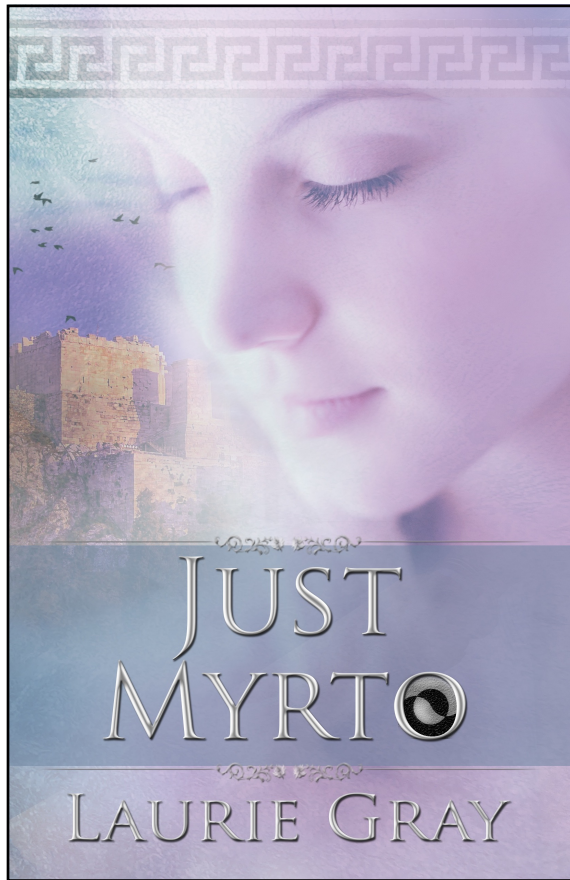


# JUST MYRTO

By Laurie Gray



## ABOUT THE BOOK

After caring for her dying father, Myrto is left with nothing; no dowry for a marriage and no home. In Ancient Greece, women had no rights, no respect, and no control over their lives. So it is up to Myrto's older brother to decide her fate, and he chooses to give Myrto to his teacher and friend, Socrates, for a second wife to bear him sons. Neither Xanthippe, Socrates' wife, nor Myrto is pleased with the arrangement, but since Myrto has no choice, she will make the best of it. Socrates wife, however, frightens and bullies Myrto. Myrto is shocked when Socrates is kind to her and treats her with respect. He invites her to come with him into the city every day, and to engage in his students' discussions. Socrates asks Lamprocles, his son, to teach Myrto to read, and together Lamprocles and Myrto study the ancient writings. Soon Myrto gives birth to a son, and Myrto has come to love Socrates. After their second son is born, officials in Athens charge Socrates with corrupting the young men of Athens with his philosophy and throw him in jail to await trial. Once again Myrto's life will change as a result of a man, but she will rise up and be who she is; just as she has learned to do.

## ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide is written in alignment with the Common Core State Standards for grades 9 and 10 but teachers may determine that the questions and activities can also be used for grades 11 and 12. The discussion questions and activities will challenge students to refer back to the text in order to use critical thinking and problem solving skills. Just Myrto will also help students meet the standards for College and Career Readiness because of the complex ideas presented. Further, reading about a different time period and culture will build a foundation for background knowledge so that students will be better readers in all content areas.

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## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

The references to Greek gods and goddesses, mythical and physical locations, as well as food and literature used throughout mythology are listed in the glossary. As a way to familiarize your students with the terms in the glossary, divide students into groups of three and assign each group the same number of terms. Ask students to create a poster with a picture illustrating each term their group has been assigned. Display the posters in the classroom for quick reference as the students read the novel.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Myrto so willingly marry Socrates even though she does not want to? How does Socrates' behavior and kindness surprise Myrto?
2. How do Myrto's attitude and feelings change from, "Socrates had absolutely no feature that one might call attractive" on page 11 to love, respect, and admiration? When does her love for him begin to grow?
3. Why do the people of Athens disapprove of Socrates' influence over young men? Why is it worse to teach a young woman? How do the people of Athens respond to Myrto coming into the city with Socrates?
4. What secret does Socrates tell Myrto that helps dissipate her fear of Xanthippe? How does knowing the secret help Myrto overcome her fear?
5. What helps develop the relationship between Myrto and Lamprocles? How does he react to the news of Myrto and Socrates' baby?
6. What role does Myrto play in the education of the girls in Socrates' home? How does teaching Korinna to read affect all of the girls in Socrates home? How does Xanthippe plan to achieve the goal of the girls learning to read?

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7. On page 151, Aspasia advises Myrto to use her head, but follow her heart. How does this advice help Myrto make her decision about marrying Plato?
8. How do Xanthippe's feeling change toward Myrto? What brings about the change in Xanthippe's attitude?
9. Why does Socrates refuse to quit teaching when he knows he will be charged with a crime? What does his family want him to do?
10. How does the title reflect Myrto's character? How can you justify that the title is appropriate to the novel?
11. In what way does Myrto's dream in the Prologue play out in her life with Socrates?

Correlates to Common Core State Standards Language: Conventions of Standard English: L.9-10.1 and Speaking & Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: SL.9-10.1

An Educator's Guide  
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CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

## Illuminating Quotes

Ask students to choose three quotes from *Just Myrto* that the author uses to help convey an idea she wants the readers to understand from the text. The quotes can be spoken by the characters or taken from the narration. Students should write the quote with the page number and explain the relevance the quote has to the novel and the meaning or idea the author is trying to convey.

Correlates to Common Core State Standards Language: Conventions of Standard English: L. 9-10.2 and Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.9-10.1 and Production and Distribution: W.9-10.4; Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.9-10.1

## Socratic Discussions

Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one of the topics Socrates discussed with the young men of Athens, Myrto, and Lampocles; fear, tradition, honor, love, and wisdom. Before the discussion, each person in the group should find references in the book about their topic and take notes, including the page number so they can refer to the text during the discussion. Then each person should write open-ended questions about their topic to discuss with others in their group.

Correlates to Common Core State Standards Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.9-10.1 and Craft and Structure: RL.9-10.4 and RL.9-10.5 and RL.9-10.6; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: SL.9-10.1

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## Socrates, Plato, Aristotle: Early Philosophers

Show students the following website and read the brief description of each philosopher:

<http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/socrates-plato-and-aristotle-the-big-three-in-gree.html>

Then ask students to select one of the three and to research his life and the contribution he made to modern society.

Correlates to Common Core State Standards Language: Conventions of Standard English: L.9-10.1 and L.9-10.2 and Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.9-10.2 and Production and Distribution: W.9-10.4 and Research to Build and Present Knowledge: W.9-10.7; Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.9-10.1

## Myrto Evolves

Myrto's character changes over the course of the novel. Ask students to analyze her character, showing how her interactions with other characters and how she helps advance the plot and develop the theme. Students should use direct quotes and cite textual evidence to support their analysis. After the papers are written, put students into small groups to discuss their analysis.

Correlates to Common Core State Standards Language: Conventions of Standard English: L.9-10.1 and L.9-10.2 and Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.9-10.2 and Production and Distribution: W.9-10.4; Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.9-10.3.

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## Facebook Page

Ask pairs of students to select one of the characters and to create a “pretend” Facebook page for that character. Students should complete a full profile and write at least two status updates. Students can then share their pages with others in the class.

Correlates to Common Core State Standards Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.9-10.1 and Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, and W.9-10.3.

## Thematic Quotes

In a group discussion, ask students to identify three underlying themes of Just Myrto. Then, using the Internet, ask them to find a quote that appropriately expresses one of the themes. Students can write the quote and an explanation of how it relates to the novel to share with the class.

Correlates to Common Core State Standards Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.9-10.2; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: W.9-10.4. Research to Build and Present