

Extracting & Employing Evidence From Literary Nonfiction Text Sources

Allegory of the Cave — Conquer It Excerpt and Worksheet

Directions:

1. Read the second excerpt from Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" on the following page.
2. As you read, identify and define any unknown words.
3. Reread the passage, underlining and marking evidence in the text that shows you words and phrases that may have a deeper meaning (such as symbols and allegories).
4. Take notes in the margins about possible meaning of the excerpt as you read.
5. When you are finished reading and annotating, complete the Conquer It assessment.

Excerpt 2 From Plato's "Allegory of the Cave"

And he will contemplate the sun, as it is. Would he not proceed to argue that it is the sun who gives the seasons and the years and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which his fellows have been accustomed to behold? Truly he would first see the sun, then reason about it. And when he remembered his old habitation and what was the wisdom of the cave his fellow prisoners, do you not suppose that he would bless himself for the change? Pity them? And if they were in the habit of conferring honors among themselves on those who were the quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before and which followed after and which were together and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honors and glories? Or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say, with Homer, "better to be the poor servant of a poor master and to endure anything rather than think as they do and live after their manner."

Imagine, once more, such a one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation. Would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness? And if there were a contest of measuring the shadows and he had to compete with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak and before his eyes have become steady, wouldn't they all laugh at him and say he had spoiled his eyesight by going up there? That is was better not to even think of ascending? And if anyone tried to release another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death. It is the task of the enlightened not only to ascend to learning and to see the good but to be willing to descend again to those prisoners and to share their troubles and their honors, whether they are worth having or not. And this they must do, even with the prospect of death. They shall give of their help to one another wherever each class is able to help the community.

Plato's Republic, "The Allegory of the Cave" Book VII, 514a-521b