

The allegory of the cave assignment

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

On top of the wall were some statues, which were manipulated by another group of people, lying out of sight behind the partial wall. Because of the fire, the statues created shadows across the wall that the prisoners were facing. The prisoners watched the stories that these shadows played out, and because these shadows were all they ever saw. They believe them to be the most real things in the world. When they talked to one another, they named what was before them, referring to these shadows.

These prisoners represented the lowest stage of imagination. If a prisoner is freed from his bonds, and is forced to look at the fire and at the statues themselves he will suffer from pain and confusion because of direct exposure to the light of the fire. After a period of time the prisoner will realize that what he sees now is the reality rather than the shadows he has always thought of as real. He will understand how the fire and the statues together caused the shadows, which were the copies of the actual real things.

He will accept the statues and fire as the most real things in the world. The stage in the cave represents belief. Next, if the prisoner is dragged out of the cave into the world above, he will be so astonished by the light up there that he will only look at shadows, then at reflections, then finally at the real objects. He will see that these are even more real than the statues were, and that the shadows were only illusions. This is when the prisoner would have reached the cognitive stage of thought, seeing the real things by their forms.

After coming to these realizations, the prisoner, out of pity, might return to the cave to try to enlighten his former fellows, but if he attempted to release them to experience what they would see as madness, they would try to kill

him. Socrates says that this allegory explains why philosophers are so often mocked by society; they have been blinded by the truth of the Good, and those to whom they try to explain themselves find their ideas incomprehensible. These people are trapped in the illusory world of the senses just as much as the prisoners were trapped in the cave.

Socrates believed the ability to perceive the world of forms lies in the soul of each person, requiring only a proper education to be released. The rulers of the city must receive this education and then return from their studies to care for the city. Without their rule, the city will be governed “in which men fight with one another about the shadows only and are distracted in the struggle for power, which in their eyes is a great good”. Fighting over ruling leads to the destruction of the city. The philosophers will therefore feel obligated to repay their debt to the city that raised them by ruling it properly.