



NAME: _____ DATE: _____ CLASS PERIOD: _____

Teacher's Introduction to Hippocrates

"Virtually nothing is known of the first physician named Hippocrates, but there are considered to have been several, all of them teachers at the famous medical school on the Mediterranean island of Cos. It was in the 5th century B.C.E., however, that Hippocrates' name and image began to emerge as a leader in medical research and thought."

"Hippocrates is generally credited with turning away from divine notions of medicine and using observation of the body as a basis for medical knowledge. Prayers and sacrifices to the gods did not hold a central place in his theories, but changes in diet, beneficial drugs, and keeping the body 'in balance' were the key."

"Central to his physiology and ideas on illness was the humoral theory of health, whereby the four bodily fluids, or humors, of blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile needed to be kept in balance. Illness was caused when these fluids became out of balance, sometimes requiring the reduction in the body of a humor through bloodletting or purging..."

Source: Excerpted from "Hippocrates and Rise of Rational Medicine" (http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/greek/greek_rationality.html). In Greek Medicine: "I Swear by Apollo Physician...": Greek Medicine from the Gods to Galen, (http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/greek/greek_rationality.html) an online exhibition by History of Medicine Division at the National Library of Medicine

1. What was the key to the medical knowledge, according to Hippocrates?

The key to medical knowledge was observation of the body.

2. Define "humors" based on the introduction above and name all four humors.

Humor means bodily fluid.

The four humors are blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile.

3. What caused illness according to the humoral theory?

The four humors getting out of balance caused illness.