

# Ancient Greek Philosophers

## Socrates

was a philosopher who taught by asking questions. Socrates asked many questions, but he gave few answers. Socrates was a well-known teacher in Athens. He walked around the city with his students, engaging many people in arguments. What we know about Socrates comes from what others wrote about him. Socrates did not write any books since he believed it was better to debate than write. Socrates regarded the tales of the gods as just make-believe.



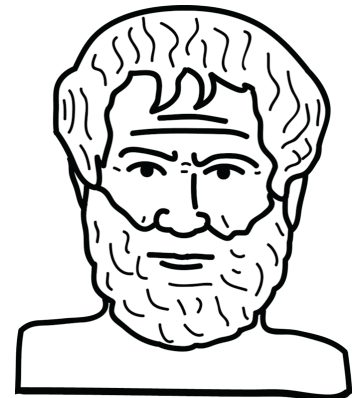
This upset the leaders of Athens. They threatened to bring him to trial for neglecting the gods and for corrupting the children of Athens by encouraging them to consider new ideas. The leaders expected the seventy year old Socrates to leave Athens before his arrest, but he remained in Athens, stood trial, and was found guilty. A friend planned an escape from prison, but Socrates refused to participate. He believed that he must obey the law, even if he disagreed with it. His last day was spent with friends. At the end of the day, Socrates calmly drank from a cup of poison hemlock, the customary practice of execution at that time.

**Plato** was Socrates' most famous student. Most of what we know about Socrates comes from Plato. When his teacher was executed, Plato left Greece for more than a decade. He returned to start The Academy, a school that would operate for more than 900 years. Plato described his idea of the best society in his most famous book, The Republic. Plato did not believe in democracy. He argued in favor of an "aristocracy of merit," where the best and the wisest people would rule. Plato believed a small group of people intelligent and educated men and women should govern everyone.



**Aristotle** was the greatest scientist of the ancient world.

He believed in using science and reason, rather than the anger or pleasure of gods, to explain natural events. Aristotle moved to Athens and studied at Plato's Academy. He remained at the school for more than twenty years until shortly after Plato died. Aristotle then returned to his home in Macedonia, where King Philip hired him to prepare his thirteen-year-old son, Alexander, for his future role as a military leader. His student would one day be known as Alexander the Great, one of the greatest military conquerors of all time. Once Alexander became King of



Macedonia, Aristotle returned to Athens and opened a school he called the Lyceum. For the next twelve years, Aristotle organized his school as a center of research on astronomy, zoology, geography, geology, physics, anatomy, and many other scientific fields. Aristotle wrote 170 books, 47 of which still exist more than two thousand years later. His ideas formed the basis of modern science.

Answer the questions.

1. Who were three great philosophers in ancient Greece? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why was Socrates sentenced to death? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What was Plato's school called? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Plato's most famous book is called? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Aristotle helped teach this famous military leader? \_\_\_\_\_

## Other Ancient Greece Philosophers:

- ΠΥΘΑΓΟΡΑΣ - Pythagoras is most known for the Pythagorean Theorem which is used to find the length of sides of right triangles. He also believed that the world was based on mathematics.
- ΕΠΙΚΟΥΡΟΣ - Said that the gods had no interest in humans. That what we should do is enjoy our lives and be happy.
- ΖΕΝΩ - Founded a type of philosophy called Stoicism. He said that happiness was from accepting whatever happened, good or bad. His philosophy was a way of life that emphasized a person's actions more than their words.



### Fun Fact:

Above the entrance to Plato's Academy was the following quote, "Let none who has not learned Geometry enter here."