

Paul and Stan, who were twins, had always been very competitive. Back in nursery school, each had hit on the idea of being the first to write his name. They had practised separately in secret, filling page after page with scribbles that gradually formed into words. Then on their mother's birthday, they had each been furious when the other presented their mother with a perfectly signed card.

There had been all sorts of competitions between them since, over sport, school, eating chocolate mints, not saying the word "the" and dozens of other things. Who was the best runner, swimmer, writer, faster, joke-teller, cook. Now, Paul had hit on what he thought was the ultimate competition, and one he was determined to win.

He was going to be... the best *person*.

Not just the best at some particular sport, or subject at school, or at some trivial challenge they had chosen between them. He was going to be best at the biggest challenge of all – not at being good at something, but at being good, full stop.

He was going to be the twin people meant when they said, "He's the one who's a really good lad. His brother's nice enough, but he's not in the same league when it comes to..."

And then his imagining what they would say faded out, because he wasn't entirely sure what being good would mean. It couldn't just be a matter of saying, "please" and "thank you", although those might be part of it. It had to be more difficult and complicated, otherwise it would be too easy for Stan to catch up and be just as good.

Paul started pacing about to think...

## **The Good Twin?**

Here are some themes that might come up and ways to explore them. Even if they don't come up, using one of these exercises afterwards may be good for building critical thinking. Discussion plans and philosophical exercises were an integral part of the original vision of P4C, and without them it can be very difficult for P4C to rise above being a ritualised conversation (which is no bad thing in itself) to achieve its full potential as an education in thinking.

### **“Good” versus “good at”**

Put these in order of how easy it is to tell how good someone is at something, from the one where it's most clear and obvious who is good at something and who isn't to those where it is hardest to tell. This is an exercise to get pupils thinking about how contestable concepts are in different contexts.

Playing football.

Throwing the javelin.

Being a parent.

Doing maths.

Adding up.

Being a friend.

Being a good person.

Being wise.

### **Good for whom?**

You might get into questions of moral motivation. If Paul is only being good in order to beat his brother, can he really be good? Do you have to have other people's interests at heart, rather than burnishing your own moral credentials, in order to be a good person?

### **Competitiveness**

Is it good to be competitive?

Can being good be a competition?

If being good were a competition, who would be the judge?

Is getting into heaven like a competition for being good?

If you try doing something good for somebody, and it doesn't work, have you failed at being good?

If being good was a race, would it be the winning or the taking part that counted?