

Name: _____

Date: _____

Socrates

Wisdom can be defined as the knowledge of what is right and true. The ancient Greeks discussed, debated, and studied wisdom. This is called philosophy. The word philosophy comes from a Greek term meaning "the love of wisdom."

The Greeks believed they could become wise by using reason. Reason is the ability to think clearly. Greek philosophers developed logic, a step-by-step method of using reason to think through a problem. A philosopher named Socrates challenged the leaders of Athens by asked his students to use reason and logic instead of following the directions of the leaders of Athens.

Socrates was a retired stonemason. As a young man he fought in the Peloponnesian War and served in the boule, but he devoted the last years of his life to philosophy. Socrates believed that we all could find truth by thinking logically and trusting our inner voices. Socrates told his students that "wisdom begins in wonder."

Socrates did not teach in a school. The old philosopher drifted around Athens, engaging his students in arguments about justice, bravery, and ethics. Socrates taught by asking questions that forced his students to use logic. When teachers ask questions that encourage students to draw conclusions, they are using the "Socratic method" of teaching. A priest called the Oracle of Delphi pronounced Socrates the wisest man in Greece. Socrates concluded that while others professed knowledge they did not have, Socrates knew how little he knew. Socrates asked many questions, but he gave few answers. He often denied knowing the answers to the questions he asked.

Socrates did not write any books because he believed in the superiority of rhetoric over writing. Rhetoric is speech that is used to persuade someone. What we know about Socrates comes mostly from his student, Plato. Plato wrote down his teacher's ideas in a series of dialogues. A dialogue is a conversation between two people.

Athens had recently lost the Peloponnesian War to Sparta, and the humiliated leaders of the polis did not want a critic like Socrates challenging their authority. Socrates called himself a "gadfly." A gadfly is a pest that bites livestock. Socrates tried to use his criticism of Athens to "sting" the polis into recovering the Golden Age that existed before the long war.



The Athenian leaders threatened to bring Socrates to trial on two charges. Socrates refused to honor the gods. He was also charged with corrupting the youth of Athens by teaching the young people to trust their own judgment instead of following the rules of the city leaders. Most Athenians expected the seventy-year-old Socrates to leave Athens before his arrest, but the old philosopher remained in Athens, stood trial, and was found guilty.

Socrates refused to participate in a plan to escape from prison. The philosopher calmly accepted his death by drinking from a cup of poison hemlock, the customary practice of execution of his time. Socrates believed that he must obey the law, even if he disagreed with it.

Answer in complete sentences

1. What is philosophy? What does the term philosophy mean?

2. What is reason? What is logic?

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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Fill in the Blanks

The study of wisdom is called p_i_o_o_hy. Wisdom is the k_o_l_d_e of what is i_ht and true. The ancient Greeks believed they could attain wisdom by using r_a_on. Reason is the ability to t_i_k clearly. The Greeks developed a step-by-step method of using reason they called l_g_c.

Socrates was a p_i_o_o_h_r who taught his students to think l_g_c_l_y and to t_u_t their i_n_r voices because “w_s_om begins in w_n_er.” Socrates and his students drifted through A_h_ns discussing j_s_i_e, bravery and piety. The old p_i_o_o_h_r taught by asking q_e_t_o_s that e_c_u_a_ed his s_u_e_t_s to use l_g_c. We call this method of teaching the “S_c_a_ic method.”

The l_a_e_s of Athens threatened to bring S_c_a_es to trial for *t_a_h_ng his students to t_u_t their own j_d_m_nt. Athens had recently lost the P_l_p_n_e_i_n War to S_a_ta and did not want a “g_d_ly” challenging their a_t_o_i_y. The leaders expected S_c_a_es to leave A_h_ns, but the 70-year-old p_i_o_o_h_r stood t_i_l and was found g_i_ty. Socrates accepted his d_a_h by calmly drinking from a cup of poison h_m_o_k.

Answer in complete sentences

3. What is logic?

4. What did Socrates mean when he said, “wisdom begin in wonder”?

5. The text states that “Socrates knew how little he knew.” What does that phrase mean?

*6. Write a message to a parent, teacher, or friend where using your rhetorical skills. (You do not have to be concerned about a topic sentence or a conclusion.)

*7. Name a person from today or the recent past who challenged society by asking uncomfortable questions. (You may need to ask your parent for help with this question.)

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