

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Aristotle

Aristotle is one of the most well-known ancient Greek philosophers and natural scientists. In the Middle Ages, he was so beloved that many European scholars referred to him as *Ille Philosophus*, or ‘The Philosopher.’ He was born in 384 BC in Stagira, a town in northern Greece. His father was Nichomachus, physician to the Macedonian royal family. At 17, Aristotle was sent to Athens to study at Plato’s Academy.

At Plato’s Academy, Aristotle studied mathematics, philosophy, and literature. After completing his studies, he remained at the Academy as an instructor until Plato’s death in 347 BC. When the directorship of the Academy was given to Plato’s nephew, Aristotle left the Academy, and traveled to Assos, a town near Troy. He lived there for several years before accepting an invitation in 342 BC from King Phillip II of Macedonia to come and tutor the king’s thirteen year-old son, Alexander.

Aristotle taught Alexander literature, mathematics, philosophy, and logic. When King Phillip was murdered in 336 BC, Aristotle’s pupil Alexander became King of Macedonia, and set off on the tour of war and conquest that earned him the name Alexander the Great.

No longer needed as a teacher, Aristotle returned to Athens in 335 BC, where he founded his own school known as the Lyceum. Similar in some ways to Plato’s Academy, the Lyceum was designed to instruct the young men of Athens in philosophy and science. Where the Academy focused on mathematics and theoretical sciences such as geometry, however, the Lyceum was directed more to natural sciences, and the studies of biology, physics, and metaphysics.

Aristotle’s thinking had been greatly influenced by Plato, yet Aristotle’s interests lay in slightly different areas. Plato’s writings deal almost solely with theoretical concerns. Although Aristotle wrote a number of theoretical texts such as *Nichomachean Ethics*, in which he explores the relationship of love and friendship to human happiness. Aristotle was also very interested in the natural world. Aristotle’s numerous texts cover practical topics such as psychology (*On Sleep, Old Age, Life & Death*), biology (*History of Animals, Generation of Animals*), physics (*Physics, Metaphysics*), and meteorology (*Meteorology*).

Aristotle’s school, the Lyceum, flourished in Athens for twelve years, until the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC. At this time, Athens became very hostile to those with Macedonian connections. Due to his close relationship with the Macedonian royal family, Aristotle felt he was unsafe in the city. To ‘prevent Athens from sinning twice against philosophy’—a reference to the earlier Athenian execution of the philosopher Socrates—Aristotle retired to his mother’s estate on the island of Euboia, where he died in 322 BC.

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## **Comprehension**

Read the following questions based on the text, and select the best answer.

1. Where was Aristotle born?
  - a. Stagira
  - b. Athens
  - c. northern Greece
  - d. both a & c
  
2. Which of the following is NOT a true statement?
  - a. Aristotle studied at Plato's Lyceum.
  - b. Aristotle was 17 when he went to study in Athens.
  - c. Plato was Aristotle's teacher.
  - d. Aristotle became an instructor at Plato's Academy.
  
3. In which year did Aristotle return to the Macedonian court?
  - a. 336 BC
  - b. 347 BC
  - c. 335 BC
  - d. 342 BC
  
4. Why did Aristotle return to the Macedonian court?
  - a. King Phillip asked Aristotle to come and enjoy the Macedonian court
  - b. King Phillip asked Aristotle to come and tutor his son in philosophy
  - c. King Phillip asked Aristotle to come and tutor his son in war strategy
  - d. King Phillip asked Aristotle to come and tutor him in mathematics
  
5. Which of the following was NOT true of Aristotle's Lyceum?
  - a. It focused more on natural science than Plato's Academy had.
  - b. It operated for 12 years in Athens.
  - c. It emphasized geometry more than any other subject.
  - d. It was founded by Aristotle in 335 BC.
  
6. Which of the following BEST describes the subjects that Aristotle wrote about?
  - a. a wide range of topics concerning natural sciences and philosophy
  - b. a wide range of topics concerning war strategy and philosophy
  - c. a few topics, explored in-depth, such as physics and biology
  - d. strict mathematical theory
  
7. Why did Aristotle leave Athens?
  - a. He wanted to visit his mother's estate on the island of Euboa.
  - b. Athens had become unfriendly to those with Macedonian connections.
  - c. Athens had executed Socrates.
  - d. Aristotle died in 322 BC.

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Answer Key for Aristotle

1. d
2. a
3. d
4. b
5. c
6. a
7. b