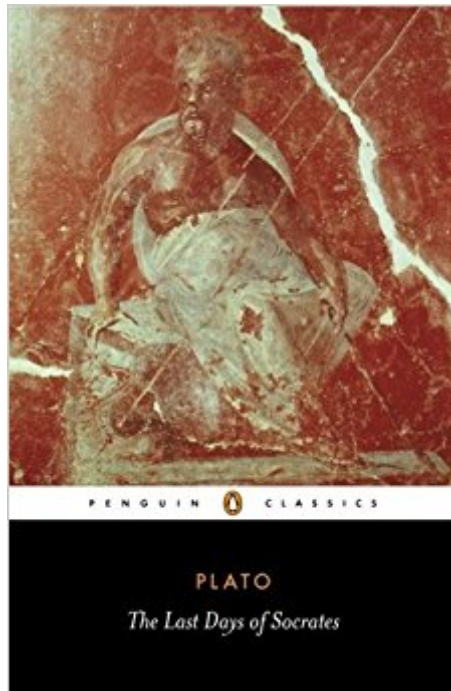




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# The Last Days Of Socrates (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

The trial and death of Socrates (469-399 BCE) have almost as central a place in Western consciousness as the trial and death of Jesus. In four superb dialogues, Plato provides the classic account. Euthyphro finds Socrates outside the court-house, debating the nature of piety, while the Apology is his robust rebuttal of the charges of impiety and a defence of the philosopher's life. In the Crito, while awaiting execution in prison, Socrates counters the arguments of friends urging him to escape. Finally, in the Phaedo, he is shown calmly confident in the face of death, skilfully arguing the case for the immortality of the soul. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Plato (c.427-347 BC) stands with Socrates and Aristotle as one of the shapers of the whole intellectual tradition of the West. He founded the Academy in Athens, the first permanent institution devoted to philosophical research and teaching, and the prototype of all Western universities. Hugh Tredennick was Dean of the Faculty of Arts at London University. Harold

Tarrant is Senior Lecturer in Classics at the University of Sydney.

Ordered for my Intro to Philosophy, came with pre-emptive reading ability through Kindle. I find it to be quite thrilling and thought probing. While violence and sexual content aren't directly spoken of, the theme of the book holds a reflection on a man's last days before his execution.

As Socrates abstained from recording his philosophies, we must thank Plato for having the insight to preserve Socratic thoughts for posterity. As a student of Socrates, it seems that Plato, through his own writings, attempts to preserve the memory of his well respected teacher. In *The Last Days of Socrates*, Plato begins with *Euthyphro* and we see the Socratic method in action. Socrates and Euthyphro discuss the nature of piety, and through a series of thought provoking questions, Socrates argues for what he feels is the proper relationship between Man and God. Next, Plato discusses the trial of Socrates by the Athenian aristocracy. Again, we see Socrates using his rhetorical skills in illustrating the hypocrisy and prejudice pervading throughout the Athenian government. Socrates discusses what role a good citizen should play in government. He announces his being a "gadfly" on the hide of the establishment, and we also find Socrates exposing his own intelligence by claiming that he, in fact, knows very little. The *Apology* is by far my personal favorite section of the book. After Socrates conviction, we find him discussing the morality of obeying or breaking laws in *Crito*. He meets with one of his close friends and the two discuss Socrates' options in regard to his death sentence. Here we see Socrates espouse the belief that it is acceptable to break an unjust law, however, one must also accept the consequences for breaking said law in order to preserve the stability of society. *The Last Days of Socrates* tackles many complex issues which are as relevant today as they were when first committed to paper in the 4th century B.C. This should be standard reading for any introductory course in political theory, and a must have for anyone interested in philosophy or ethics.

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Truly life changing. Highly recommended for those in law school.

Wonderful piece of knowledge. In this book Plato introduces us to the brilliant mind of Socrates and his belief in afterlife. The concepts of heavens and hell. he talks about the earth and in many different aspects. Many things that people take as Christian values do not seem to be the case after reading this book. It sheds a light on the many aspects of our belief system, spirituality etc. Must read if you want to have a better understanding of Christianity and its roots. This book contains; before Socrates' trial, his trial and after his trial.

The Last Days of Socrates is a essential reading for anyone with an interest in philosophy or Western culture. What I find so amazing about and most ancient philosophy is that the questions it raises are still relevant today. For those readers not familiar with Plato, the author of the four dialogues that make up the book, he lived during the fourth century BC. Plato is credited with founding the Academy in Athens, which was essentially the first institution devoted to philosophical research and teaching. Many scholars claim it was the prototype of all Western universities. It's interesting to note that, Plato was a student of Socrates. And much like Jesus Christ, we have no written documents from Socrates himself. Strangely, this isn't the only similarity between Socrates and Jesus Christ either. Whatever the reason, it seems that many people in modern society believe that the philosophy of the ancients is not relevant to them. I believe the contrary and I'm not sure we're any wiser in the modern era. In fact, I'm quite sure that we aren't. Yes, technology has changed, but life's most important questions have not. And we still don't have answers to them. If anything, there are more distractions and noise that keep us from pondering the mysteries of life today. Anyway, this book is a collection of four early Socratic dialogues: "Euthyphro," "Apology," "Crito," and "Phaedo." Translator Harold Tarrant explains in his introduction that most scholars do not believe the events depicted by Plato actually happened, but rather, they are Plato's depiction of Socratic philosophy in action. It's also worth noting that the Socratic dialogues were not unique to Plato. In the "Euthyphro", Plato writes: "Consider the following point: is the holy approved by the gods because it's holy, or is it holy because it's approved?" This dialogue essentially examines Socrates' questioning of religion, more specifically, holiness or piety. Holiness was one of five Greek virtues. It seems that the purpose of the dialogue is to explore the definitions of holiness by asking the difficult questions. We are left to consider whether Socratic doubt is more truthful and more valuable than unreasoned religious dogmatism. "The question which excites the Socratic mind is

how anybody, man or god, can recognize any action as an instance of goodness. What is the standard, and in what terms can we express it?" On that question it must be said that "Euthyphro" fails to provide an answer that suffices. In the "Apology", Plato writes: "It is because they enjoy hearing me examine those who think that they are wise when they are not; an experience which has its amusing side." The classic scenario in a Greek tragedy is when a person of high moral principle is confronted step by step with a bad situation from which there is no escape, oftentimes through a conflict with people of lower moral principles. As the "Apology" demonstrates, the art of writing a tragedy was not lost on Plato. The "Apology", then, is Socrates' self-defense at his trial. Socrates, using his rhetorical skills, talks of the ills apparent in the Athenian government. According to Plato, Socrates did not live an ordinary and quiet life. He didn't care for the things that most people care about: making money, a comfortable home, high status, and political appointments. He certainly was not afraid of dying. As he said, "Nothing can harm a good man either in life or after death, and his fortunes are not a matter of indifference to the gods." Socrates supposedly said: "It is only too likely that neither of us has any knowledge to boast of; but he thinks he knows something which he does not know, whereas I am quite conscious of my ignorance. At any rate it seems that I am wiser than he is to the small extent, that I do not think that I know what I don't know." Accordingly, this book really ought to be read by anyone seeking a liberal education.

The Last Days of Socrates. Probably getting it for a class. This is the one you need. Story of Socrates as he was imprisoned and refused to flee for he did not believe he was guilty of anything.

Great anthology, good translation

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