



# PHI ALPHA THETA

HISTORY HONOR SOCIETY INC.

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## THE INITIATION CEREMONY

### OPTION 1: Full Version (Required for the Installation of a New Chapter)

#### **PRESIDENT OR PRESIDING OFFICER:**

Since you, as students of human thought and action, have expressed a desire to continue upon the high paths of History, and since your predecessors have found you worthy to share such privileges, it is with pleasure that we initiate you into \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, a society dedicated to the service of History.

You know that the Greeks deemed Clio worthy of the highest place among the Muses; you know also of the immeasurability of time and the imperfection of human understanding. Before the beginning of History, time stretched back through unknown eons; the future lies ahead in equally unknown vistas. Within this immense span of eternity, historic time is only a very brief period.

The study of the past may be divided into six great ages. Of these, four have disappeared, having left everlasting impressions on civilization. The fifth age is the present; while the last, the Future, lies ahead to be known and judged by generations yet unborn.

#### **THE PREHISTORIC AGE:**

I am the spokesperson for the Prehistoric Age. In the Prehistoric Age, societies were formed as people learned to make fire, improve their tools and weapons, domesticate animals, raise cereals, weave coarse cloth, construct crude permanent shelters, create art, and develop religious expressions. As their numbers increased, they evolved larger and more complex societies with institutions of government. With the introduction of agriculture and the commencement of trade, people created a system of enduring human relationships. When at last they learned to record their deeds and desires in writing, they passed from the Prehistoric to the Ancient Age.

#### **THE ANCIENT AGE:**

I am the spokesperson for the Ancient Age. In the Ancient Age, early societies in China, India, the Middle East, the Mediterranean World, Africa, and the Americas built cities and created powerful states and empires which were sustained by increased control over the natural environment and a regimentation of society. With steadily increasing religious, political, and economic specialization, social hierarchies appeared. Through reason and speculation, the conceptual realms of religion, ethics, philosophy, and science developed. In the teachings of the philosophers and prophets, individuals learned to understand and transcend the inequities of life, and to perceive the order permeating the universe.

In the latter centuries of the Ancient Age, the great empires of the Afro-Eurasian World experienced political, social, and economic disintegration in the face of numerous challenges. With the collapse of the Han Dynasty in China, the decline of the Roman Empire, and the fall of India's Gupta Empire, the ancient Afro-Eurasian World passed away. The Americas, however, were unaffected by these changes.

### **THE MEDIEVAL AGE:**

I am the spokesperson for the Medieval Age. The Medieval Age began when folk migrations challenged the classical civilizations of Europe and Asia. As the political powers of the great empires declined, new forces emerged. The great religions of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism spread beyond the lands of their birth to bring the majority of the inhabitants of the earth into an understanding of the essentially ethical nature of human life.

In China, Japan and Southeast Asia, India, Africa, the Americas, and the Near and Middle East, rich civilizations arose and achieved stability. Western Europe, however, remained for several centuries a land of instability and conflict. Ideals constantly outstripped practice. The dream of a united Christendom and civilized behavior sharply contrasted with the reality of numerous contending states and the brutalities of feudal warfare. Displays of great power and wealth stood beside a general and harsh poverty of the masses. Yet, the germ of a more stable, refined and prosperous civilization in Europe was alive in the abstract pondering of scholars, in the general technological and mechanical orientations of Western society -- and in the appearance of new expressions of human endeavor -- universities, capitalism, representative assemblies, and constitutional government. A new dynamism was evident which heralded the coming of the Early Modern Age.

### **THE EARLY MODERN AGE:**

I am the spokesperson for the Early Modern Age. During the four hundred years of this age, national states arose in Europe, America, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, and society divided into an increasing number of social classes. Capitalism, emerging from its primitive beginnings, became a dominant feature of Western civilization. Contact was established between isolated continents of the world, and, in successive waves of imperialism, Europeans carried both the virtues and vices of their civilization to all corners of the globe. In the wake of these enlarged activities came revolutions in ideas, institutions and practices. No aspect of life -- religion, family structure, economic activity, political systems or culture -- was left untouched. Great progress was made in material benefits, but often this was at the expense of the significant dislocation of human lives, the suppression of peoples, the ravaging of natural environments, cultural tensions and resentments between peoples, and the intensification of ideological conflicts. Further, concentration on material well-being led to a growing secularization of society. All of these developments would pose serious challenges for the world during the Contemporary Age.

## **THE CONTEMPORARY AGE:**

I am the spokesperson for the Contemporary Age. At the beginning of the Contemporary Age it seemed that the ideals of democracy would soon be achieved throughout the world and that the horrors of war, which had haunted humanity since the beginning of recorded time, would soon be ended forever by an era of perpetual peace and international cooperation. These hopes were dashed by two world wars and numerous smaller conflicts which resulted in untold misery and serious economic and social dislocations. The development of the Cold War, the end of colonialism, and the emergence of the Third World brought an ever-increasing complexity of internal and international relations. All of this tended to promote pessimism and widespread unrest.

Nevertheless, the Contemporary Age has been rich in spiritual values and has had a great thirst for reform and civil rights. The Berlin Wall has been torn down, Communism compromised in many places, and the Cold War brought to an abrupt end. People have practiced humanitarianism on a scale greater than anything known in any other era. And the horizons of human understanding and learning have been widened immeasurably. Globally, great problems still remain -- bitter ethnic feuds, new outbreaks of racism, continuing concerns about sexual discrimination, barbaric violations of human rights, more devastating machines of war, ecological challenges of the greatest magnitude, and the dehumanizing effects of certain modern technologies. In the midst of these tensions, the historian believes that individuals and nations may approach nearer to the ideal of harmonizing responsibility with freedom through the study of the human experience of the past, which will afford content and wisdom for our lives in the Future Age.

## **THE FUTURE AGE:**

I am the spokesperson for the Future Age. You have now passed through five ages of the past, and where the path leads in the future no one can predict. The pessimists may be right. Tensions among nations and power blocs, backed by new material and technological advances, could bring about the destruction of civilized society. The previous ages have demonstrated that nationalism, racism, and sex discrimination are long enduring problems. Therefore, they must be monitored constantly until permanent, yet unknown solutions are evolved. The pessimist sees this delayed into the distant future, but the optimist sees it as just over the horizon where the human race may succeed in producing a civilization immeasurably more peaceful and finer than any the world has yet seen--an age in which may be realized the highest ideals of universal humanity.

It is toward this great goal that the historian should constantly strive. To you, worthy students of History, this challenge is offered so that, in part through your own efforts, the future may become the world's greatest age.

**PRESIDENT OR PRESIDING OFFICER:**

As new members, you will be expected to live up to the ideals of Phi Alpha Theta, keeping in mind the three important forces contained in the words Philia, Anthropolos, Theos--Love, Humanity, God. Among the invaluable lessons that may be learned from the study of History and the ideals of this Society are:

The spirit of respect, which inculcates a sincere regard for the rights of each individual to freedom;

The belief in the community of all persons which renders abhorrent all ideas that tend to foment national hatreds, racial and sexual discrimination, and all forms of injustice;

The need for historians to search for Truth and to accept the responsibility for making decisions in terms of their meaning for others as well as themselves.

Do you accept the challenge of striving to live up to these ideals of Phi Alpha Theta?

[After the appropriate response has been made] I am pleased to welcome you now as newly initiated members of \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta.

**EXPLAIN THE SYMBOLISM AT THIS TIME  
(pages 6-7)**

**CONGRATULATE THE NEW MEMBERS AND PRESENT THEM WITH THEIR  
MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATES AND A RED ROSE.**

## OPTION 2: ABBREVIATED VERSION

### **PRESIDENT OR PRESIDING OFFICER:**

On behalf of the \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, I would like to welcome you to our initiation of new members. Today we are celebrating the achievements of those students who have excelled in their study of History. With us today are the current members of Phi Alpha Theta, the new members and their friends, and others from the \_\_\_\_\_ College/University community who value the pursuit of historical knowledge.

Phi Alpha Theta is a national honor society in History. It was organized at the University of Arkansas in 1921, and since then it has grown to more than 820 chapters. The membership of Phi Alpha Theta is composed of students and faculty who have been elected to membership on the basis of excellence in the study and writing of History. It is highly democratic, however, in that any student of History may become a member simply by maintaining a high standard of work in his/her studies. In addition, all the members participate in the work and direction of the Society.

Phi Alpha Theta is a professional society, which promotes the study of History through the encouragement of research, good teaching, publication, and the exchange of learning among historians in a variety of ways. It seeks to bring students and faculty together both intellectually and socially for mutual understanding and encouragement in their common interest in the study of History.

As new members, you will be expected to live up to the ideals of Phi Alpha Theta, keeping in mind the three important forces contained in the words Philia, Anthropos, Theos-- Love, Humanity, God. Among the invaluable lessons that may be learned from the study of History and the ideals of the Society are:

The spirit of respect, which fosters a sincere regard for the rights of each individual;

The belief in the community of all persons which renders abhorrent all ideas that tend to foment national hatreds, racial and sexual discrimination, or any form of injustice;

The need for historians to search for truth and to accept the responsibility for making decisions in terms of their meaning for others as well as for themselves.

Do you accept the challenge of striving to live up to these ideals of Phi Alpha Theta?

[After the appropriate response has been made] I am pleased to welcome you as newly initiated members of \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta.

**(CONGRATULATE THE NEW MEMBERS AND PRESENT THEM WITH THEIR MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATES AND A RED ROSE.)**

**(NOTE: An explanation of the symbolism of Phi Alpha Theta follows.)**

## SYMBOLISM OF PHI ALPHA THETA

The symbolism of the Society is a Star, a Serpent, the Colors, and the Flower. The six-pointed star, which is composed of two triangles, is worked in black and laid on a circular frame, the whole encircled by a Serpent.

That which governs the universe may be thought of as having three attributes: Parenthood, Spirit of Life, and Reason, which are symbolized by one of the triangles. Ancient philosophers believed that people and the world were made of three elements: Spirit, Blood, and Water. These are represented by the second triangle of the Star.

The triangle with the apex below the base symbolizes the guiding principles of the universe:

1. The Greek letter PI . . . signifies Progonos, for Parenthood.
2. The letter PSI . . . signifies Psyche, for Spirit of Life.
3. The letter LAMBDA . . . signifies Logos, for Reason.

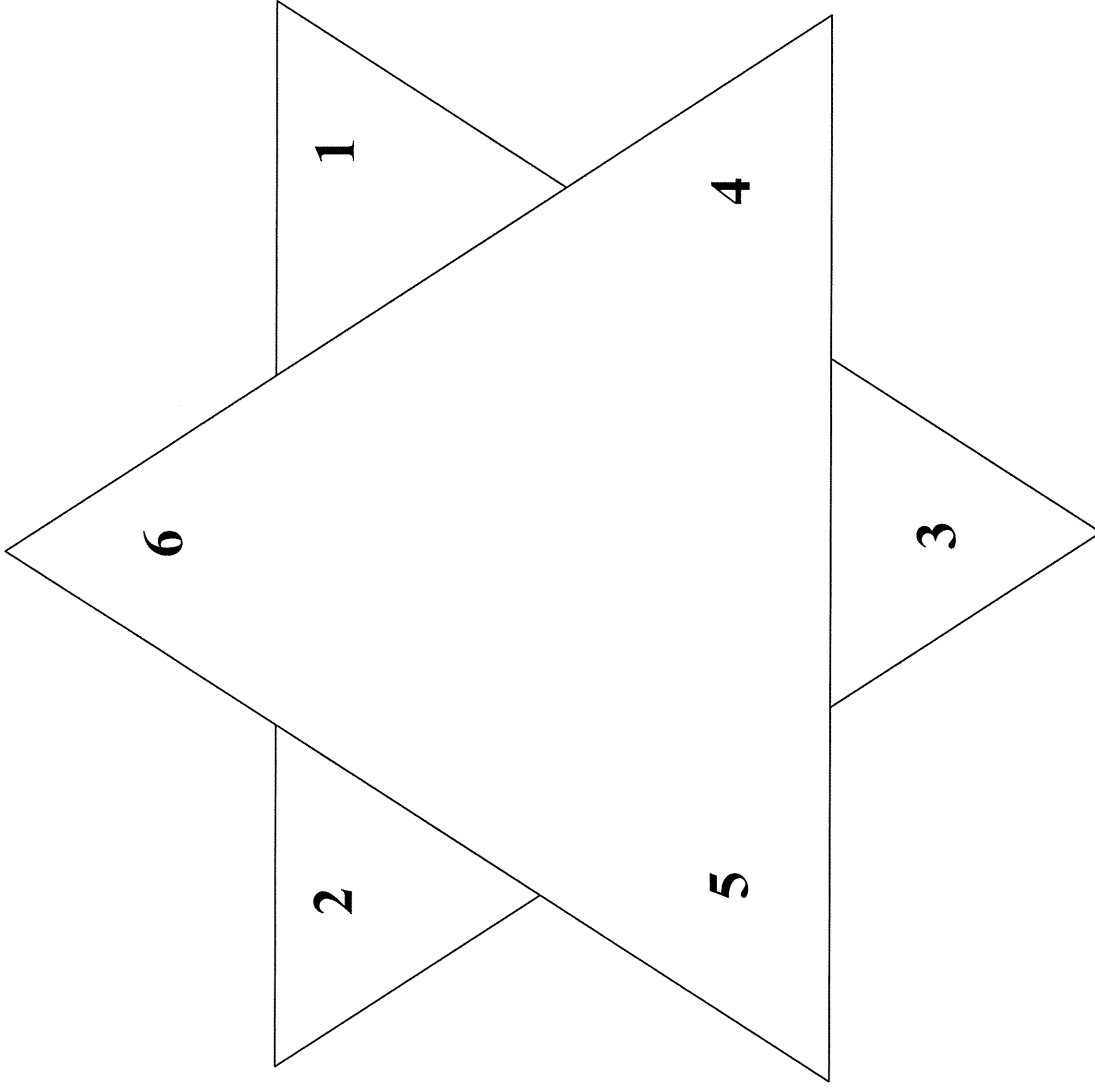
The triangle with the apex above the base symbolizes the earthly and human:

4. The letter ALPHA . . . signifies Haima, for Blood.
5. The letter UPSILON . . . signifies Hydor, for Water.
6. The letter PSI . . . signifies Psyche, for Spirit of Life.

The union of these two triangles forming the six-pointed star (the Ancient Assyrian sign of divinity) symbolizes the intimate relation of the infinite and the human. By some ancient peoples the Serpent was regarded as a symbol of eternity, good fortune, and plenty. In our symbolism it signifies happiness, fruitfulness, and eternity.

Superimposed on the black within the two triangles are the three letters, PHI, ALPHA, THETA, - Philia, Anthropos, Theos, - signifying Love, Humanity, and God.

The colors of our Society also denote the relation between the human and the infinite. The red symbolizes the blood, which is essential to human life, while the blue symbolizes the sky, which to many ancient peoples signified the divine. The flower, a deep red rose, symbolizes beauty, charm, and fervency.



<b>1</b>	<b>PI</b>	<b>PROGONOS</b>
	<b>PARENTHOOD</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>PSI</b>	<b>PSYCHE</b>
	<b>SPIRIT OF LIFE</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>LAMBDA</b>	<b>LOGOS</b>
	<b>REASON</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>ALPHA</b>	<b>HAIMA</b>
	<b>BLOOD</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>UPSILON</b>	<b>HYDOR</b>
	<b>WATER</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>PSI</b>	<b>PSYCHE</b>
	<b>SPIRIT OF LIFE</b>	