

Pythagoras Reading Comprehension

Name _____

Pythagoras was a Greek philosopher and mathematician who contributed insights to many schools of thought during his life. One of his most notable accomplishments is his development of the Pythagorean theorem, which creates a relationship between the three sides of a right triangle. Specifically, that the square of the hypotenuse (or longest side of a triangle) is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. This is written mathematically as $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$. Unfortunately, it is hard to make definitive statements about much of Pythagoras' life because we have no confirmed and authentic pieces of writing from him during his lifetime. It is challenging to distinguish between valid writings from Pythagoras and the works of his followers; regardless, we can make informed conjectures with the evidence we do have.

Based on the information available to us, Pythagoras was born in 570 BC on Samos, an island near Asia Minor at the time. He was well-educated and had two or three brothers, but as he grew up, he found he did not agree with the government and tyrannical politics of Samos. Thus, in 532 BC, he escaped to southern Italy and created his own academy for ethics and politics in a Greek colony known as Croton.

Pythagoras' academy attracted many devout followers, most of whom had no personal professions. Pythagoras taught his followers everything he knew and implored them all to follow a strict set of rules, including remaining vegetarian and swearing by the oath "1+2+3+4." A key aspect of Pythagoras' teachings was the philosophy of metempsychosis: the idea that souls are immortal and enter new bodies after death.

In 510 BC, Pythagoras' group of followers began to have an ideological clash with supporters of democracy and rule by the people. This conflict of ideas soon turned violent, resulting in the razing of Pythagorean meeting place. Pythagoras may have been killed in one the blazes, or, he may have escaped to Metapontum, a city in Magna Graecia, and died there.

- 1. What word in the first paragraph specifies to the reader that the author is going to elaborate?**
 - a. Confirmed
 - b. Specifically
 - c. Distinguish
 - d. Valid

- 2. Why is it challenging to make conclusions regarding Pythagoras?**
 - a. Because he lived thousands of years ago
 - b. Because there are no known writings attributed to Pythagoras
 - c. Because we can make conjectures about his life
 - d. Because he had so many followers

3. Which is NOT true about Pythagoras?

- a. He was born on an island near Asia Minor
- b. He created his own academy for ethics and politics
- c. He escaped southern Italy for Samos in 532 BC
- d. He was a vegetarian

4. In the Pythagorean Theorem...

- a. the square of the hypotenuse equals the sum of the squares of the other two sides.
- b. the sum of the hypotenuse equals the sum of the other two sides.
- c. the square of the other two sides equals the hypotenuse.
- d. the square of the hypotenuse equals the sum of the other two sides.

5. What word could replace “implored” in the following sentence?

Pythagoras’ academy attracted many devout followers, most of whom had no personal professions. Pythagoras taught his followers everything he knew and implored them all to follow a strict set of rules, including remaining vegetarian and swearing by the oath “1+2+3+4.”

- a. demanded
- b. convinced
- c. facilitated
- d. urged

6. What is implied in the final paragraph?

- a. There is much more known about the life of Pythagoras than previously thought
- b. Pythagoras died in a fire
- c. Pythagoras and his followers did not support the idea of democracy
- d. Pythagoras and his supporters were willing to fight for democracy

7. Which of the following lacks elaboration in the passage?

- a. What is metempsychosis?
- b. What is the significance of the “1+2+3+4” oath?
- c. What did Pythagoras think happened after a person died?
- d. What happened in 532 BC in the life of Pythagoras?