

Aristotle

c. 384–322 BC

Aristotle was a philosopher, poet, scientist and teacher.

He was born in northern Greece in 384 BC into a rich family and was well-educated. Aristotle was interested in nature, science and art. He was taught by another famous Greek named Plato and learnt how to discuss ideas about the world.

Aristotle opened a school in Athens and came up with lots of new ideas about life and the world. He began to teach people how to observe how things worked rather than make guesses.

Many of his ideas have influenced the way people learn and practise science today. For example, Aristotle taught students how to cut up animals to find out about their bodies. He also sorted living things into different groups.

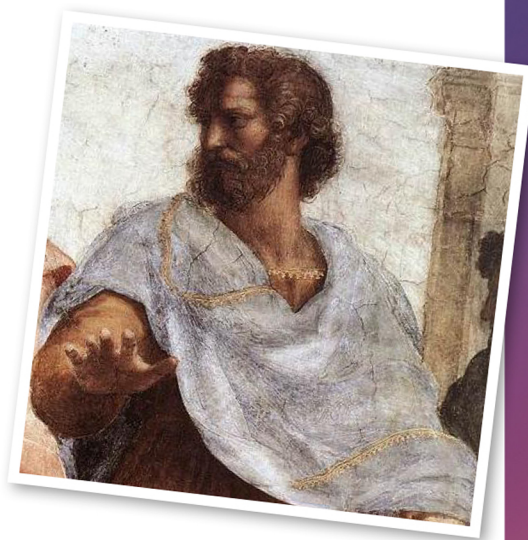
Importantly, Aristotle found proof that the Earth was round and observed how and why objects fall through the air at different speeds.

However, some of Aristotle's ideas were not so accurate. For example, he also believed that the universe had no beginning nor would it ever end.

Aristotle wrote his ideas and works down, which were studied by future generations. Aristotle died in 322 BC, aged 62. He had two children.

Fascinating fact

One of Aristotle's most famous students was the future Greek ruler, Alexander the Great!



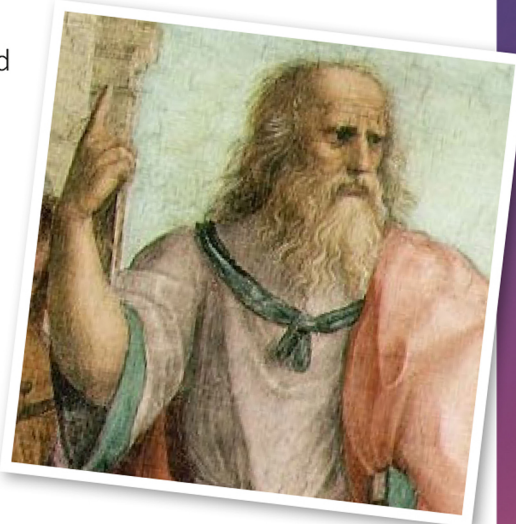
Plato

c. 428–347 BC

Plato was a philosopher, writer, mathematician and teacher.

He was born in Athens around 428 BC and was well-educated. Plato was taught by the great teacher, Socrates, and showed talents in grammar, poetry, mathematics and politics.

Plato was unhappy with the way that Athens was ruled, and started to think about how governments should behave. He believed that rulers should be intelligent people, not just good warriors.



Plato discussed many subjects such as mathematics, art and morals, and wrote down several sides of an argument to encourage people to think. These writings were called 'dialogues' because they were written like a conversation between different characters.

Plato opened one of the first universities, known as the Academy, in Athens. Here, he taught Aristotle, who became another famous Greek philosopher and scientist.

Plato's ideas have helped to form modern philosophy, and his ideas are still read and discussed today.

He died around the year 347 BC at 80 years of age. It is not known if he had any children.

Fascinating fact

Plato thought that artists were a very bad influence on society!

Archimedes

c. 287–212 BC

Archimedes was a mathematician, engineer, inventor and philosopher.

He was born around 287 BC on the island of Sicily, which used to be part of the ancient Greek empire. Later, he was educated in Egypt but returned to work in Sicily.

Archimedes is well-known for his mechanical inventions such as the compound lever. He also invented a type of mechanism that could raise water by scooping it up and carrying it upwards when turned. Known as an Archimedes' screw, the mechanism is still used today in some machines.



One of Archimedes' discoveries even came to him while taking a bath! He realised that when an object goes into water, it forces the water out of position. He called this process 'displacement'. He also created a scientific law called Archimedes' principle, which explains why objects float or sink.

Archimedes worked out the answers to complicated maths problems, such as finding the value of 'pi', a number used when measuring circles.

In later life, Archimedes designed weapons, such as the catapult and a 'ship shaker' claw that grabbed onto enemy ships. Another unusual weapon he developed was a mirror that reflected the Sun's rays onto invaders' wooden boats, setting them on fire!

Archimedes was killed when his hometown was invaded by Roman soldiers, around the year 212 BC. It is not known if he had a wife or children.

Fascinating fact

Apparently, when Archimedes discovered his water theory in the bath, he leapt up and ran through the streets naked shouting 'Eureka!' meaning 'I have discovered it!'

Pythagoras

c. 570–495 BC

Pythagoras was a philosopher, mathematician and teacher.

He was born in Greece around the year 570 BC but not much is known about his early life. Historians believe that Pythagoras travelled and even studied for a while in a secret cave, to focus on his ideas.

Pythagoras opened a school of philosophy, teaching his ideas to students. He believed in living a strict life without many luxuries. Pythagoras was also a good public speaker and was able to influence many people with his ideas about how they should live.

However, Pythagoras' mathematical discoveries are thought to be his biggest achievements. He worked out rules about shapes and angles that are still used today.

Pythagoras believed that numbers had special properties. For example, he thought that 10 was the 'perfect number' and that there were male and female numbers.

Pythagoras died around the year 495 BC, aged approximately 75. Some historians claim he was killed during a riot. He had four children.

Fascinating fact

Pythagoras believed that he had lived four previous lives, and could remember details about each one!



Alexander the Great

356–323 BC

Alexander the Great was a king of Macedonia who united Greece and conquered many lands.

He was born in Macedonia, part of the ancient Greek kingdom, in 356 BC. His father and mother were the king and queen of Macedon so Alexander grew up in a royal court.

While his father spent most of his time fighting against Greece's enemies, Alexander learnt maths, archery and other subjects. He was even taught by the famous philosopher, Aristotle. Soon, Alexander realised that he wanted to become a leader, soldier and hero.



When his father, the king, was murdered, Alexander was worried that the crown would go to someone else. So, he gathered an army to murder his enemies. Alexander became king at 19 years old and united the different states of Greece into one large empire. He won the support of other rulers and led a large army to face his greatest enemy, King Darius, the ruler of the Persian empire.

His army finally defeated Darius in 333 BC, and Alexander became King of Persia as well as Macedonia. He had control over a huge area we now know as the Middle East and parts of Asia. Alexander set up a new capital city for the Greek empire, Alexandria, and conquered other lands such as Egypt. Alexander stopped riots in his own Greek city-states such as Thebes.

Alexander the Great died at the age of 32 in 323 BC. He had three children.

Fascinating fact

Alexander was known as 'The Great' because he conquered so many lands and became the overall Greek ruler.