

# SOCRATES

## Character Breakdown

Socrates: the chief protagonist of the play. The play opens with Socrates, seventy years old but still vigorous in both mind and body. As he remains on stage throughout most of the play, Socrates is able to display the full panoply of emotions: concerned teacher, sharp inquisitor, long-suffering husband, gentle father, principled defendant and prisoner, and in the end, a brave and loving man. In short, SOCRATES allows the audience to observe a man of many sides who, though constantly tested, retains a core of deep humanity.

Xanthippe: Socrates' wife. Xanthippe appears at first to be, in a word, a nag. She complains constantly about Socrates' appearance, lack of attention towards her and their son, his daily forays into the marketplace, and their near constant poverty. However, when visiting him in prison on the day of his execution, she expresses deep love and admiration most notably through the song *You Were Still My Star*.

Euthyphro: Socrates' interlocutor in the discussion about piety. Euthyphro has come to Athens to prosecute his father for manslaughter on the basis of his understanding of piety. At first, Euthyphro claims perfect understanding of the term. However, through a series of questions by Socrates, Euthyphro becomes increasingly frustrated by his inability to provide a clear and precise definition. We later learn that not only did Euthyphro prosecute his own father but also accused Socrates of "refusing to accept the gods," one of the chief indictments leading to Socrates' execution.

Plato: Though destined to become one of the world's great philosophers, in the play he is, along with Crito and Phaedo, simply one of Socrates' loyal students. History tells us he was about twenty years old when he met Socrates. In the song, *If I Could Be*, Plato fantasizes being like Socrates but, as the song progresses, comes to realize that it's more important to be his true self.

Crito: Perhaps the most emotional and passionate of Socrates' students, he implores Socrates to escape from prison. Failing that, he begs Socrates to delay drinking the poison till much later in the day so he can spend more time with him.

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Phaedo: A student of Socrates. After Socrates is convicted, Plato tells Phaedo to speak with him suggesting that Phaedo is the student with whom Socrates feels most comfortable expressing his deepest thoughts to.

Apollo: A student of Socrates. Though appearing the most loyal, he is easily seduced by the Sophists and joins the masses in the chant “I serve the state, it will provide.”

Menexenus: Socrates’ son. In the play he is six or seven years old. He loves his father dearly and agrees at their final meeting to always help his mother and study hard...even math.

The Three Merchants: The merchants have a complicated relationship with Socrates. At first they warn Plato not to get involved with Socrates “that is, if you want to keep your sanity.” Later, however, they warm up to him in the song *This Great City*. Eventually, however, they revert to their original suspicions as they vigorously join in the chanting of “I serve the state, it will provide” and, as observers at Socrates’ trial, wait impatiently for his conviction.

Jailor: A common man who acts kindly towards Socrates in his final days. It is he who administers the poison.

The Sophists: Contemporaries of Socrates, they taught skepticism about morality and knowledge, coached in the art of politics and took fees for their services; all of which Socrates eschewed.