

— ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS —

THE  
**GREEKS**  
LEADERS IN DEMOCRACY



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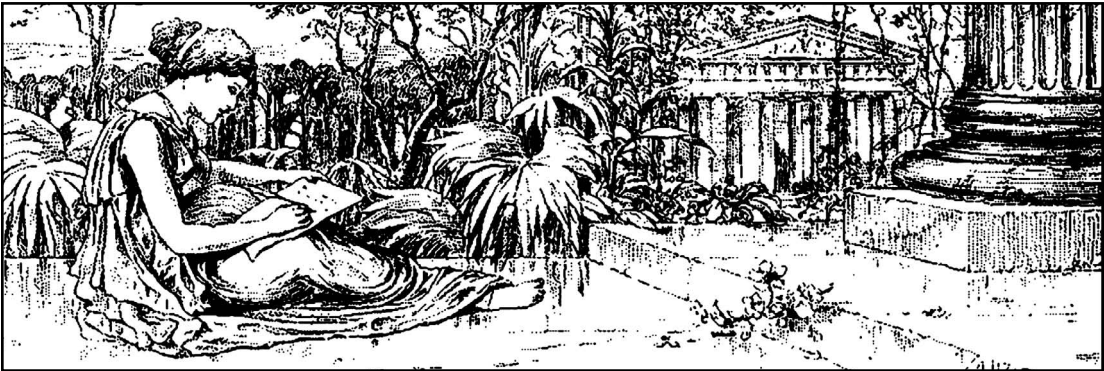
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# introduction



How do you spend your time? Do you read books, go to plays, or watch movies? Do you compete in sports? Have you ever heard of a birthstone? How do you solve a puzzle or math problem? Who first believed the earth revolves around the sun, discovered the smallest particles that make up every living thing, and questioned how things happened in the world around them?

A Greek woman from ancient times writing (above). Amethyst (right) is the birthstone for February.



## BIRTHSTONES

Greeks believed that stones had special powers and decided in the 700s B.C.E. to give each month a special stone. People wore the stone of their birthday month to festivals or for extra luck and protection.

Some refer to Ancient Greece as the birthplace of Western Civilization. Greek ideas about art, government, **philosophy**, science, mathematics, and athletic competition still influence our lives today. The Greeks prized freedom and encouraged individual thought. The Greeks believed that any individual could be important, that people should be responsible for creating their own happiness, and that ordinary people could rule themselves.

Ancient Greeks used complex mathematics to create the entrance to the original Olympic Stadium in Olympia. This shows the great time and effort put forth to honor athletics.



# WHERE WAS ANCIENT GREECE?

Ancient Greece was an area about the size of present-day Alabama. **Hellas** is the name given to the homeland of both ancient and modern Greeks. Hellas includes the mountainous mainland that juts into the Mediterranean Sea and the islands that are scattered throughout the Aegean and Ionian (Adriatic) seas. Crete is the largest island to the south, Peloponnesus is the **peninsula** to the west, Attica is the peninsula to the north, and Asia Minor, referred to as Ionia, lies east.

A map of ancient Greece



The character of the land was a major reason for how ancient Greeks lived and how their government developed. Most of the land consists of mountains, with Mount Olympus rising to a height of 9,570 feet (2,917 m). Other mountains range from 3,000 to 8,000 feet (914 to 2,438 m). Very little of the land is suitable for farming. Thousands of natural harbors dot the coasts along the many islands.

The Mediterranean climate of ancient Greece was similar to today with short, mild, wet winters. Annual rainfall varied between mountains and coastal areas, ranging from 50 inches (130 cm) in the west to less than 20 inches (50 cm) in the east. Most of the rain fell in winter months. During the summer, skies were cloudless, and breezes from the sea cooled the coast lands. Water was scarce with very few rivers flowing year round. Irrigation for farming on a large scale was not possible.

The long, hot Greek summers were dry. Average temperatures ranged from 40° F (4° C) on the mainland in winter to above 75° F (24° C) during the summer along the coasts. Winter temperatures seldom dropped below freezing, so outdoor activities were enjoyed year round.



Ancient ruins of the fortress at Tiryns, Greece

Since travel was difficult on the rugged land, most people settled in the river valleys or along the coasts. The northern mainland consists mostly of plains. Mountains and lower hills cut the rest of the land into many valleys between the coastal and upland plains. The people who settled in each valley formed **city-states**, which included their town, surrounding villages, and farmlands. Walls surrounded many cities for protection from invaders.

The geography of Greece made it difficult for one ruler to control all of the land. The Greek city-states were independent and often quarreled among themselves. Yet, a common language, religion, and culture created a bond between them. They called themselves **Hellenes** after their land, Hellas. Peoples who lived outside their boundaries were **barbarians**.

## WHO WERE THE ANCIENT GREEKS?

People from Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa met and mingled in the Greek Islands. The first major civilization began on the island of Crete around 3000 B.C.E. These people were known as **Minoans** after King Minos, one of their rulers. The Minoans were expert sailors who grew wealthy from their trade within Greece and other lands along the Mediterranean Sea. Shady groves of olive trees produced oil. Rich soils on sun-baked farms gave the Minoans grains. Wine was made from grapes grown in the vineyards lining the mountain slopes.

Columns still stand among the groves of olive trees.







Palace Knossos

## PALACE KNOSSOS

On the north side of Crete the Minoans built the Palace Knossos. The palace had hundreds of rooms on five levels. Everyone brought their crops to the palace where they were stored and were then distributed back to the people. There were 250,000 storage jars and even indoor plumbing.

There was little need for Minoan city-states to protect themselves from each other. They worked together to produce what they needed for all. The ruler in each city-state told the farmers how much they needed to produce, and their crops were collected in a central area. The ruler then decided what each person would receive in order to live, and as a reward for work. The grains, wines, and oils were stored in sprawling palaces, which contained many rooms or chambers.

Storage compartments and jars at Knossos





The Treasury of Atreus, Mycenae

While the Minoans prospered, another civilization, called Mycenaeans, who arrived from lands north of Greece, began to build a series of hilltop villages on the mountainous mainland around 2000 B.C.E. Mycenaeans had their own customs and languages, but were farmers, traders, and seamen just like the Minoans. However, they were also warriors. By the 1600s B.C.E. they had built walls around their palaces and towns in major valleys for protection.

At first, Mycenaeans learned from the Minoan way of life. Minoan power declined when ash from a volcanic eruption destroyed their fertile soil, and tidal waves damaged their harbors. By then Mycenaeans were ready to extend their own control over the region in 1450 B.C.E.

In spite of their walled palaces, the Mycenaeans were overrun by invaders who destroyed the town of Mycenae and other settlements around 1100 B.C.E. The Mycenaeans fled their homelands to the city-state of Athens or sailed to other distant lands to resettle. Greek culture declined, trade with the East decreased, and a Dark Age began for the Greek Islands. No written records existed, so poems and songs told by fathers to their sons kept Greek knowledge alive. The Dark Age lasted until 800 B.C.E.

Gradually, new settlements that had been established by Greeks as far away as southern Italy, Sicily, along the western Mediterranean Sea, and the eastern shores of the Black Sea became richer and began to exchange ideas and cultures. Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet after 800 B.C.E. A poet by the name of Homer recorded the **Iliad** and the **Odyssey**. By the 700s B.C.E., once again there were many small, independent city-states in Greece, each ruled by a small group of wealthy men.

Samples from Greek and Phoenician alphabets



## ILIAD AND ODYSSEY

In the *Iliad*, the poet Homer tells the story of a long Greek war against the distant city of Troy. After 10 years of battle, the Greeks finally tricked their way into the city. They built a large wooden horse, left it outside the walls of the city, and pretended to sail away. The Trojans dragged the horse into the city and were surprised when Greek soldiers jumped out! The *Odyssey* describes Odysseus's adventures on his long ten-year journey home to Ithaca after the Trojan War.



Odysseus shipwrecked at sea

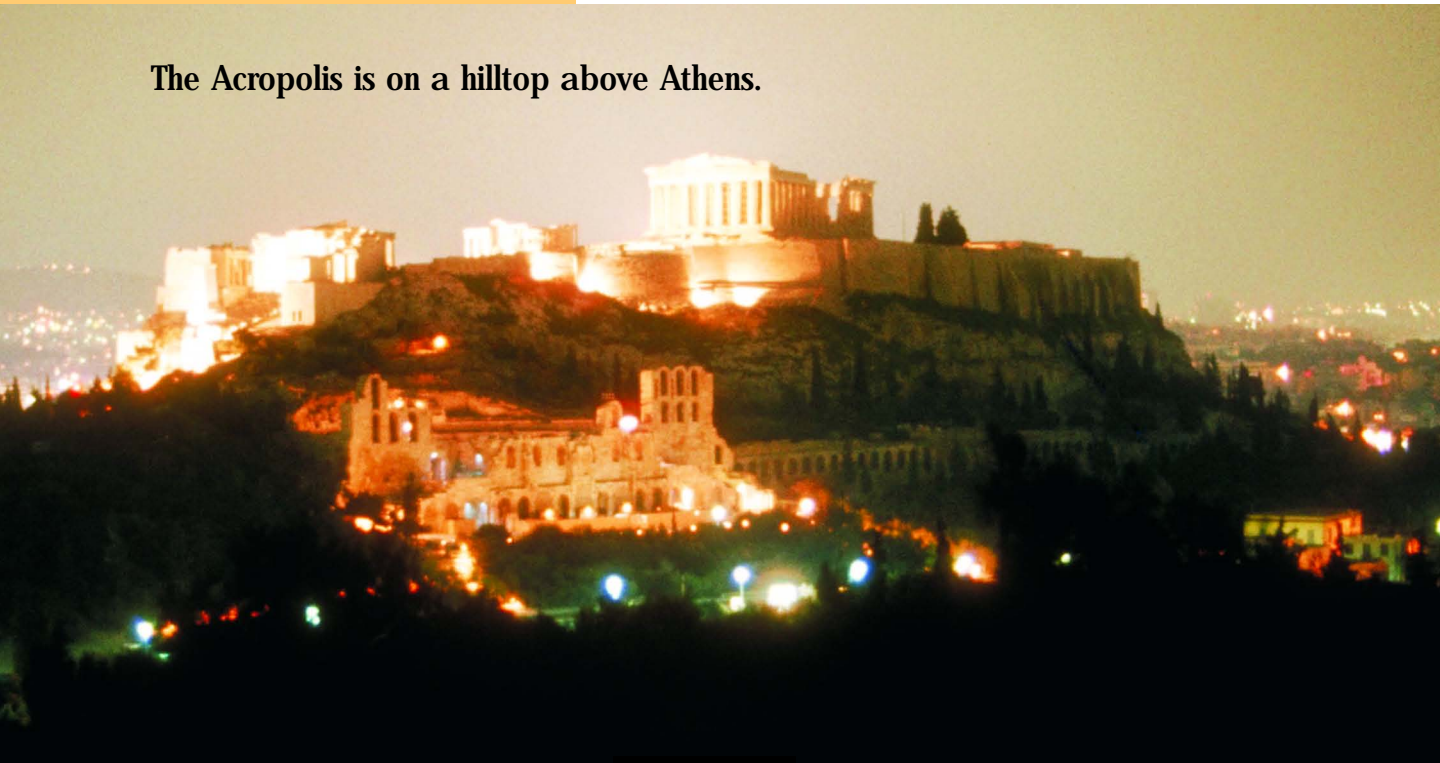
People were divided into social classes based on their wealth and ancestry. **Citizens** could own land and take part in their government. Only those people born to citizens could become citizens. Noncitizens included women, slaves, **serfs**, Greeks from other city-states, and foreign traders. Slaves were allowed to own personal property, but serfs could not. Women were denied the right to own property, vote, or ever become citizens. Women were expected to spend their time in their homes and attend to family needs.

## CITIZEN IN ATHENS

When boys were 18 years old, they applied to become citizens in Athens. A panel of five judges decided if a boy would be a citizen or not. If they doubted his father was a citizen, the boy would be sold into slavery.

Most families lived in simple, small houses with only one or two rooms made of sun-dried bricks and were surrounded by high walls. Wealthier people could afford larger homes built around a central courtyard with separate rooms for cooking, eating, and sleeping. While hard-packed dirt was common flooring in homes, stones or tiles covered the floors in homes of the rich.

The Acropolis is on a hilltop above Athens.



More than half of all Greek families lived on farms, growing wheat or barley and herding livestock. Some farmers even owned slaves. The whole family helped with chores and tended to the groves of olive trees or vineyards. Sheep and goats grazed on land unsuitable for crops. Greece always had too many people with too little farmland to feed everyone in the city-states. As a result, many times throughout history the city-states fought their neighbors to gain land.

In ancient Greece, the husband was the head of the family. Women did household chores, raised children, wove cloth, and supervised any slaves. Young girls were controlled by their fathers before marriage and were expected to obey the husbands picked for them by their fathers. Married by the age of 12 or 13, girls gained status if they had male children.

Within the family, the husband made all decisions. Greek fathers even decided if the family would keep a newborn baby. If the father felt the family could not afford to raise the child, the baby was left out in the open. They were not being cruel, since they assumed someone would find the child and bring it up as their own. These children were often raised and sold as slaves.



Women in Sparta were encouraged to compete in physical activities.

Only children of citizens received an education, and their schooling differed between city-states. Very few girls attended school, but many learned to read at home. In Athens, there were separate schools for subjects like reading, writing, and math. Children learned to play musical instruments like the **aulos** and **lyre**. In physical education classes they ran, jumped, and wrestled. Older boys learned to handle weapons like the spear and sword.

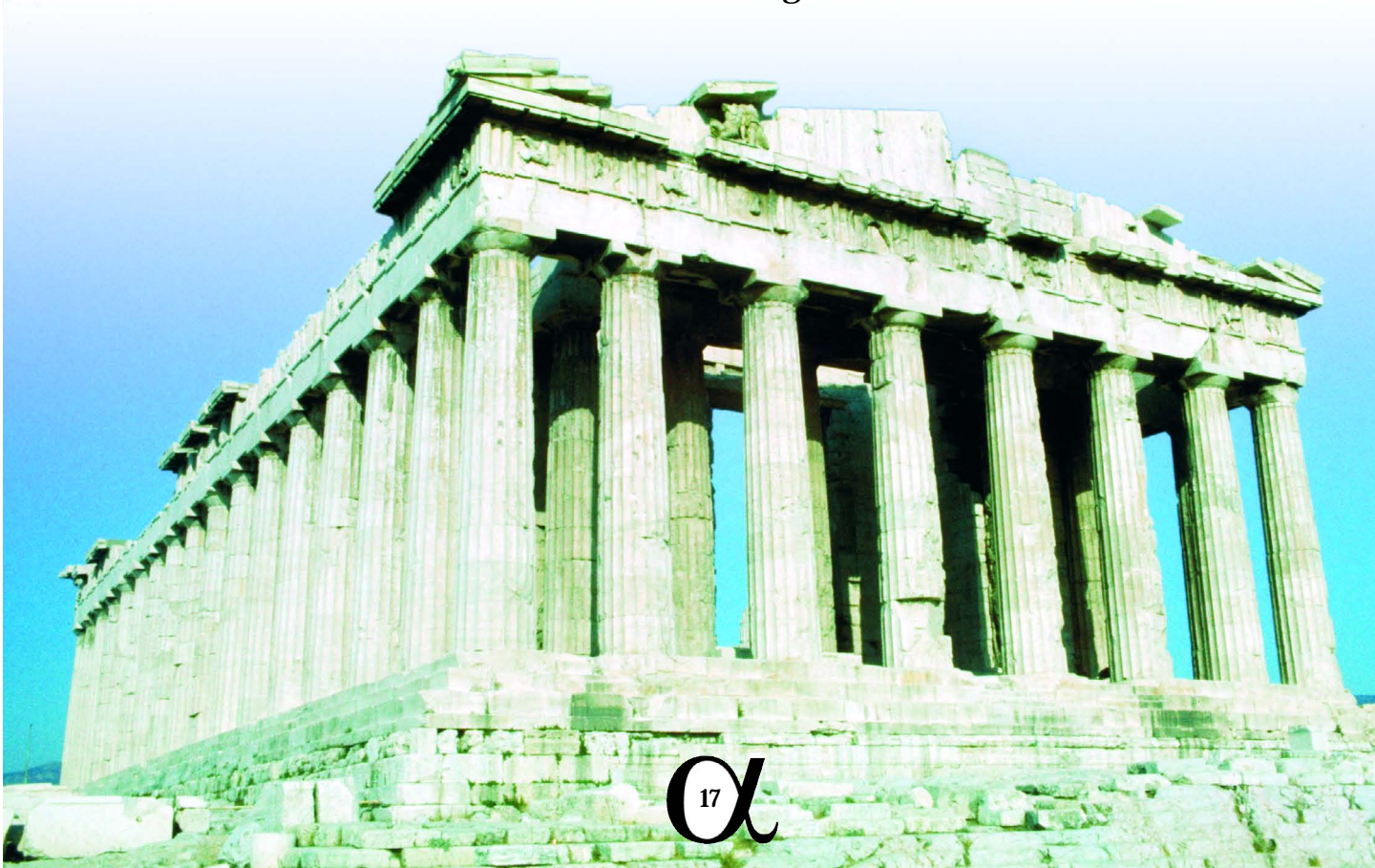
Because the city-state of Sparta wanted tough, warlike people, their schools were much harsher. At seven, boys were sent to military camps where they learned to accept strict discipline. Unlike other city-states, girls in Sparta also engaged in physical competition like the boys.

Universities provided higher education in law, medicine, philosophy, or public speaking. **Plato** founded the world's first university, called the Academy. One of his students, **Aristotle**, later began the Lyceum in Athens.

By the 500s B.C.E. some city-states were becoming more of a **democracy**. All citizens could vote on government policies, hold political office, and serve on **juries**. Poorer noncitizens spent their days working and had little time to participate in government activities.

Athens became a powerful city-state with the most successful democracy and was considered a center for art and learning. The people of Athens lived on land below a rocky hill, or **Acropolis**. A grand temple called the **Parthenon** stood at the top of the Acropolis. In this temple was a statue to their goddess, Athena, goddess of wisdom and warfare.

The Parthenon was home to a statue of the goddess Athena.





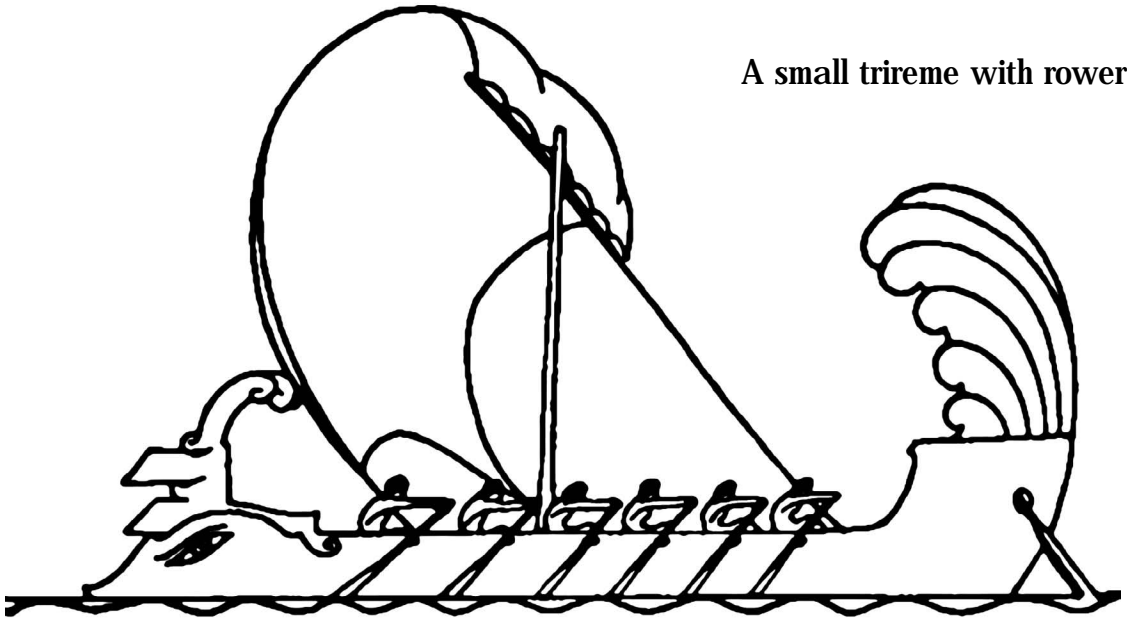
Profits from nearby silver mines made Athens wealthy. Slaves did most of the work, so citizens were free to hold government office or serve on a court jury. Every citizen, rich or poor, had the right to serve permanently in the **assembly**, which passed laws, elected Athenian generals, and made decisions on whether to go to war. In order to have such a meeting, at least 6,000 men had to be present!

The council was a group of 500 members who were elected by the citizens. These councilmen ran the day-to-day business of government. They prepared issues for discussion and vote in the assembly. Juries were created to decide the guilt or innocence of those accused of a crime. In times of war, ten military commanders formed the **stratego**i and made all decisions about defending the city. Athens also had a fleet of more than 200 ships and paid citizens to be in the navy.

## ATHENIAN NAVY

Warships called **triremes** were powered by more than 200 oarsmen who sat on three decks, one above each other on both sides of the ship. The ships had square sails, but they needed the power of the oarsmen in battle. Commanders tried to sink enemy ships by ramming the bronze-tipped bow (front) of the triremes into the side of an enemy vessel.

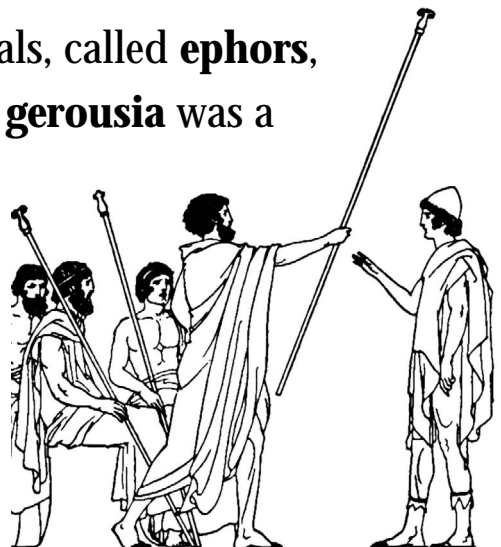
A small trireme with rowers



Sparta had a very different type of government, called an **oligarchy**. Spartans valued toughness and bravery in warriors. Every part of Spartan life was controlled by law, and the city-state was ruled by kings. Only a small number of Spartans were citizens. Citizens did not have to work because they lived off the proceeds from public land, farmed by slaves and serfs. In all of Greece, Spartan women enjoyed the greatest freedom.

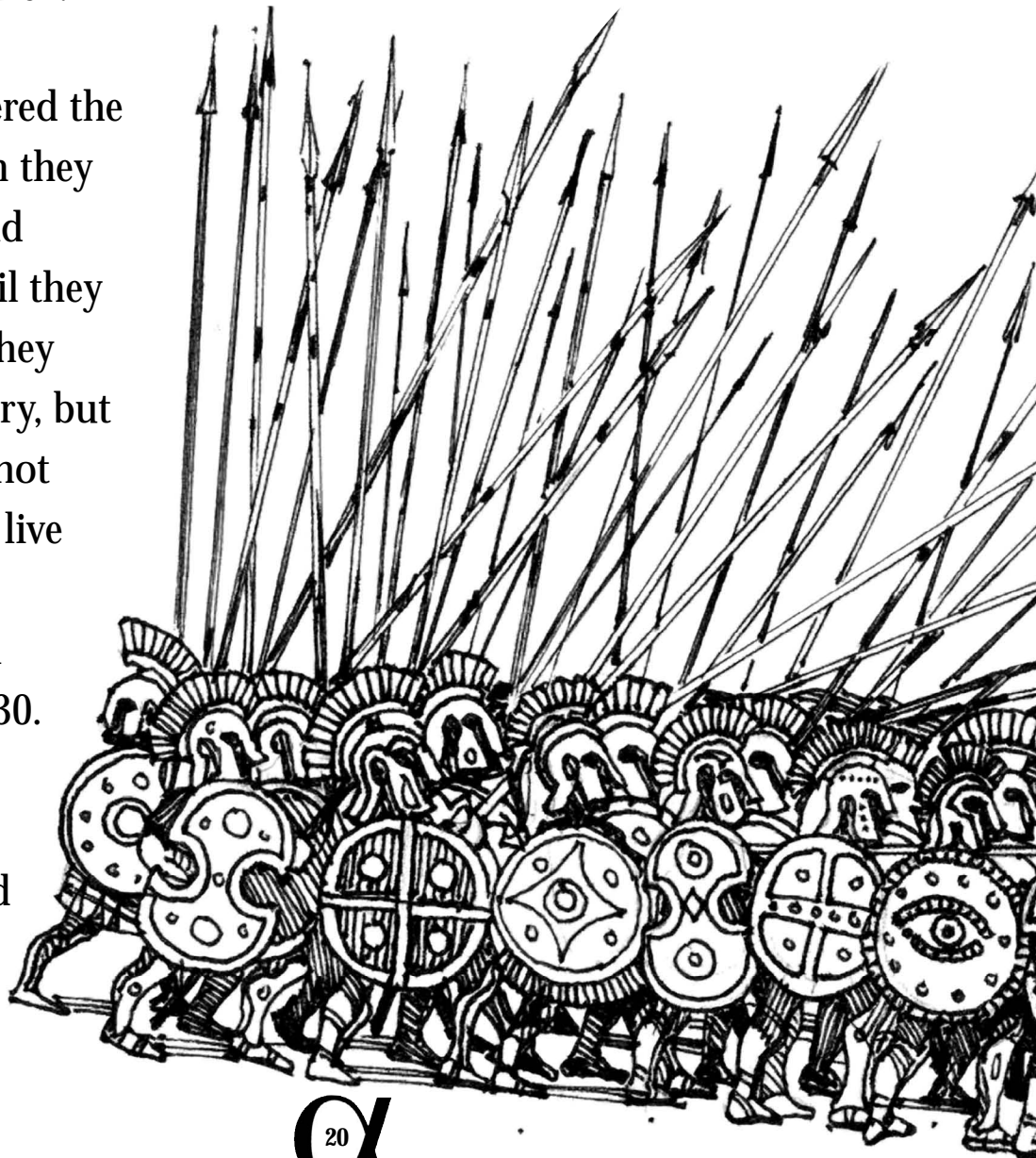
Sparta was governed by five officials, called **ephors**, who were elected for one year. The **gerousia** was a council of elders who were elected for life. Sparta also had a citizen assembly, but members could not propose issues for debate.

A council of Greek men

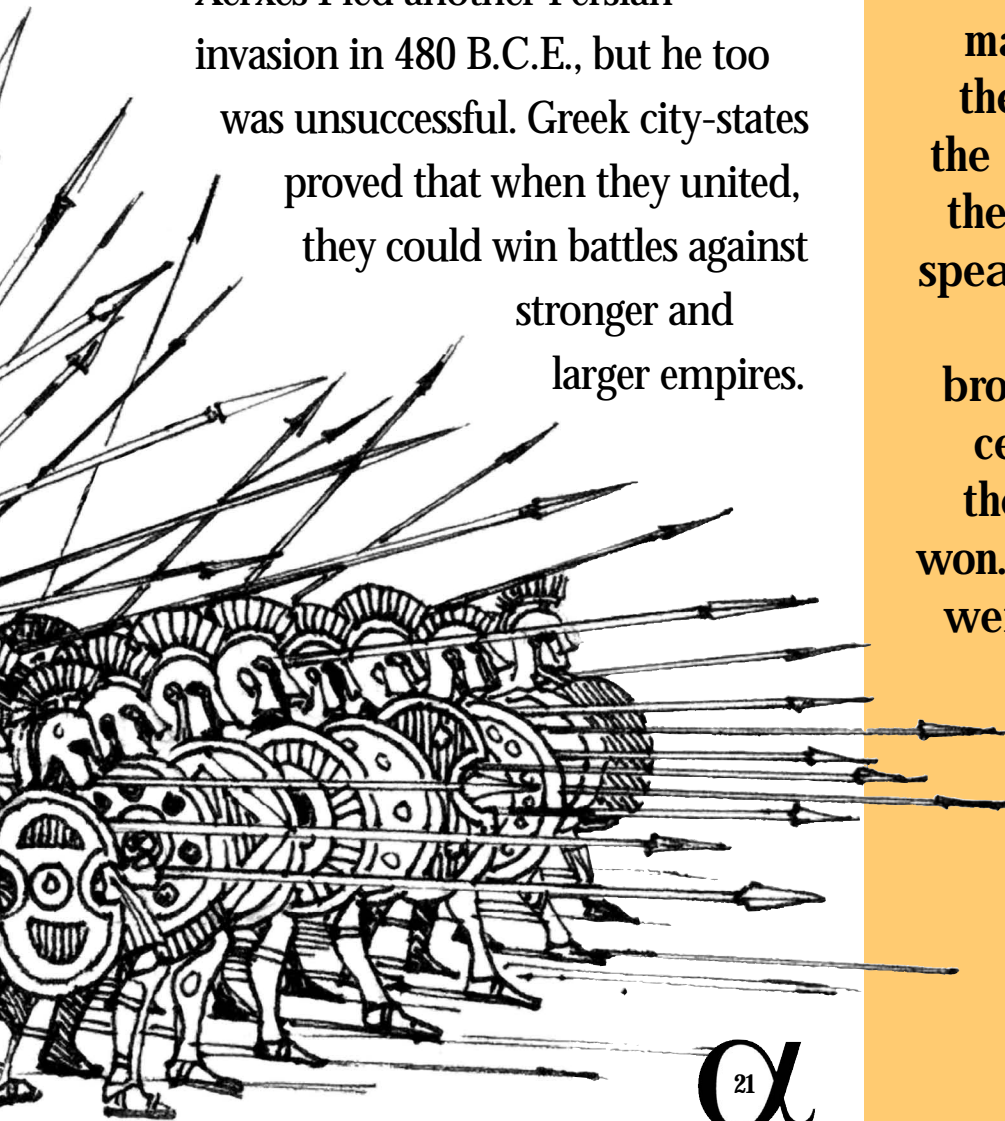


Most Greek city-states formed an army when they needed to defend themselves. However, Sparta had a permanent army that was headed by the king. At age six, all Spartan children were sent to live in military schools. Boys learned fighting skills and virtues like discipline, obedience, toughness, and endurance. Girls learned how to run a home, but they also took part in sports and athletics. Spartans believed that strong women would bear strong children.

Boys entered the army when they were 20 and served until they were 60. They might marry, but they were not allowed to live with their wives until they were 30. At that time, they also earned the right to vote in assembly.



During the 500s B.C.E. the Persian Empire was expanding rapidly and wanted to include the Greek city-states in their empire. From 499 until 494 B.C.E., the Greeks successfully resisted the Persian attacks. King Darius I sent his army to punish Greece, but Athens defeated the Persian army. King Xerxes I led another Persian invasion in 480 B.C.E., but he too was unsuccessful. Greek city-states proved that when they united, they could win battles against stronger and larger empires.



## SPARTAN ARMY

Greeks used a battle formation called the **phalanx** in battle. Armed foot soldiers lined up shoulder to shoulder, eight rows deep, and marched toward the enemy. When the two sides met, they battled with spears and swords.

The side that broke through the center or circled the other usually won. Other soldiers were archers and threw stones with slings.

Illustration of a  
Greek fighting  
phalanx

## MARATHON

When Athens won the battle of Marathon against the Persians in 490 B.C.E., a messenger ran more than 26 miles (42 km) to Athens to report the victory. Today the marathon is a sporting event in which people train to run their best over the same distance.

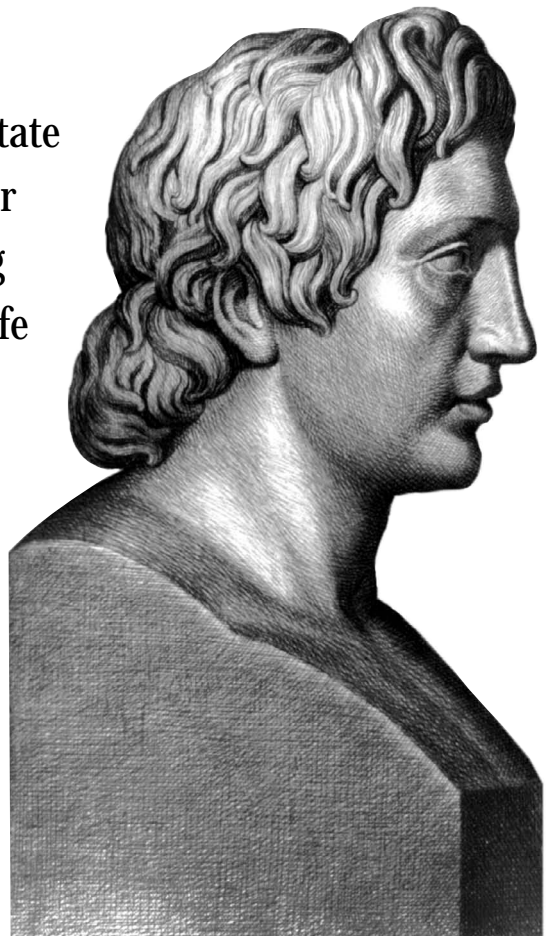
The hills of Marathon



A Persian and a Greek soldier (right) fighting

The Greeks unified for victory over the Persian barbarians, but rivalry between Athens and Sparta was common during the middle to late 400s B.C.E. Athens reached the height of its power from 477 to 431 B.C.E., the **Golden Age**. Then the Peloponnesian War broke out between Athens and Sparta in 431 B.C.E. and lasted until 362 B.C.E. A plague swept through Athens, killing one third of its people, including many of its leaders. This gave Sparta the opportunity to rise in power.

Sparta was the strongest city-state for a short period of time. Other city-states began to fight among themselves, and the quality of life declined. As Greece was weakening from within, Macedonia to the north was gaining power. Greece lost its independence to King Philip II of Macedonia in 338 B.C.E. When King Philip II was killed in 336 B.C.E., his son, Alexander, took his place.



A marble statue of Alexander the Great

At 20, Alexander the Great set out to fulfill his father's dream to conquer **Persia**. He invaded Persia in 334 B.C.E. and conquered it all in less than 10 years. Alexander's empire stretched from Greece to India and included Asia Minor, Egypt, and present-day Afghanistan.

Through Alexander's conquests, Greek ideas and culture spread throughout Egypt and the Near East. Even after Alexander's death in 323 B.C.E., other lands and peoples continued to adopt the Greek way of life in what was called the **Hellenistic Age**.

## WHAT DID ANCIENT GREEKS EAT?

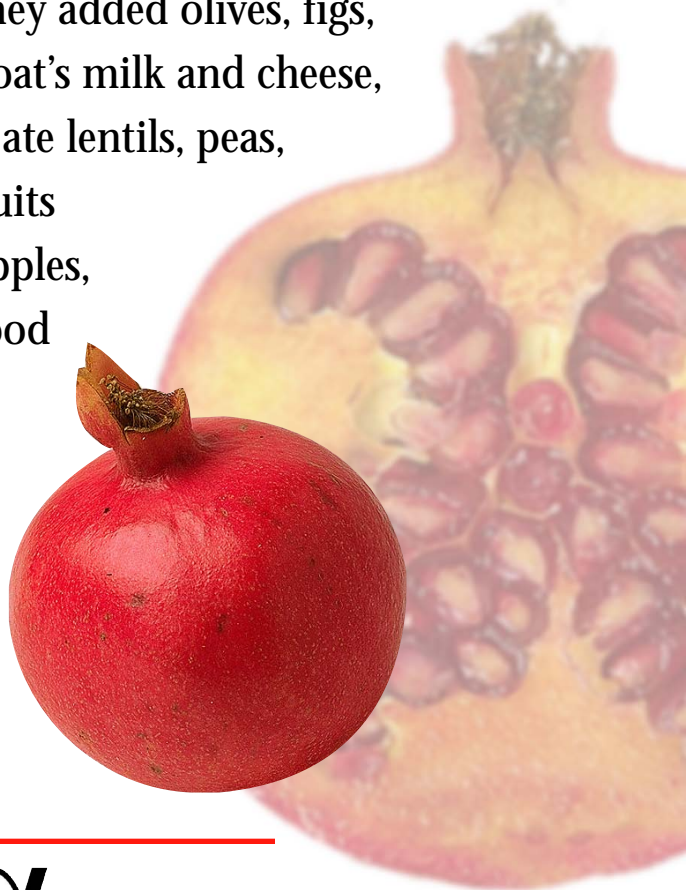


Greek farming was difficult because of poor soil quality. Plows made of wood with iron tips were pulled by oxen. Families raised pigs for meat and goats for milk and cheese.

From their crops, ancient Greeks made bread, cakes, and barley mush. To their meals, they added olives, figs, goat's milk and cheese,

salted fish, and eggs. They also ate lentils, peas, onions, garlic, and cabbage. Fruits included pomegranates, figs, apples, and pears. Greeks liked their food flavored with fresh herbs and used olive oil instead of butter. To sweeten their cakes and biscuits, they used honey. Beehives could be found at every country home.

Figs (above) and pomegranates (right)



Fish were plentiful for everyone. Fishermen used bronze fish hooks to catch many kinds of fish, including squid and octopus. Common people had meat only during festivals, when sacrificed animals were shared.

Wealthy Greeks hunted boar, wild deer, and hare with bows, slings, and spears. Birds were trapped with nets. The tables of the wealthy were filled with pork, meat, and spiced honey cakes. Wine thinned with water was the favorite beverage for everyone.



Olives were used in cooking and for religious purposes.

Greek hunters bringing home a boar



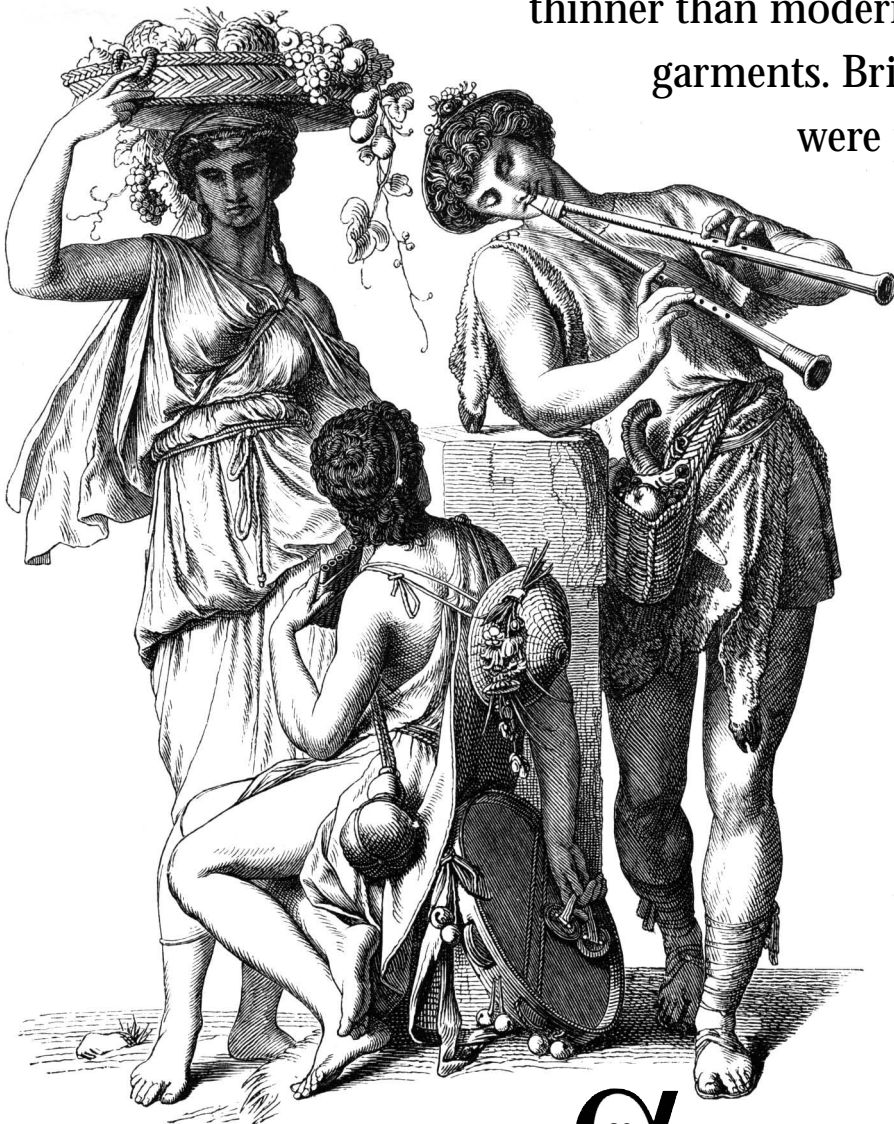


## WHAT DID ANCIENT GREEKS WEAR?

Simple, loose-fitting clothing kept the Greeks cool in the warm Mediterranean climate. The type of yarn used by women to weave cloth in their homes depended on the family's wealth. The rich wore linens spun from flax or bought expensive silks from the East. Poorer families, and those in cooler regions, wore clothing made of wool.

Clothing spun from the wool of local sheep was much thinner than modern wool garments. Bright colors

were popular, especially for women of wealth.



Greek commoners  
in traditional  
loose-fitting attire

Both men and women wore a belted garment called a **chiton**, a long piece of cloth draped around the body and held at the shoulder by a clasp or button. Men's chitons stopped at the knees. Women wore their chitons ankle length. Women often wore a tunic, or **peplos**, that was doubled over the shoulders to create a loose top that hung to the waist. These fastened at the shoulders with long straight pins and had a brightly colored decorative border. A cloak, or **himation**, in a large square shape was thrown over the shoulders and arms in colder weather. The way it

was draped across the body showed social status and style. Children wore clothing similar to adults, but shorter so they could run and play.

From left to right:  
Olympic athlete,  
Temple priest, and  
Greek noble





Most of the time Greeks went barefoot but occasionally wore sandals with straps. Men sometimes chose sandals with thick soles to make them look taller. Wealthier citizens had jewels on their sandals. Everyone removed their sandals when they entered a home.

Women wore their hair long or tied up in the back. For festive occasions, they curled their hair and held it in place with nets or ribbons. Wealthy women added headbands and gold decorations. When women left their homes, they wore simple scarves or veils to cover their hair. Men's hair was cut short, so it could not be grabbed in battle.

Beauty and cleanliness were important to ancient Greeks, who admired the human body. Young men took excellent care of their bodies so they were fit and strong for battle. Men and boys rubbed olive oil on their skin to keep it from drying. Women wore perfumed oils and stayed out of the sun because dark, tanned skin was not considered to be attractive.



Common hairstyles of Greek women (above and right)

# TRADE AND COMMERCE

In the center of Greek towns was an **agora**, or marketplace, where people came to buy or sell their products. Stone carvers, metal workers, jewelers, potters, and shoemakers either worked alone or in factories with 20 to 100 workers in the marketplace. Each city-state was identified by a special trade. Athens was known for its decorated pottery, Megara for woolen garments, and Corinth for jewelry and metal goods such as armor. Each city-state produced large enough quantities of goods so there were enough for home use and trade.

Farmers brought vegetables, fruit, and cheese to market to sell to people who lived in the city. This was a very busy place where you could find officials overseeing weights and measures, money changers, dancers, acrobats, and slaves for sale.

Ancient Greece exported surplus quantities of olive oil, wine, wool, pottery, and metal work and imported timber and extra grain. Slaves were bought and sold throughout the Greek world. Merchant ships sailed along the mainland coast, among the islands, and overseas to Egypt, Sicily, and Scythia, a country near the Black Sea.

Foot travel, or even travel by horseback, was very difficult due to the rugged countryside. Wagons or pack animals like donkeys could only go short distances. Runners carried most messages from city to city, but very few people traveled out of their local areas unless they went to war. The rough landscape made travel on the seas and trade with lands along the coasts only natural for the Greeks.

The lack of good farmland meant that as the population grew, food supplies were limited. Greeks who did not own land traveled by sea to a colony and became landowners. Between the 700s and 800s B.C.E., Greeks created new city-states along the shores of the Mediterranean and Black seas.

Stairway to the harbor on the Greek island of Thera

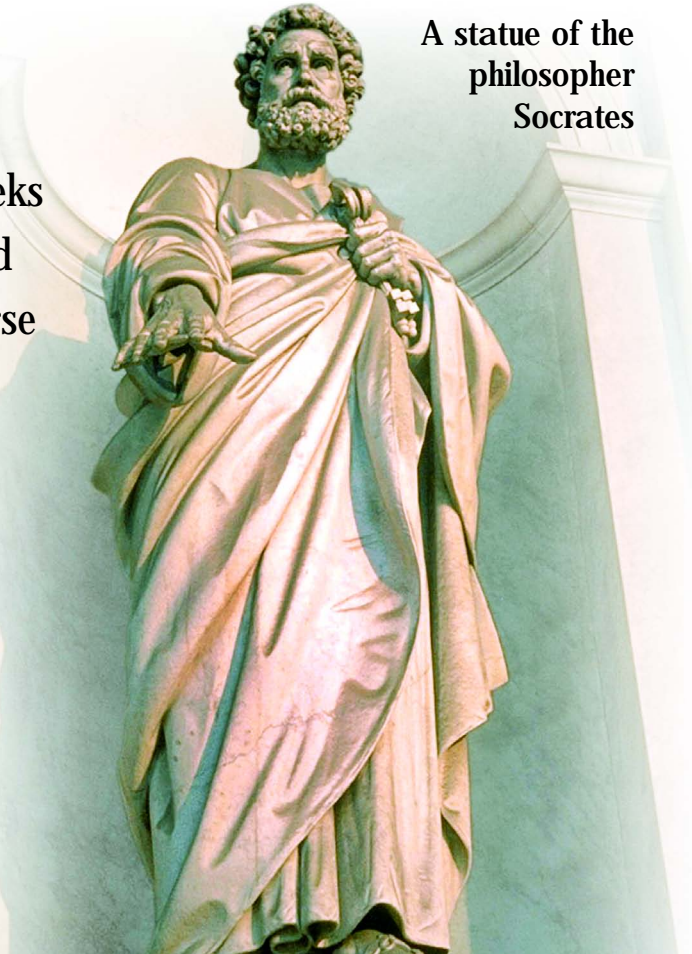


# PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE, ART, AND ARCHITECTURE

The word philosophy means “love of wisdom.”

Naturally curious, the Greeks asked many questions and wondered how the universe was made and how it operated. They tried to understand the nature of good and evil. Greek philosophers kept asking scientific questions at a time when many of their fellow men continued to believe in superstitions.

A statue of the philosopher Socrates



## SOCRATES, PLATO, AND ARISTOTLE

Socrates’s manner of teaching was a give and take of questions until the truth was finally found. One of his students, Plato, began the first university in the world. Plato’s student was another great thinker named Aristotle. Aristotle’s ideas about nature and the physical world were the basis for biology.

The Greeks made many advances in biology, mathematics, astronomy, and geography. They believed an explanation of how the universe worked was based in numbers and mathematical relationships rather than magic or myths. By the 400s B.C.E., a man named Democritus said all things consisted of atoms, tiny bits of matter that could not be divided. While most thinkers of the time believed that the sun, stars, and planets moved around the earth, Greek scientists in the 200s B.C.E. were the first to insist that the earth revolved around the sun! A man named Hippocrates founded a medical school and was the first to argue that illness was caused by natural causes and was not the will of the gods.

Architects, sculptors, and painters produced art with lines of beauty and proportion. Temples were the largest and most beautiful Greek buildings. Not only were temples places for prayer and sacrifice, but they also provided safe places for people when there was trouble. Inside was a small fire burning all the time to show that the god was always present. The buildings were made of limestone or marble blocks brought to the site in ox-drawn carts. The ceilings were wood, and roof tiles were made of clay or stone. Columns around a long, inner chamber held up these heavy roofs.



## GREEK COLUMNS

Greek columns had one of three designs. Doric columns (above right) were simple and sturdy with a plain top, or capital. Graceful Ionic columns (above left) were thinner and more elegant. Their capitals were decorated with a scroll-like design. A third design called Corinthian was seldom used in the Greek world, but was later seen in Roman temples. Decorative leaves were on the tops of these fancy columns.



Sculptors created figures of gods, goddesses, and humans in very lifelike poses. Few paintings survive, but designs on pottery show the everyday life of humans and gods. Every Greek town had a large outdoor theater where citizens would begin to arrive at daybreak to watch plays. They sat

on the surrounding grasses or in the theaters, which could hold thousands. They brought picnic baskets of food and watched **dramas** given in honor of the gods.

**Comedies** poked fun at everyday life. **Tragedies** told stories about the mistakes that people make, and how others are hurt by their actions.

Stone carving of a dancing girl

Music was important to the Greeks. There were special songs for births, weddings, and funerals. Greek musicians created love songs, battle songs, drinking songs, and songs of thanksgiving to the gods. Musical instruments included a harplike stringed instrument called the lyre. Wind instruments called **panpipes** were made of reeds of different lengths.

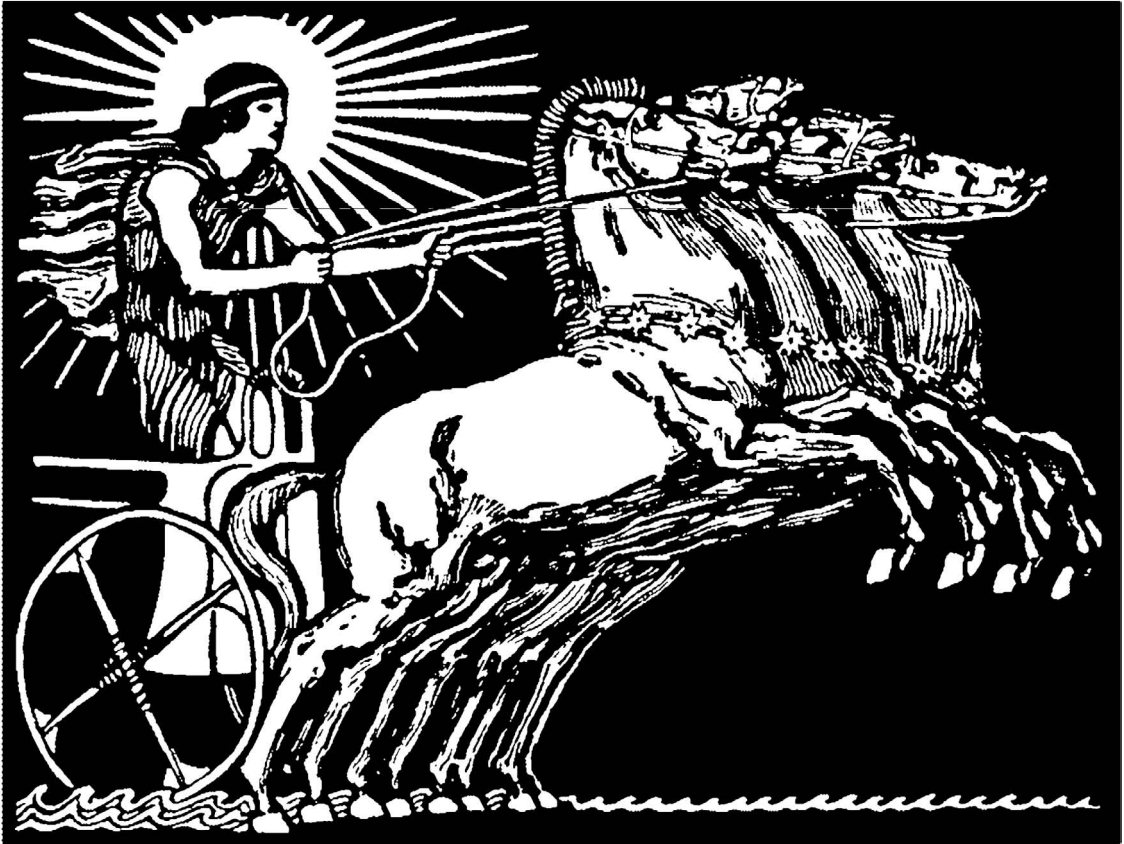
An ancient Greek theater still in use today



## GREEK PLAYS

Greek plays had only three main characters, all played by men, even if one of the characters was a woman! The men played different parts by wearing large masks that could be seen even by the people in the back of the theater. A woman's mask was white, and men's masks were brown. The actors wore platform shoes and big wigs to make them look larger on stage. A larger group of actors called the chorus spoke and sang to the audience.

# BELIEFS AND GODS

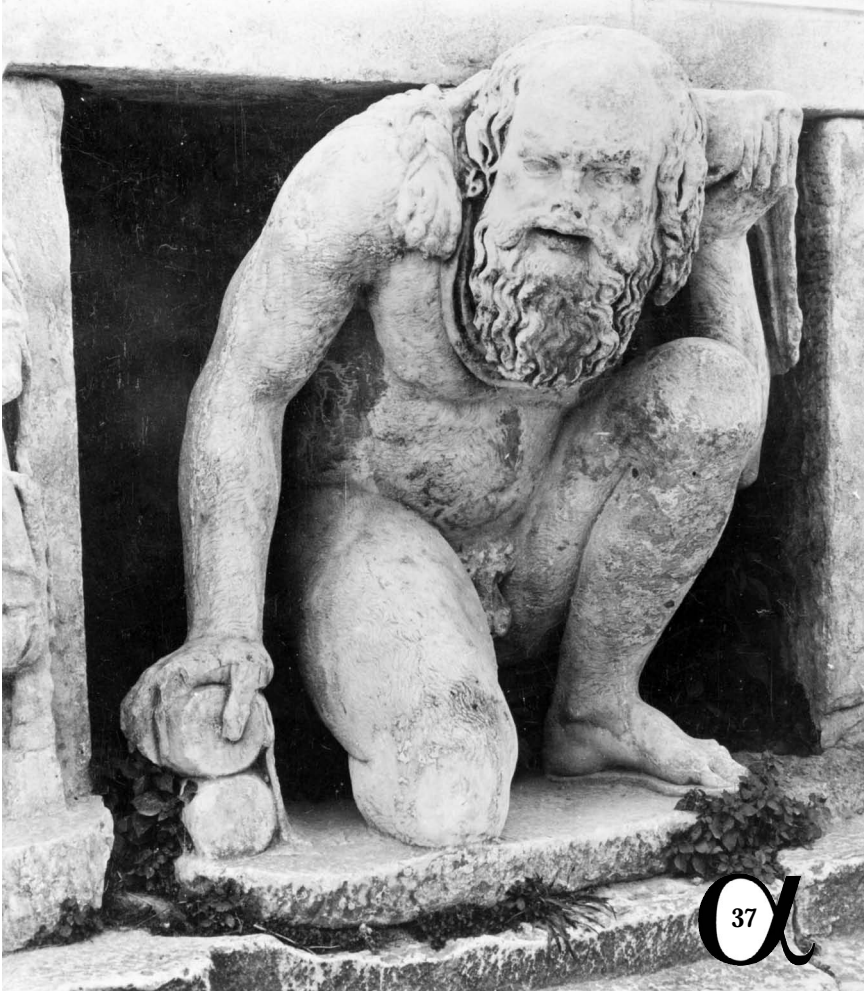


Apollo was the Greek god who drove the sun across the sky in his chariot.

Religion played a central part in Greek life. All Greek gods came from Gaia (the earth) and Uranos (the sky). The Greeks believed their gods and goddesses watched over them and directed every human activity and natural event that happened. If the gods were happy, all went well, but if the gods were angry, an entire harvest could be ruined. Every city-state had one or more gods to protect them, and festivals were held to honor and please their gods.

Greek gods looked just like humans and had all the same human emotions, such as jealousy, anger, or love. Greek gods were all related to each other and had many of the same problems every family would. They lived on Mount Olympus and differed from humans because they never died and had supernatural powers.

The Crouching Silenus, A deity, from the stage of the Theater of Dionysus, Athens



## GREEK GODS AND GODDESSES

**Zeus and his wife,  
Hera, ruled over  
Olympus**

**Aphrodite—  
goddess of love**

**Apollo—god of  
music, light, and  
prophecy**

**Ares—god of war**

**Athena—goddess  
of wisdom, law,  
and war**

**Demeter and  
Persephone—  
goddesses of  
grain growing**

**Artemis—goddess  
of hunting**

**Hades—god of  
the underworld**

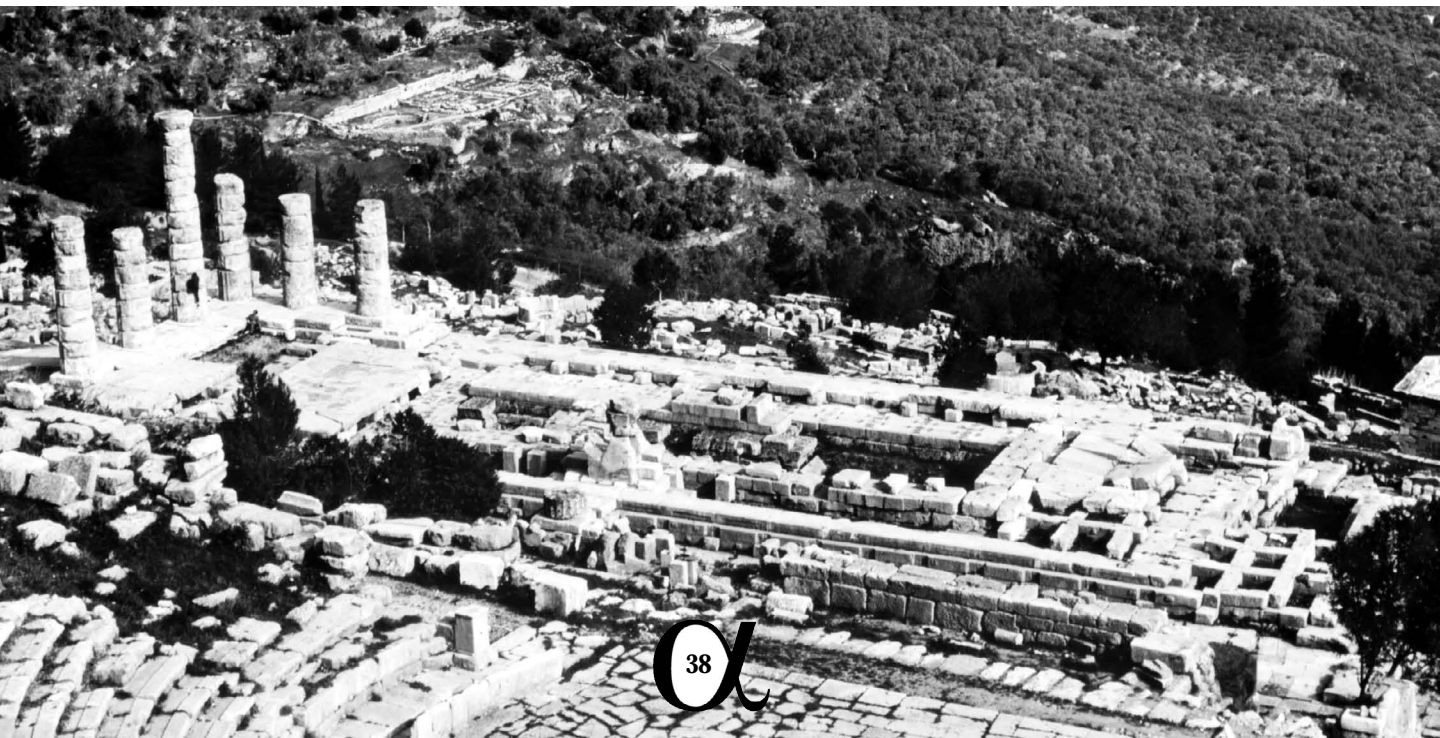
**Pluto—god of  
the seas**

## GOOD OMEN

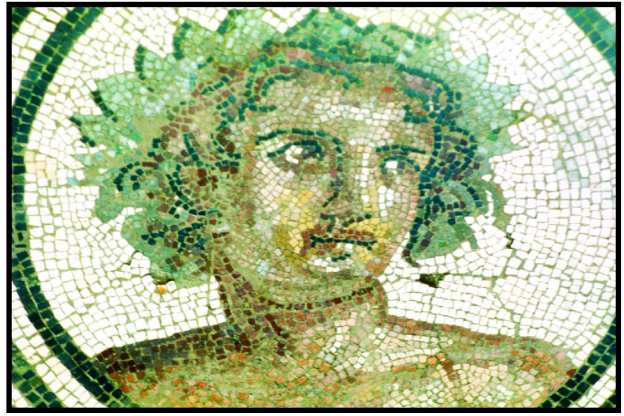
When Greeks came to ask the oracle a question, the priests at Delphi would present a goat to Apollo. If the goat trembled, it was a sign that Apollo was ready to speak. Before the ceremony the goat was sprinkled with water, so no wonder it shivered!

Priests or priestesses called **oracles** were believed to act as the mouthpiece for the gods. Greeks visited the oracles when they had important questions they wanted the gods to answer. The god or goddess spoke through the oracle and told the people what would happen in the future. The temple of Apollo at Delphi was the home of one of the most famous oracles.

The temple of Apollo at Delphi



Religious festivals were held in honor of the gods. Large crowds would gather, and athletes competed in wrestling, boxing, foot and chariot



Mosaic of an athlete with a laurel wreath

races, jumping, and **javelin** throwing. The festival also included large feasts, colorful parades, and plays. Zeus, the king of the gods, was honored every four years with **Olympic Games**. Any athlete who won in these games was rewarded with a crown of **laurel** leaves, a symbol of the highest honor the athlete could achieve.

Most Greeks believed in, or at least hoped for, some kind of life after death. Many men died early in life on the battlefield. Frequently, young women died giving birth to their children. Greeks buried their dead and thought that the kingdom for the dead was underground. Tombs were decorated with pictures of feasts, and some of the dead person's favorite things were placed alongside the body so he or she would be happy in the afterlife. Others **cremated** their dead and believed the soul of the dead person escaped as a tiny winged person who rose up to become one of the stars, until it was reborn in a new body.

# the people today



A modern-day scene from the Greek island of Naxos

Today Greece is a small country with no part of it more than 86 miles (138 km) from the sea. Much of the country consists of islands. Its total land area measures approximately 50,949 square miles (131,947 sq km).

## HELLENIC REPUBLIC

The official name of Greece is the Hellenic Republic, but the country is called Greece by accident. Ancient Romans mistook Magna **Graecia**, the name for Greek colonies in southern Italy, to refer to all people of Greece.

More than half of the 10,647,000 people live in cities. Athens, the capital, is the largest city. Older sections of the city with low buildings, narrow streets, and very few sidewalks mix with more modern areas that have tall buildings, wide streets, and shopping malls. Greeks drive their automobiles on paved roads today and take mass transit to work, to shop, and to get to restaurants or entertainment events.

Most people have left farming to look for jobs in the cities. Farms today exist only on some coastal areas or inland plains, where farmers can use irrigation to water and grow crops. Wheat is still the main crop of Greece, but other grains, cotton, olives, oranges, peaches, potatoes, sugar beets, tobacco, tomatoes, and grapes for wine or raisins are also grown.

Many people take jobs in banking, service, trade, tourism, or transportation. Factories produce some beverages, cement, chemicals, cigarettes, clothing, shoes, and processed foods. Metals, paper, medicines, and rubber products are also manufactured.



The people speak modern Greek, which is a combination of many different languages such as French, English, Italian, Slavic, and Turkish. Most wear clothing that is very much like that of the United States or Europe. During festivals, men wear traditional Greek clothing with braided jackets and pleated **kilts**.

The modern Greek diet includes a variety of meats such as lamb, chicken, pork, and beef, along with generous amounts of the many fish available in the Mediterranean Sea.

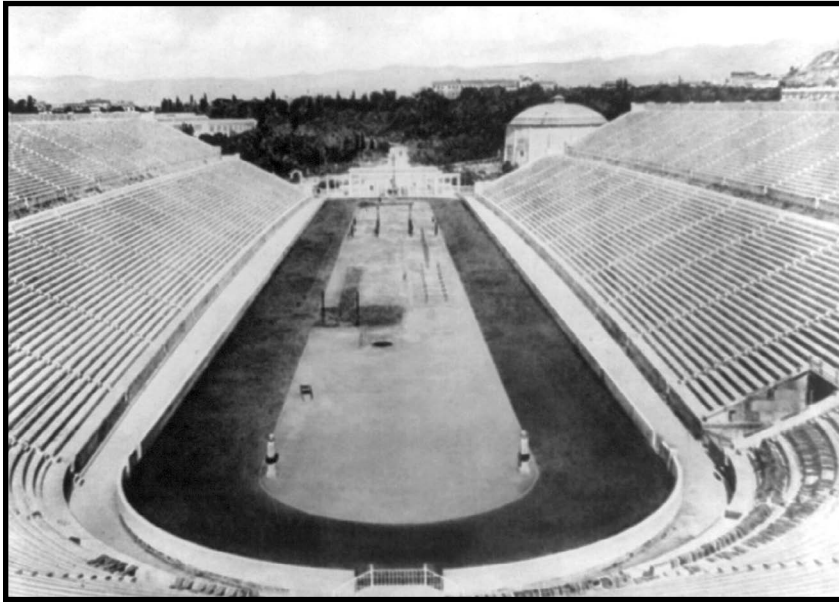
Fresh vegetables such as tomatoes, eggplant, and beans are often combined with the meats to make popular stews. The Greeks

cook with olive oil and herbs such as oregano, garlic, onions, and parsley to flavor their foods.

There are many kinds of sweet pastries available, or anyone can choose fresh fruit and cheese made from goat or sheep's milk for dessert.

Modern Greek fishing boats in the Mediterranean Sea





Olympic Stadium in Athens, the home of the first modern Olympiad, has many ties to the ancient history of Greece.

Greeks like to travel to visit their friends and family in other parts of the country on holidays. Sports arenas today feature soccer, basketball, and swimming. Just as in ancient times, Greeks fill the outdoor theaters, cafés, and restaurants to meet with friends and enjoy their time away from work.

Ancient Greece laid the foundations for Western Civilization. Government by the people, trial by jury, and equality under law came from Greece. Questions by early Greeks advanced ideas in biology, geometry, history, philosophy, and physics. Literary forms of writing, poetry, and plays came from the Greeks and are still studied and enjoyed today. Appreciation for beauty produced Greek art, which was based on order and proportion. The rich heritage of the Greek culture is apparent throughout the world today. We, indeed, owe much to the ancient Greeks!

# A TIMELINE OF THE HISTORY OF GREECE

- 3000 B.C.E.** The Minoan Culture arises on the island of Crete.
- 1650 B.C.E.** Mycenaean culture prospers on the Greek mainland.
- 1450 B.C.E.** Mycenaeans conquer Crete.
- 1100 B.C.E.** Dark Age begins in Greece.
- 1000-800 B.C.E.** Rise of Greek city-states.
- 800-750 B.C.E.** Homer writes the Iliad and the Odyssey.
- 776 B.C.E.** Greeks begin the Olympic Games.
- 490-479 B.C.E.** Greeks defeat invading Persian armies twice in The Persian Wars.
- 477-431 B.C.E.** The Golden Age of Greece, known for its greatest art.

**431-404 B.C.E.** Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta.

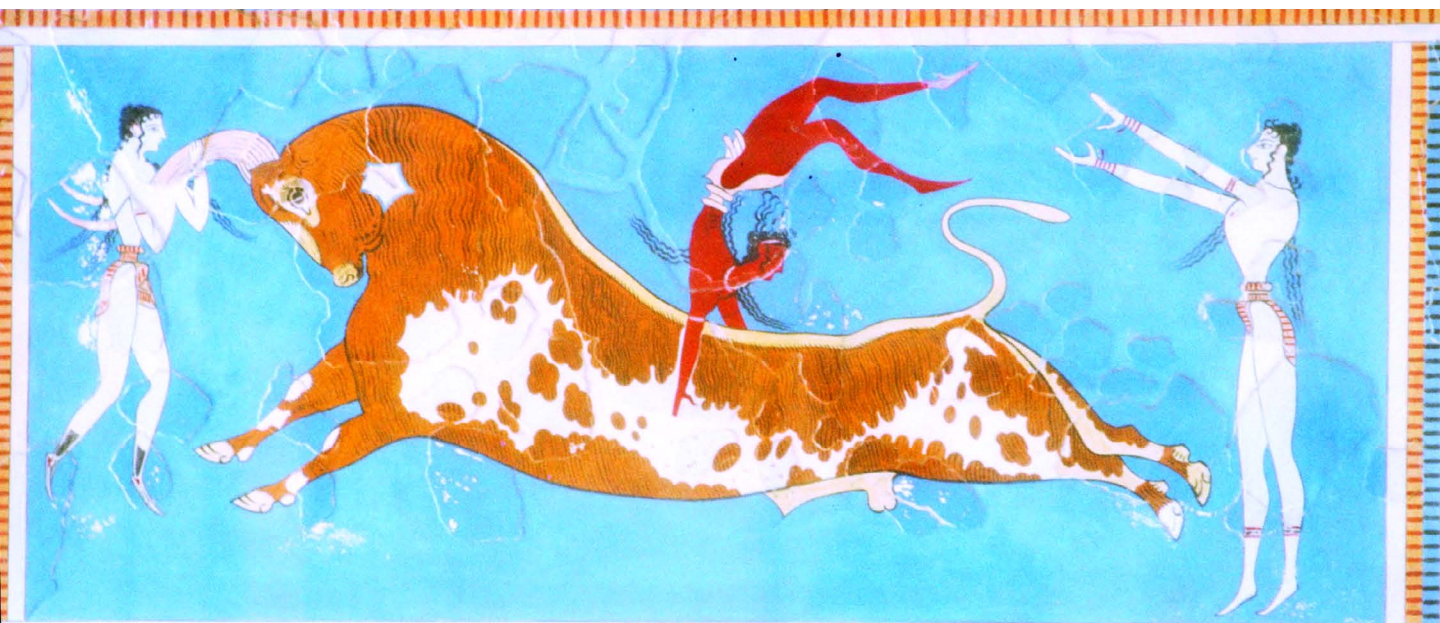
**338 B.C.E.** Philip II of Macedonia conquers the Greeks.

**336 B.C.E.** Alexander the Great is crowned.

**334-326 B.C.E.** Alexander the Great, ruler of Greece and Macedonia, conquers the Persian Empire.

**323 B.C.E.** Alexander the Great dies. The Hellenistic Age begins.

Fresco of a bull leaping from the Palace Knossos



## GLOSSARY

**Acropolis**-A large hill in the center of Athens. On top of it were many temples and other buildings, the remains of which can still be seen today.

**Agora**-Bustling market square in the center of the city.

**Aristotle**-Greek philosopher who was Plato's pupil and taught Alexander the Great.

**Assembly**-The public meeting of the government of the city where all citizens could take part and vote.

**Aulos**-An ancient Greek wind instrument that looked like a double pipe played with a double reed.

**Barbarians**-An uncivilized group of people who were crude and lacked culture.

**Chiton**-Basic dress in ancient Greece, which was a straight tunic fastened at the shoulders with brooches or pins.

**Citizen**-A person with the right to take part in the assembly, serve on juries, and take a turn as a member of the ruling council.

**City-state**-An independent state consisting of the city and surrounding land with its own government, laws, and armies.

**Comedy**-Story that makes us laugh.

**Cremate**-To burn a dead body until nothing remains but ashes.

**Democracy**-A system of government in which citizens can vote to decide things.

**Drama**-Story about a conflict that is acted out.

**Ephors**-Body of five elected officials who swore to uphold the rule of the kings of Sparta.

**Gerousia**-Ancient council of elders in Sparta.

**Golden Age**-Period between 461 and 431 B.C.E., when the arts flourished in Greek culture.

**Graecia**-Name of a Greek-speaking people in Italy.

**Hellas**-Greater homeland shared by all peoples of the Greek islands and mainland.

**Hellenes**-Greek-speaking peoples.

**Hellenistic Age**-Period between 323 and 30 B.C.E. when other people imitated the Greek way of life.

**Himation**-Ancient Greek garment worn by men and women consisting of a large rectangular piece of cloth draped over one shoulder and under the opposite arm.

**Iliad**-The long poem written by a poet named Homer, which tells of the loyalty of friends to each other.

**Javelin**-A spear thrown as a weapon or in games.

**Jury**-A group of people who decide the innocence or guilt of a person accused of a crime.

**Kilts**-Knee-length wraparound garments.

**Laurel**-A tree or shrub whose leaves were woven into a wreath and used to crown winners of Olympic Games in ancient Greece.

**Lyre**-A musical instrument with strings that are plucked with the fingers.

**Minoans**-Ancient group of people who flourished on the island of Crete from 3000 to 1000 B.C.E.

**Odyssey**-The long poem written by Homer, which tells of a warrior's return home after 20 years and the challenges he faces.

**Oligarchy**-A system of government in which a small group of wealthy men have the power.

**Olympic Games**-A religious festival held in honor of Zeus. People from all over Greece came together in peace.

**Oracle**-A person who predicts the future.

**Panpipes**-Wind instruments, made of reeds of different lengths that are bound together in a row and played by blowing across the top of each pipe.

**Parthenon**-A large temple to the goddess Athena built on the Acropolis in Athens.

**Peninsula**-Land with water on three sides.

**Peplos**-Loose-fitting garment worn by women in ancient Greece that draped in folds around the shoulders and reached the waist.

**Persia**-A large and powerful country to the east of Greece. Persia tried to invade Greece but was defeated at the battles of Marathon and Salamis.

**Phalanx**-A tight group of soldiers that attacks in close formation protected by

their overlapping shields and projecting spears.

**Philosophy**-Search and study for general understanding of reality and values.

**Plato**-Ancient Athenian philosopher who was a pupil of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle.

**Serf**-A farm worker who belongs to the landowner and is bought and sold with the land. A serf cannot leave the land, marry, or change occupation without the landowner's permission.

**Strategoi**-In ancient Athens, a group of ten military commanders who made all decisions on the city's defense.

**Tragedy**-Story about the mistakes that people make and how many lives are hurt by them.

**Trireme**-A warship that had three levels of oars on each side.

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