reading, I became interested and even more interested in the plot of the story in which Sophie Amundsen received a letter from an anonymous sender. I became to wonder who it came from. Did it come from a suitor or maybe from school? Those were just the things that came up to my mind while reading the first page of the book. When the questions were revealed, such as such as " Who are you? " and " Where did the world come from? , I myself were interested to <https://assignbuster.com/sophies-world-by-jostein-gaarder/>

know the answers too. It was like it was me who was in Sophie's situation. It's really funny how I became attached with the story though I don't really read novels. As the story progresses, the reader becomes attached to Sophie and follows her on the quest for answers. We are reminded of the beauty in the genuine thirst for knowledge and for answers that we often devalue as we get older. This book can be approached in different ways. It is on one hand the story of a few individual lives, and on the other a philosophy book.

Seeing it only as the story of Sophie Amundsen brings little satisfaction, but regarding it only as a reference on philosophy does not fulfill its purpose. To me, its theme is an expression of people's propensity to become caught up in their daily lives and lose the desire to question. And though the characters seem two-dimensional at times, I viewed them as tools of the writer, commenting on what Gaarder saw in the world. The style of the novel is similar to a detective story which emphasizes Gaardner's idea that philosophy's search for answers to the fundamental questions of life is much like a detective's investigation.

Throughout the book, we are reminded that philosophy is not the pursuit of someone who has spare time to sit and ponder; rather, it is essential for every living, thinking human being. This novel is a great substitute for a boring philosophy book. Sophie's World is probably the best way to learn about philosophy. Even more redeeming is the fictional portion of the novel, so although readers may grow bored and want to skip over the philosophy lesson bits, you'll still find yourself being pulled in enough to finish the entire lengthy book. Sophie's world took me in a wild and crazy ride while also learning about the history of philosophy.

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I liked this book because it was never preachy and is not trying to force any grand idea down my throat. Instead it gave me a bunch of really good ideas and let me form my own philosophy and let me choose the ideas I wanted to believe. I also loved the crazy plot twists of the story. Just like when the story revealed that Sophie and Alberto Knox were just part of another story and when Hilde wanted to believe that Sophie and Alberto were real people as opposed to some characters in a book written for Hilde's 15th birthday. I think it was great how the author just kept making the story weirder and weirder.

First Sophie kept getting mysterious post cards, then they started popping up everywhere, then a banana said " Happy Birthday Hilde", then the dog talked and when she found out she was in a book she started seeing Winnie the Pooh and Little Red Riding Hood. This book was just a bunch of jumbled insanity that kept my attention every step of the way. I absolutely loved it I think everybody on the planet should read this book. Personally I thought the philosophy lessons were boring, but Jostein Gaarder paints such a beautiful picture and story that Sophie's World truly is compelling.