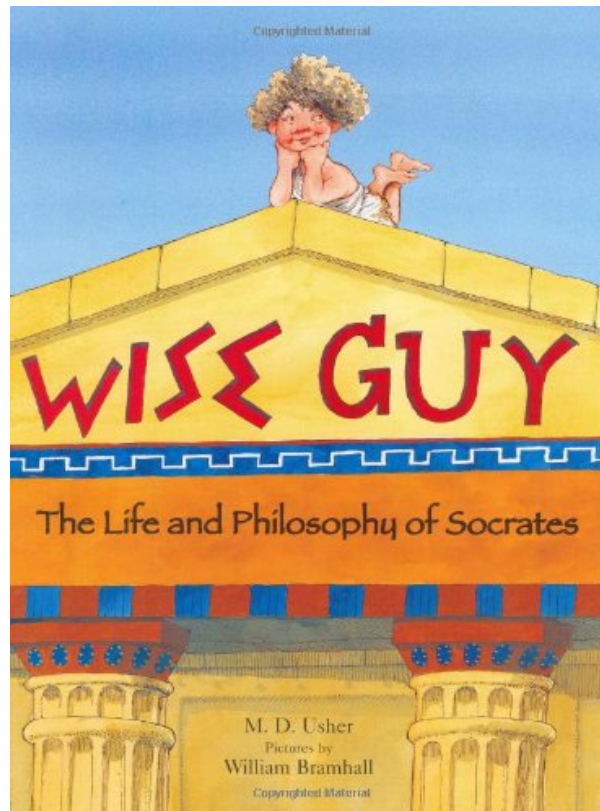
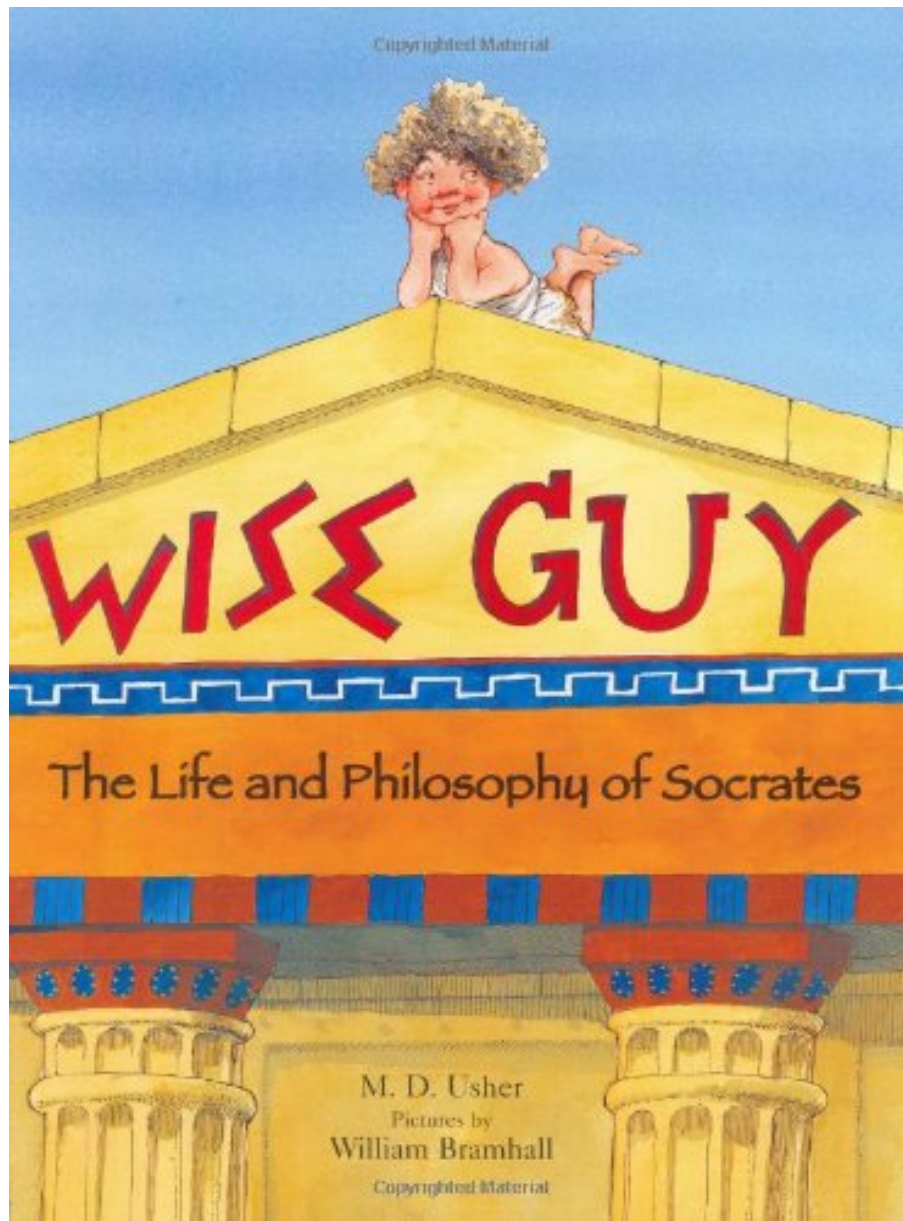


# WISE GUY: THE LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY OF SOCRATES BY M. D. USHER



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From School Library Journal

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to Socrates will find this an original, but not wholly successful, choice. Carolyn Phelan  
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#### Review

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Greek philosophy for kids

"I know that I know nothing."

With this classic statement, uttered over two thousand years ago, Socrates set the standard for the future of Western philosophy. By day, he soaked up the sun in the Athenian marketplace, where he'd converse for hours on end about the meaning of wisdom, right and wrong, courage, justice, and love. By night, he feasted and danced with friends. He was charming, but not handsome, happy, but not rich. Unfortunately, his method of thinking did not sit well with everyone. In the end, his fellow Athenians punished him with death.

The story of Socrates' life unfolds through cheerful illustrations and a two-tiered text, one layer quite simple, the other full of juicy additional details about the philosopher's life and times. The ending assembles a "School of Athens," showcasing thinkers, from Erasmus to Martin Luther King, Jr., who have been inspired by Socrates' philosophy.

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9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Not another mafia story

By Bill Koch, DDS

All those days of torture came back to me-- the "Socratic Method" they called it... THEY being my oral surgery profs. They just kept asking questions until we ran out of answers. Mark Usher brings the father of philosophy to life in *Wise Guy*, an easy-to-read, well-illustrated primer for kids. The book is appropriate for two age groups, 6-8 and 9-12, as it is written and illustrated for the younger readers in the main frames, with more dissertation on sidebars for the pre-teens. The book covers Socrates' early life as he attempted to pin down the basic concept of the idea. It continues along, with Socrates picking up disciples as he developed the dialectic-- his framework for the logical analysis of ideas. The eternal question of the nature of good and evil prompts him to spawn the logical basis for ethics. Finally, as his enemies bring him to trial for his teachings, it is the ethics he deduced that left him no alternative but the cup of hemlock.

In a world of post-modern cultural and ethical relativism, it is precisely Socrates who can offer our young people an anchor in the form of logical analysis of ethical dilemmas. The pursuit of wisdom is the pursuit of truth, which is in reality the search for an absolute. Contrast this to our modern culture's use of phrases such

as "my truth" and "what's right for me", and the book offers its best lesson.

Written in a lighthearted, storybook fashion, one is hard pressed to be saddened at the demise of Socrates. His death marked the notion that no man is above the law, despite its imperfections. This is important to note for parents concerned about the appropriate time to introduce literature with death involved. It is definitely not frightening as presented.

More could have been mentioned about the Socrates-Plato-Aristotle continuum, but for the intended reader this may be more dialogue than needed to get the message across. All in all this is a good work

Bill Koch, DDS

Barre, Vermont

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

For kids from 1 to 92

By Augustine

"Wise Guy" is possibly one of the cleverest children's books I have ever come across. Although the main text is ostensibly targeted at "juveniles," the delightful illustrations will nevertheless appeal to the youngest kiddies in the crowd (my 4-year-old was ROFL at Socrates' antics), while the sidebar commentary offers adult-level background info on the thinking, history, and legend behind Socrates and ancient Greece. The storyline itself is captivating, and the end of the book deftly ties in the impact of Socrates' legacy on our modern world, linking the ancient "Wise Guy" to later Wise Guys (including Gandhi, Hannah Arendt, and MLK)-a gentle and good-natured debunking of scoffers who would dismiss Socrates as just another Dead White Male. The author, a university professor, does his own homework too: the end pages provide handy sections entitled "The Ancient Sources" and "Further Reading," which will surely be useful for those whose interest in the classics is piqued by this marvelous book. Let us hope for many additional works in this vein by the duo of Usher and Bramhall.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Engaging Wisdom and Kids

By Wishful Thinker

With "Wise guy" Professor Usher and artist Bramhall have brilliantly captured the ancient sage, Socrates, growing from childhood through adulthood always asking those simple questions that through the ages have always had hard answers. These are questions that each person must grapple with. The clever text and extraordinary illustrations comfortably link the reader to the person, Socrates, and ancient Greece. The sidebar text on each page provides more depth that enables an advanced young reader or an adult to probe more deeply into the ideas and concepts presented. This is a must-have book for kids with an inquisitive mind. Bravo to Usher and Bramhall for their engaging book. Let's have more!

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