Plato: Introduction, Apology & “Parable of the Cave”

Directions: IN YOUR NOTEBOOK, answer the following questions. Note that some answers require extensive explanations and drawings. To understand Plato ask yourself, “What is reality?” Then, let go your mind and question everything.

I. Introduction:
1. What tragic event inspired Plato to write down his philosophical thoughts?
2. In what country and city did Plato live and work?
3. What is the Greek word for philosophy?
4. What 2 groups of protophilosophical thinkers preceded Plato?
5. Who were the pre-Socratics?
6. Who were the Sophists? What did they teach?
7. Why did Socrates and Plato ridicule the Sophists?
8. When was Plato born? When did he die?
9. Describe Plato’s family, upbringing, and education.
10. What are the 3 phases of Plato’s work?
11. What events does Plato’s Apology retell?
12. In what work is the allegory (or parable) of the cave?
13. What does the Greek work dialectic mean?
14. According to Plato’s main theories, what is knowledge?
15. According to Plato’s main theories, what do we see in this world?
16. Who would be the ideal leader of an ideal state? Why?
17. What quote is applied to Plato’s mode of expression?
18. How does Plato present his ideas?
19. What does Plato often create to illustrate his arguments? Use dictionary to define term.
20. How does Plato feel about poetry?
21. Beside philosophical thought, what else do Plato’s dialogues convey?
22. Who was Socrates?
23. What brought about Socrates’ death?
24. What are the 2 possible explanations why Socrates was unjustly executed?
25. What would Socrates not give up, even though it meant his death?
26. Do you agree or disagree with the quote from Socrates about “the practice of writing” (pg. xiv)? Explain.
27. In Plato’s Apology, for what reasons was Socrates being tried?
28. What are the 2 parts of Socrates’ speeches in the Apology?
29. In the Apology Plato presents as what (2) mythological types of hero/heroine?
30. What is the “Socratic Method” of learning and/or examining life?
31. What term is applied to questions that are posed but are left unanswered (or are unanswerable)?
32. Why should a philosopher rejoice when he/she is about to die?
33. What is the Greek word for soul?
34. What did Socrates/Plato believe about the existence of the soul?
35. What are the Greek words for love and story?
36. For Plato, what is “Heavenly” love?
37. What is the myth about the 3 sexes? Explain fully.
38. Explain the notion that men are pregnant and desire to give birth.
39. In the Gorgias, what is the radical doctrine about evil?
40. According to Plato, what is the most serious question each person should ask him/herself?

II. “The Apology”
1. What is an apologia?
2. Who is the speaker? How old is the speaker?
3. To whom is he speaking?
4. How will he defend himself?
5. What are the two charges brought against Socrates?
6. Who said, “There is no man wiser,” in answer to the question, “Is there any one wiser than Socrates”? Who said it? Be specific. Where was it said?
7. What three groups did Socrates question?
8. According to Socrates, why can he alone not corrupt the youth NOR would he want to corrupt the youth?
9. According to Socrates, why would it be impossible for him to be an atheist and introduce new gods at the same time?
10. According to Socrates, what should all men fear instead of death?
11. Unlike other men, who fear death as “the greatest evil,” how does Socrates conversely view death?
12. What does Socrates say he will never stop doing?
13. For Socrates, what should be the “greater good” that all men should seek to improve?
11. Explain what Socrates means by “I am that gadfly which God has attached to the State.” Who have been other gadflies throughout history?

12. According to Socrates, the “only office of State which [he] ever held was that of Senator.” Why does Socrates think that he made an unlikable senator?

13. Of what is Socrates not afraid?

14. According to Socrates, who sent him on a “duty of cross examining other men”?

15. Who does Socrates ask to step forward and testify that he never gave them “bad advice in the days of their youth”?

16. Who does Socrates say he will not call to “petition [the court] for acquittal? Why not?

17. When the 500 votes are counted, 220 senators vote innocent and 280 vote guilty. What is Socrates’ sentence?

18. What does Socrates say about the alternatives to his sentence?

19. According to Socrates what are the two reasons he cannot stop what he has done all his life?

20. At seventy years old, in the race against time, who is running faster than Socrates?

21. Because Athens executes (kills, murders, etc.) Socrates for his beliefs what will he become?

22. What does Socrates mean when he says, “I prophesy to you who are my murderers, that immediately after my departure, punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely wait you”?

23. According to Socrates what are the two reasons he cannot stop what he has done all his life?

24. According to Socrates death may be one of two things, either a “state of nothingness and utter consciousness” OR a “change and migration of the soul from this world to another,” both of which he considers a good thing.

25. Just before his death, what does Socrates ask Athens to do to his sons? Why?

26. In your opinion, did Socrates receive a fair trial?

III. The Republic:

A. Introduction & Theories (Define and/or leave room for notes + drawings):

B. “Parable of the Cave” (Republic, Book VII)

1. What form does Plato use to define the Absolute or Ideal State?

2. The Parable of the cave may be found in which of Plato’s works?

3. Who does Socrates, the main character, address in the Parable of the Cave?

4. In the Parable of the Cave, Socrates attempts to illustrate or show the difference between what two groups of people?

“Parable of the Cave” : “You are your Best Thing!” (Beloved, Toni Morrison)

1. Draw and label the Cave and its contents.

2. What are the only things the chained prisoners are allowed to see?

3. If the shadows are all the prisoners are allowed to see, what do the shadows represent?

4. What physically happens when a prisoner is released and forced into the Light?

5. Once the prisoner is released and his eyes adjust, what are some of the new objects he sees?

6. After seeing all these new and wonderful things, how might the prisoner feel about those who are still chained in the darkness?

7. Explain the quote, “Better to a poor servant of a poor master” than to live in the darkness of ignorance.

8. What physically happens when the released prisoner is forced to return to the darkness?

9. What do the other prisoners in the cave say about those who wish to leave the reality of the cave?

10. Socrates states that this allegory or parable tries to illustrate the journey of what part of a person toward the intellectual world or the Absolute?

11. What does it take for the soul to reach the Intellectual World or the Absolute?

12. Socrates uses Justice as an example of the Absolute (Perfection). What thing(s) here on earth represents the shadow of the Ideal Justice?

13. How do people in the Light feel about those in the dark and vice-versa?

14. What do educators wrongly assume they do for their students?

15. Where does the capacity for learning already exist?