

PLATO

REPUBLIC

Study Questions

Book I

- 1) What are we supposed to learn from the way in which Socrates is brought to stay in Piraeus and participate in the discussion?
- 2) How does the question of whether to return a sword to an enraged friend point to a difficulty in Cephalus' understanding of justice?
- 3) If justice consists in rendering good to friends and harm to enemies, as Polemarchus claims, what good can the just man do; in other words, what good is justice?
- 4) According to Thrasymachus, whose good is served by justice, where justice is understood to be what is commanded by the laws of a political community?

Book II

- 5) According to Glaucon, most people believe that injustice is wrong only by convention and law, but good by nature and intrinsically. How does the story of Gyges support this view?
- 6) Adeimantus argues that some people are just voluntarily, but this does not mean that they believe justice is good for its own sake. Why, then, do they act justly?
- 7) Why is it, according to Socrates, that human beings form political communities? What principles must be followed in constructing a just political community?

Book III

- 8) Why does Socrates think that the stories and songs taught to children and young people are so important?
- 9) What is the purpose of the noble lie?

Book IV

- 10) What is the basis of Socrates' claim that the regime he has constructed in speech is the happiest and most just?
- 11) How does Socrates' definition of justice differ from that of Polemarchus?

Book V

- 12) Why do Polemarchus and Adeimantus oblige Socrates to return to the consideration of the private life of the guardians?
- 13) What argument does Socrates give for the equality of men and women?

Book VI

- 14) What is Socrates' image of the divided line intended to show?

Book VII

- 15) What is the role of mathematics in the education of the guardians?

Books VIII & IX

- 16) According to Socrates, what is the fatal weakness of democracy?
- 17) Why is it, according to Socrates, that the life of a tyrant is the worst possible human life?