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## GREAT GREEKS: THE PHILOSOPHERS

"One is never too young or too old to seek wisdom."  
-Epicurus, Hellenistic Philosopher

Do you ever think about the big subject called "life?" Do you like to understand how things came to be? Do you want to be wise? Then you are interested in philosophy! Philosophy means "love of wisdom."

The Ancient Greeks used their intelligence to create a better world. They explored the meaning and mysteries of life and they started by asking very basic questions like:

### **What is true? What is good? What is success?**

When you really think about these questions, they are not as easy to answer as they seem! For instance, how do you know if what you believe is really true? If I believe that I can jump over a building, is that true?

What about goodness? If someone is overly kind and, say, feeds an animal too much, is that being good?

How about defining success, or a good life? Do you think that being rich makes a good life? If that's true, then why are some rich people unhappy?

### **SOCRATES**

...was a teacher who urged people to take a deeper look at their beliefs. He taught his students to think for themselves and to question everything, even the existence of the gods!

In the end, Socrates got into terrible trouble for speaking out against the gods. At the age of 70, he was hauled off to prison and given this choice: He could leave Athens forever or he could drink a cup of hemlock tea, which was poisonous. He chose the hemlock. Plato, his student, wanted to bribe the guards to let Socrates escape, but the old teacher refused.

Socrates told the people who sentenced him, "As long as I have strength, I will think about all reality. If you kill such a one as I am, you will do far greater harm to yourselves than to me." **What do you think Socrates meant?**

### **PLATO**

Just about everything we know about Socrates, was written down by his student, **Plato**. Like his teacher, Plato believed in the idea of philosopher-king to lead Athens. He wrote about how to make a perfect society run by a philosopher-king in his book, *The Republic*.

It has been very hard for historians and philosophers to know where Socrates' ideas ended and where Plato began. Plato was not only the recorder of Socrates' ideas, he was a superb writer and teacher too.

### **ARISTOTLE**

...was Plato's star student whose influence is felt from poetry to politics, from the soul to dreams. He made a tremendous impact on science and education by creating a way to classify things. His scientific method lasted until the A.D. 1600's.

Aristotle taught at an outdoor gymnasium in Athens, after working out with his student. His star student was a young Prince Alexander of Macedonia, (Alexander the Great) who later conquered many lands.