Name: _____

Date: _____

ANCIENT GREECE
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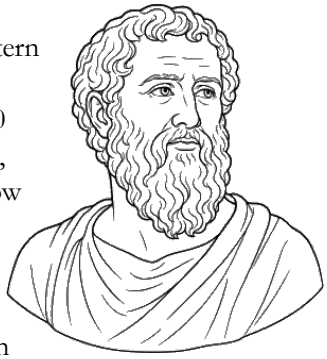
Plato



Socrates taught Plato to ask questions. Plato taught the Western world how to think, starting a conversation lasting nearly 2,500 years. He explored truth, beauty, justice, and perfection asking how big ideas could build a better world.

A Follower of Socrates

Plato was a young man from a wealthy and powerful family when he began to follow Socrates on his walks through Athens. Plato may have been a nickname meaning "broad," perhaps describing either the philosopher's broad shoulders or the breadth of his intellect.

The Academy

Around 387 BCE, Plato founded the Academy, a quiet park outside Athens where thinkers gathered. Unlike modern schools, there were no set classes or diplomas. Instead, scholars met to hear lectures and debate math, science, politics, and the best way to live. Our word for learning and study, academics, derives from Plato's school.

Plato's Dialogues

Plato believed real conversation was superior to writing because dialogues allow thinkers to challenge ideas directly. Most of his works are written conversations where characters debate big questions. Socrates appears in most of these dialogues, though scholars still debate which ideas belonged to Socrates and which were Plato's own.

Theory of Forms

Plato believed the visible world is changing and imperfect. A flower fades, and every drawn circle is a little crooked. Yet we recognize beauty and know what a circle is. Plato argued that physical things are merely copies of perfect, unchanging patterns he called Forms.

To explain this, Plato created his famous Allegory of the Cave. He imagined prisoners chained in a dark cave, mistaking flickering shadows on a wall for reality. When one escapes into the sunlight, he discovers the true world outside. To Plato, philosophy means escaping the shadows to find deeper truth.

The Republic

Plato constantly sought ways to improve society. In his most famous work, The Republic, he described an ideal state — what Thomas More later called a utopia. Though no nation ever built Plato's vision, his political ideas shaped leaders for centuries.

The Ideal Society

Plato felt society was unfair because wealth and power were inherited at birth. To create equal opportunity, he proposed raising children collectively rather than in traditional families. To protect young minds, he proposed that young people learn only from tales that teach courage, self-control, and respect. Since Homer and other Greek poets often showed gods fighting, lying, and behaving badly, Plato said those parts of the old stories should not be taught to children.

In Plato's perfect society, the state, not a child or family, decided where each person belonged. School was not a path to personal choice; it was a sorting system. As children grew, testing separated them into three groups. Farmers and craftworkers left school early to produce essential goods.

The defenders formed the middle tier — the state's military and enforcement arm. Their education focused heavily on physical fitness, military tactics, and strict moral discipline. Plato believed these soldiers must be fierce toward enemies, gentle toward citizens, and fiercely loyal to the state.

Philosopher-Kings

At the top were the philosopher-kings, the small group Plato believed should rule. No one would govern because they were wealthy or came from an important family. The most promising men and women would continue their education for decades, studying mathematics, philosophy, and public service. Not until about age fifty, after repeatedly proving their wisdom and self-control, would they be trusted to govern.

Aristotle

Later in life, Plato taught Aristotle, who studied at the Academy for twenty years. Aristotle would go on to observe and classify the natural world, laying the foundation for modern science.

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Fill in the Blanks

A w__a__t__y young A__h__n__an named Plato became a follower of S__c__at__s and later founded the A__a__e__y, a school where s__h__l__rs debated m__t__e__a__i__s, science, p__l__t__cs, and the best way to l_____. Plato wrote several d__a__o__u__s, because he believed conversation let people challenge ideas directly. Plato taught that the changing p__y__ic__l world contains i__p__r__e__t copies of eternal F_____. His A__l__go__y of the C_____ compares people who mistake *app__a__a__c__s for r__a__i__y to prisoners watching s__a__o__s. In The Republic, Plato proposed an i__e__l state ruled by p__i__o__o__h__r-kings rather than the rich or well-born. Children would be raised c__l__e__t__v__ly, taught only *app__o__ed stories, and sorted through e__u__a__i__n into f__r__e__s, craftworkers, defenders, and future ru__e__s. Defenders *pro__ect__d the state, while the most promising men and women s__u__i__d for decades before ruling. Plato later taught A__i__t__t__e, whose observations and classifications helped shape the study of the n__t__r__l world for generations of later scholars and scientists.

Answer in Complete Sentence

1. How was Plato's Academy different from modern schools?

*2. Why did Plato propose raising children collectively instead of in families? Explain why you agree or disagree.

3. What is your opinion of how Plato would use schools?

*4. What is your overall impression of Plato? Use at least two facts from the article to support your argument.

*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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