

“Allegory of the Cave”

By Plato

CS Lit 9 Summer Assignment

Background

This particular text comes from Book VII of Plato’s *Republic*. In this dialogue, Socrates and several of his friends are discussing the nature of justice at the home of Socrates’ friend, Cephalus. In this particular selection, Socrates offers an illustration for the nature of reality and the world we see around us, as opposed to the spiritual, perfect, and eternal World of Forms, a key component of Plato’s philosophy.

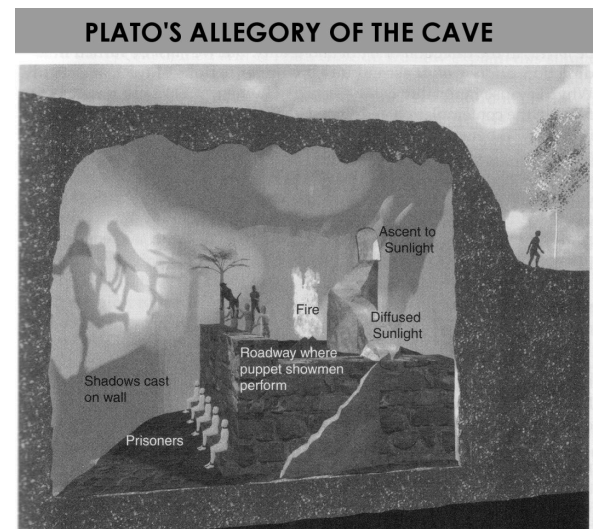


Read [Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,”](#) and annotate by underlining/highlighting passages that seem important, defining words that are unfamiliar to you, and making notes in the margins about what you find interesting, intriguing, or confusing. See this [Annotation Guide](#). Then answer the following questions thoughtfully. If you answer on a separate sheet of paper, please number your responses.

Note: I am interested in your thoughts, your understanding of the reading, and your ability to express yourself in writing. Do your best (think carefully, and use good grammar and proper punctuation), but do not spend many hours on this assignment.

1. Who is Plato? Research, and in a few sentences, write about the author. Be sure to include Socrates in your response (Who was he? How did he affect Plato?).

2. Retell the story of the “Allegory of the Cave” in your own words.



3. How does the allegory describe the process of acquiring knowledge?

4. Who are the people chained in the cave? What might they represent?

5. In your own words, what is reality?

6. What do you think of Socrates' allegory? Are all human beings spiritually and metaphorically chained inside a cave, forever staring at the shadows on the wall and mistaking those shadows for reality? If so, how will we ever escape?

7. Why do people not want to follow the man out of the cave? Why do they prefer instead to stay in the shadows? Find and write out at least three examples/quotations from the text that relate to the answer to these questions. This is not a formal paragraph; you only need to find the examples from the text.

8. Consider your own life. In what ways might you be “in the cave,” and in what ways might you be “out of the cave”? Or in between?