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# Lesson Plan: Medieval Minds - A 'Sophie's World' Board Game Adventure

## Materials Needed:

- The book *Sophie's World* by Jostein Gaarder (Chapters 14, 15, and 16)
- One large piece of poster board or cardboard
- Markers, colored pencils, or paint
- A ruler
- 30-40 index cards (or paper cut to size)
- One or two dice
- Small, unique objects for game pieces (e.g., a coin, a button, a bottle cap, a small figurine)
- A notebook and a pen or pencil
- Scissors
- Optional: A computer or tablet for quick research on medieval art styles for board decoration.

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## Learning Objectives (The Goal)

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- **Compare and contrast** the key philosophical ideas of St. Augustine (faith-focused) and St. Thomas Aquinas (faith + reason).
- **Explain** how the Middle Ages served as a bridge between Antiquity and the Renaissance.
- **Apply** abstract philosophical concepts by designing a functional and creative board game.
- **Synthesize** information from the text to create engaging game questions, challenges, and rules that reflect the philosophical themes.

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## Lesson Activities (The Adventure)

### Part 1: Warm-Up - Philosopher's Tug-of-War (15 minutes)

1. In your notebook, draw a horizontal line. On the far left, write "**Plato: Pure Reason & Ideas.**" On the far right, write "**Aristotle: Senses & Experience.**"
2. Think about the two major philosophers of the Middle Ages you just read about: Augustine (Ch. 14) and Aquinas (Ch. 15).
3. Place Augustine and Aquinas on the line where you think they fit best. Are they closer to Plato or Aristotle in their thinking?
4. Underneath each name, write one or two key phrases from the book that justify your placement. For example, did Augustine trust the senses or did he believe true knowledge came from a divine source? Did Aquinas reject or embrace Aristotle's scientific approach? This activity gets your brain warmed up for the deep connections between these thinkers.

## Part 2: Gather Your Knowledge - The Three Worlds Chart (45 minutes)

This is your research phase! You will create the intellectual "fuel" for your board game. Review chapters 14, 15, and 16 to fill out a three-column chart in your notebook. Be specific!

| Chapter 14: Augustine's World<br>(Platonism + Christianity)                                                                                                                                                         | Chapter 15: Aquinas's World<br>(Aristotle + Christianity)                                                                                                                                                                                      | Chapter 16: The Bridge to the Renaissance<br>(The Shift Back to Humanity)                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the "City of God"?</li> <li>• How does he explain the existence of evil?</li> <li>• What is his view on history (predestination)?</li> <li>• Key Quote:</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did he "Christianize" Aristotle?</li> <li>• What is the difference between "natural theology" and "revealed theology"?</li> <li>• What are his two paths to God?</li> <li>• Key Quote:</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does "Renaissance" mean?</li> <li>• What is Humanism?</li> <li>• How did the worldview change regarding science, art, and the individual?</li> <li>• Key Figure Mentioned:</li> </ul> |

## Part 3: The Main Quest - Design "The Path to Wisdom" Board Game (90+ minutes)

Now you will transform your knowledge into a playable game. The goal of the game is to travel through the Middle Ages and be the first to arrive at the Renaissance.

### Step 1: Create Your Game Board

- On your poster board, draw a winding path from a starting point (label it "The Fall of Rome") to an endpoint (label it "The Renaissance"). Create about 30-40 spaces along the path.
- Decorate the board with a medieval theme! Think castles, cathedrals, forests, and maybe even a philosophical garden.
- Designate some special spaces. Use the ideas from your chart! Examples:
  - **"Augustine's Confession:"** Go back 2 spaces and contemplate your past.
  - **"Aquinas's Synthesis:"** You successfully united faith and reason! Move ahead 3 spaces.
  - **"Hildegard's Vision:"** You see the path clearly. Roll again.
  - **"The Black Death:"** A great tragedy. Lose your next turn.

### Step 2: Craft Your Card Decks

Using the index cards, create three different decks. These will drive the game forward.

- **Deck 1: The "Faith" Deck (approx. 15 cards - use a Blue marker)**  
These cards focus on Augustine's philosophy from Chapter 14. They should be questions or prompts. If you answer correctly, you get a reward.  
*Example: "Augustine said evil is the 'absence of God.' In your own words, what does this mean? If correct, move ahead 2 spaces."*
- **Deck 2: The "Reason" Deck (approx. 15 cards - use a Green marker)**  
These cards focus on Aquinas's philosophy from Chapter 15.  
*Example: "Aquinas believed he could prove God's existence through reason and observation. Name one of his arguments. If correct, roll again."*
- **Deck 3: The "Alberto's Letter" Deck (approx. 10 cards - use a Red marker)**  
These are chance/fate cards that reflect the bigger story of Sophie's World or general medieval life.  
*Example: "A new letter from Alberto arrives, full of insight! Advance to the nearest 'Reason' space."*  
*Example: "You have been accused of heresy for your strange ideas! Go back 3 spaces."*

### Step 3: Write the Rules

On a separate sheet of paper (or the corner of the board), write a simple set of rules. Consider:

- How does a player start their turn? (Roll the dice, move the piece).
  - What happens when you land on a normal space? A special space?
  - When do you draw a card? (Perhaps on certain colored spaces).
  - How do you win the game? (Be the first player to land exactly on "The Renaissance").
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## Assessment (Checking Your Understanding)

1. **The Game is the Grade:** Your completed, playable board game is the main assessment. It shows that you not only understood the concepts but could apply them creatively.
  2. **Play It!:** The best way to test your work is to play the game with a parent, sibling, or friend. As you play, explain the concepts on the cards. Teaching is the best way to learn!
  3. **Written Reflection (1 paragraph):** After playing your game, answer the following question in your notebook:  
*"If you had to build your worldview based on either Augustine or Aquinas, who would you choose and why? Use at least two specific ideas from the chapters to support your choice."*
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## Differentiation & Extension (For an Extra Challenge)

- **Character Abilities:** Give each game piece a special power. For example, a "Thomas Aquinas" piece could get one free correct answer on a "Reason" card. A "Hildegard of Bingen" piece could skip a "Lose a Turn" space once per game.
  - **Debate Spaces:** Create a special "Debate" space. When a player lands here, they draw a card with a philosophical question (e.g., "Is free will real if God knows everything in advance?"). The player must give a 1-minute argument for their position to earn an extra turn.
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