



Wise Guy: The Life and Philosophy of Socrates

By M. D. Usher

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Wise Guy: The Life and Philosophy of Socrates By M. D. Usher

Greek philosophy for kids

"I know that I know nothing."

With this classic statement, uttered over two thousand years ago, Socrates set the standard for the future of Western philosophy. By day, he soaked up the sun in the Athenian marketplace, where he'd converse for hours on end about the meaning of wisdom, right and wrong, courage, justice, and love. By night, he feasted and danced with friends. He was charming, but not handsome, happy, but not rich. Unfortunately, his method of thinking did not sit well with everyone. In the end, his fellow Athenians punished him with death.

The story of Socrates' life unfolds through cheerful illustrations and a two-tiered text, one layer quite simple, the other full of juicy additional details about the philosopher's life and times. The ending assembles a "School of Athens," showcasing thinkers, from Erasmus to Martin Luther King, Jr., who have been inspired by Socrates' philosophy.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 2-5—This ambitious attempt to present the life and thinking of this ancient Greek philosopher to young readers does so with mixed results. The text has two tiers. The first layer (presented in a larger font) is, according to the book jacket, quite simple, while the second (presented in smaller print in a scroll-shaped box) is full of juicy additional details. Both sections contain statements that are oversimplifications of complex ideas and require further background or explanation. In one particularly confusing section of the book, the first tier states that Apollo, god of wisdom, loved Socrates dearly. 'No one is as wise, or good, or brave as he,' Apollo said. The other gods agreed. The line between Socrates's beliefs and fact is blurred here and elsewhere. There are, however, many instances where Usher distills the essence of Socrates's thinking into approachable terms, such as in his discussion that compares the idea of the blueprint for a bed to a blueprint for larger concepts: Just as a carpenter with vast knowledge and experience can make a good bed, and in turn be a good carpenter, a person who has studied the blueprint of right and wrong can be a good person. With the exception of some fictionalizing in terms of his subject's childhood, Usher has been careful to use documented sources, and the writing style itself flows reasonably well. Bramhall's amusing cartoons greatly enliven the presentation. Anyone wishing to introduce the field of philosophy to students would find this offering a useful starting point.—*Grace Oliff, Ann Blanche Smith School, Hillsdale, NJ*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 2-4. This cheerful picture-book biography of Socrates has two concurrent texts: the story of his life, which is freely fictionalized and unconvincing in its description of the early years, and, in smaller print, an introduction to the philosopher's ideas, which is actually quite good. As Usher states in the appended notes, "Socrates' adult interests have been imaginatively read back into his youth." The result is a child character who sounds utterly unchildlike. In a sudden growth spurt shown in the illustrations but unexplained in the text, Socrates grows from a scruffy child on one double-page spread to a scruffy man on the next. The accessible style of the sophisticated ink-and-watercolor artwork is reminiscent of that of a cartoonist or caricaturist. And on the closing pages, there *are* caricatures of later thinkers, from Erasmus to Gandhi, who comment on Socrates. A note on sources and a short bibliography (labeled "For Further Reading" but clearly aimed at adults) are appended as well. Parents who can't wait to introduce their elementary-school progeny to Socrates will find this an original, but not wholly successful, choice. *Carolyn Phelan*
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Review

"Socrates remains a seminal figure in the history of ideas - ideas which, as Usher, a Classics professor, brilliantly proves, are not beyond the abilities of even younger readers to absorb. An intimate, memorable, outstanding introduction."

--Starred review, *Kirkus Reviews*

"While large in scope, Usher (who drew entirely from ancient sources, mainly Plato's dialogues) keeps the ideas clear-cut and accessible, making this Socrates for the school-age set a fine introduction to philosophy."

--Starred review, *Publishers Weekly*

"Usher distills the essence of Socrates's thinking into approachable terms. Anyone wishing to introduce the field of philosophy to students would find this offering a useful starting point." --*School Library Journal*

"Parents who can't wait to introduce their elementary school progeny to Socrates will find this an original choice." --*Booklist*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Charles Stephens:

Reading a e-book tends to be new life style within this era globalization. With reading you can get a lot of information which will give you benefit in your life. Using book everyone in this world can share their idea. Ebooks can also inspire a lot of people. A lot of author can inspire their very own reader with their story as well as their experience. Not only the story that share in the publications. But also they write about the ability about something that you need case in point. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your kids, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors nowadays always try to improve their expertise in writing, they also doing some exploration before they write for their book. One of them is this Wise Guy: The Life and Philosophy of Socrates.

Beverly Harrison:

Your reading 6th sense will not betray you, why because this Wise Guy: The Life and Philosophy of Socrates reserve written by well-known writer we are excited for well how to make book that can be understand by anyone who else read the book. Written within good manner for you, still dripping wet every ideas and composing skill only for eliminate your current hunger then you still hesitation Wise Guy: The Life and Philosophy of Socrates as good book not just by the cover but also through the content. This is one e-book that can break don't assess book by its protect, so do you still needing an additional sixth sense to pick this!/? Oh come on your reading through sixth sense already alerted you so why you have to listening to a different sixth sense.

Pamela Jernigan:

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Scott Rochelle:

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