



PLATONIC DIALOGUES

Occasionally, some of the dialogues written by Plato, featuring his teacher Socrates, come up in quizbowl; many times they are asked as three part bonuses. Below are some of the more commonly asked ones, including a brief description of each dialogue.

First Alcibiades – Socrates declares his love for Alcibiades, then spends the rest of the dialogue rehearsing the many reasons Alcibiades needs him. Socrates' attempts to woo Alcibiades away from politics fail.

Apology (or ***Apologia***) – Socrates makes his defense of the charges against him; Anytus, Meletus, and Lycon are the accusers. The charges are corrupting the youth, not respecting the gods, and according to Socrates, being a curious person. He also says he is not afraid of death, and his downfall will be the gossip and slander about his charges rather than the charges themselves.

Euthyphro – Socrates and Euthyphro, a man known for being a religious expert, attempt to pinpoint a definition for piety. The definitions include Euthyphro prosecuting his father for manslaughter (rejected as merely an example), what the gods approve of, and that piety is a part of justice.

Crito – Socrates refuses Crito's offer to finance his escape from prison because it would be unjust. This dialogue contains an ancient statement of the social contract theory of government.

Parmenides – Socrates, its namesake, and Zeno of Elea debate the oneness of form (beauty, goodness, etc.). In other words, they argue about the nature of duality and monism, touching on the subject of Spinoza's ethics.

Hippias major/minor – occur with the namesake sophist; the major is on beauty and the minor is on lying.

Meno – attempts to determine the definition of virtue, meaning in this case virtue in general, rather than particular virtues (e.g. justice, temperance, etc.). The goal is a common definition that applies equally to all particular virtues.

Protagoras – argument is between the elderly Protagoras, a celebrated sophist, and Socrates. The discussion takes place at the home of Callias, and concerns a familiar theme in the dialogues: the teachability of virtue. A total of twenty-one people are named as present.



Phaedo – details the final days of Socrates and contains the scene of his death. The dialogue is told from the perspective of one of Socrates' students, Phaedo of Elis. Theme covers the immortality of the soul.

The Sophist – about Plato; introduces new Concept of the Forms = more mundane and down-to-earth, and makes more clear the epistemological and metaphysical puzzles; solves the puzzle of the *false* and the right opinion, as well as of the justified true belief

Critias – Plato is the one speaking, and he discusses the ancient war between Athens and Atlantis, and the downfall of Atlantis.

Phaedrus – Between Socrates and its namesake; ostensibly about the topic of love, the discussion in the dialogue revolves around the art of rhetoric and how it should be practiced, and dwells on subjects as diverse as reincarnation and erotic love.

Euthydemus – satirizes the logical fallacies of the Sophists. It describes a visit paid by Socrates and various youths to two brothers, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. Euthydemus and Dionysodorus continually attempt to ensnare Socrates with deceptive and meaningless arguments

Gorgias – Plato sets the rhetorician, whose specialty is persuasion, in opposition to the philosopher, whose specialty is dissuasion, or refutation.

Laws – last dialogue by Plato; the question asked at the beginning is not “What is law?” as one would expect. The first question is rather, “Who is given the credit for laying down your laws?”

Timaeus – followed by *Critias*, is by Plato. It discusses the nature of the physical world, the purpose of the universe, properties of the Universe, and the creation of the soul of the world. Also lists the elements and their respective shapes.

Symposium – It is on the nature of love, with speeches given by Phaedrus, Pausanias, Aristophanes, Agathon, Socrates, and Alcibiades. Plato regards love as the essential ingredient of the philosophic path.

The Republic – scene of the dialogue is the house of Polemarchus at Piraeus. It contains the “allegory of the cave” argument. It also discusses justice and the theory of forms, as well as the theory of universals and the four forms of government.

