

Life Principle: Responsibility Damon and Pythias

Pythias and his friend Damon, both followers of the philosopher [Pythagoras](#), traveled to [Syracuse](#) during the reign of the tyrannical [Dionysius I](#) (r. 405–367 BC). Pythias was accused of plotting against the tyrant and was sentenced to death.

Accepting his sentence, Pythias asked to be allowed to return home one last time, to settle his affairs and bid his family farewell. Not wanting to be taken for a fool, the king refused, believing that once released, Pythias would flee and never return.

Damon offered to take his spot while he was gone. The king agreed, on the condition that, should Pythias not return when promised, Damon would be put to death in his place. Damon agreed, and Pythias was released.

Dionysius was convinced that Pythias would never return, and as the day Pythias promised to return came and went, Dionysius prepared to execute Damon. Just as the executioner was about to kill Damon, though, Pythias returned. Apologizing to his friend for his delay, Pythias told of how pirates had captured his ship on the passage back to Syracuse and thrown him overboard. Dionysius listened to Pythias as he described how he swam to shore and made his way back to Syracuse as quickly as possible, arriving just in time to save his friend.

Dionysius was so pleased and astonished with their friendship that he pardoned them both. It was also said that Dionysius then sought to become their third friend, but was denied. [Damon and Pythias – Full Version](#)

[Play script for Damon and Pythias](#)

[Damon and Pythias Intro Video](#)

Step 1: Question Focus: “Responsibility”

[Question Focus Technique Resource](#)

Step 2: Produce Questions.

Rules for producing questions:

1. Ask as many questions as you can.
2. Change any statements into questions.
3. Write down every question exactly as stated.
4. Do not stop to discuss, judge, or answer the questions.

Step 3: Improve the Questions.

- 1) Identify open and closed-ended questions.
- 2) Change questions: select one question to change from open to closed-ended and one closed question to open-ended.

Example: *Closed to open*

What did Damon offer Dionysius to allow Pythias to leave?

How is responsibility demonstrated in this myth?

