

# Sophie's world by jostein gaarder essay

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Sophie's World is a novel by Jostein Gaarder.

It was first published in the year of 1991 and written in Norwegian, but since then has been translated into English (1995) and at least 53 other languages. It sold more than 30 million copies and is one of the most successful Norwegian novels outside Norway. Actually, to most readers it serves more as a basic guide to philosophy than a novel. On both sides of the Atlantic, the book is being used as a text in college philosophy courses. Information about the author and his time 20% Jostein Gaarder is a Norwegian worldwide author of several novels, short stories and children's books.

He was born in 8 August 1952 in Oslo (the capital of Norway) and grown up in a scholar family within his father was a headmaster and mother was a teacher as well as a writer of children's books. Before being a full-time author in 1991, Gaarder had taught philosophy and literacy program at a high school in Finland for ten years. He wrote Sophie's World to fill a gap. Stores were full of New Age pap and other mystical mush, but there were no books that would introduce young people to serious philosophy. Gaarder wanted to present a simplified history of philosophy that even someone who disliked philosophy would learn to appreciate it. He wanted to stress that philosophy was an everyday part of our lives. By trying to blend fantasy with head-cracking summaries of deep thought, Gaarder feared that he had "sat down between two stools". But he was mistaken.

Sophie's World fell on top of all the stools. Gaarder often writes from the perspective of children, exploring their sense of wonder about the world. He

often uses metafiction in his works, writing stories within stories. A summary of the book 30-40% Sophie Amundsen is an ordinary 14-year-old schoolgirl who lives with her mother in an ordinary Norwegian suburb. One day back home from school Sophie gets an anonymous letter in the mailbox containing two questions: " Who are you? " " Where does the world come from? " This mysterious letter makes Sophie's head spin. From that day she begins a strange correspondence course in philosophy at first by letter and then in person, a mysterious but friendly philosopher who calls himself Alberto Knox guides Sophie through the ideas of great thinkers, from the pre-Socratics to Jean-Paul Sartre. Every day, a letter comes to her mailbox with 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 questions.

Meanwhile, Sophie has to play detective on another front. As Alberto teaches Sophie about philosophers throughout time, Sophie soon begins to receive other strange letters written to another 14-year-old girl named Hilde Moller Knag from her father Albert Knag. Who is this Hilde? Why is her mail addressed to Sophie? When Sophie learns about Berkeley who suggested that perhaps our entire lives were inside the mind of God, 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. Sophie and Alberto 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... Comments on the book40-50% In this book Jostein Gaarder gives his readers a crash course in Western philosophy from pre-Socrates through to Marx and the current era in a s chronological order. At the same time, the style (translated from Norwegian) flows delightfully, there is never a dull page, and the plot holds a sense of intrigue throughout the book. 'Unputdownable' is a sorely term to describe my feeling during the process of reading.

What I appreciate most is it has a way of kindling your inner curiosity, makes you appreciate philosophy and history. The writer makes the philosophers more human unlike in some philosophy books where they are presented almost unfeeling and cold or something powerful, mystical and great which in fact they are but lacks the human side of their personality. The

philosophers were presented here as ordinary people with extraordinary talents.

Each philosopher was presented briefly and always has something in connection with the next philosophers; either they influenced the next or contradicted them. The philosophers were presented objectively and the reader is made to decide their favorite thinkers. Democritus managed to use the philosophers before him to come up with a new theory that everything is made up of tiny, invisible, and eternal particles called atoms. Socrates, the first of the great philosophers to be born in Athens, spent most of his life in the city squares and marketplaces talking with the people he met there about the individual and the individual's place in society. Tragically he couldn't avoid being accused of "introducing new gods and corrupting the youth" as well as "not believing in the accepted gods" and drank the poison and died. Aristotle believed that Plato's ideal state does not exist but that the eternal idea is really a concept. Aristotle's criticism of Plato's theory of ideas lied in that Plato used his reason while Aristotle used his senses as well.

Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, the three most important empiricists-philosophers of experience emphasized that before we sense anything, then, the mind is as bare and empty as a blackboard before the teacher arrives in the classroom. Berkeley was a philosopher who denied the existence of a material world beyond the human mind and he is most important to Sophie because he suggested that perhaps our entire lives were inside the mind of God. Kant made an important distinction between 'the thing in itself' and 'the thing for me' which means we can say something about how things will

be perceived by the human mind. To Hegel, history was like a running river that every tiny movement in the water at a given spot in the river is determined by the falls and eddies in the water higher upstream therefore there is no eternal truths or no timeless reason. I found that some of the ideas and concepts nowadays are derived from the past philosophers and sages.

They are not generated from nothing. We borrow the idea of atom from Democritus. We sketch the idealistic outline of the society—the Utopia—from the masterpiece of Plato. And the amazing concept of the 4-dimensional space resembles Hegel's view of the history—" like a running river". I reckoned that those blind people who consider philosophy as dry theories of no use would regret what they said after they read Sophie's world. Yes, the ideas of philosophy cannot push the development of human society and technology directly. However, great people can see the way of the future with the help of philosophy. They get inspirations from philosophers' outlooks and convert their impossible fancies into legends in human history.

Philosophy survives the past, impacts the present and illuminates the future of human civilization. Anyway, philosophy is the source of wisdom. This novel is a great substitute for a boring philosophy textbook. Personally I thought the philosophy lessons were tiresome, but Jostein Gaarder paints such a beautiful picture and story that Sophie's World truly is compelling. During reading Sophie's World, I always have a feeling that I were Sophie and I were taking the philosopher lessons from Alberto's letter! In this fast developing society, life is full of skills, tricks and techniques, but lacks philosophy and

wisdom. Life is buzzed with interests and money, but with no ideals and goals. We are confused of what lies ahead because of the great uncertainty of the future.

But one thing is for sure: If you listen carefully, listen attentively, you will hear the warm welcome from Sophie and his teacher, Alberto.