

Greece

Ancient Greek Achievements



Foundations of Ancient Greece

Ancient Greek Development and Decline

Ancient Greek Achievements

Thematic Icons



Economics



Geography



Historical concepts



Government

Icons



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page

For more instructions, see the *User Guide*.





Timeline



Around 800 BC, the Greeks began to use a series of symbols to represent sounds: the **alphabet**. It was the first known alphabet to use specific symbols for vowels.

The first two letters of the Greek alphabet were **alpha** and **beta**, and it is from these two letters that we get the word “alphabet” today.

We use many other words that come from original Greek. Words that end in “-ology” are from the Greek “-logia”, meaning “study.” For example, “archaeology” means “study of ancient things.”



Can you think of any other words like this?

Greek loanwords



The Greek alphabet

Here is the complete Greek alphabet.

Α Β Γ Δ Ε Ζ Η Θ

Alpha

Beta

Gamma

Delta

Epsilon

Zeta

Eta

Theta

A

B

G

D

E

Z

EE

TH

Ι Κ Λ Μ Ν Ξ Ο Π

Iota

Kappa

Lambda

Mu

Nu

Xi

Omicron

Pi

I

K

L

M

N

X

O

P

Ρ Σ Τ Υ Φ Χ Ψ Ω

Rho

Sigma

Tau

Upsilon

Phi

Chi

Psi

Omega

R

S

T

U

F

CH

PS

OH

Are there any letters we still use today?



The first **Olympics** were held in 776 BC. Initially, they were part of a large event honoring Zeus at his temple in Olympia. The event was a festival as well as an athletic competition.

Only men were allowed to participate. Events included foot and chariot races, discus throwing, long jumping and the **hoplitodromos**. This was a foot race, but participants wore a helmet and **greaves**, and carried a heavy shield.

Winners of Olympic events were given an **olive wreath** to show their achievement. They were also honored with wealth, fame and status when they returned to their own cities.



How are the modern Olympics different? How are they similar?



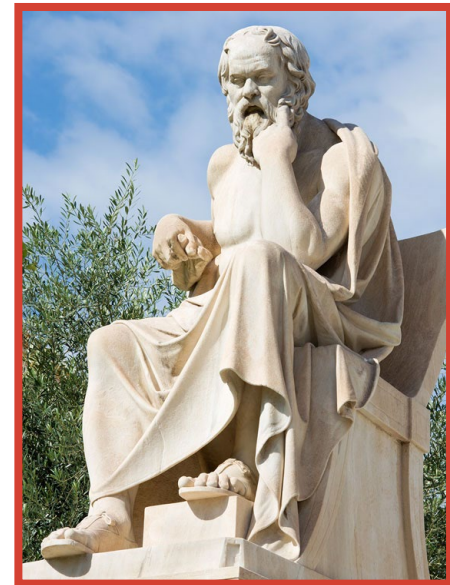
The Golden Age of Greece



The years between 500 and 300 BC are known as the **Golden Age** of Greek philosophy. Many famous thinkers lived at this time. They wrote and taught others their ideas.

One of the most famous Greek philosophers was **Socrates**. He asked clever questions to encourage his students to question their own opinions. However, he was eventually sentenced to death for his radical views.

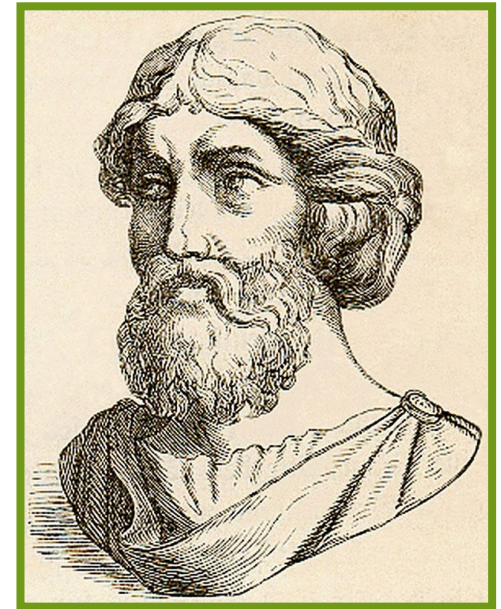
Many of these philosophers lived in the city of Athens, where higher learning was seen as very important. In around 347 BC, **Plato** set up an academy to teach his ways of thinking. It remained in existence for over 250 years.



Can you think of any other Greek philosophers?

During the Golden Age, scientific thought also flourished. Scientists and mathematicians, such as Archimedes, Euclid and Pythagoras began to write down their theories.

- Archimedes helped design siege engines, as well as a screw for moving water from a lower to a higher level.
- Euclid wrote a collection of geometrical proofs called the *Elements*, as well as writing about light and reflection.
- Pythagoras wrote about astronomy, music and geometry, and came up with the theory $a^2+b^2=c^2$.



Famous figures



Ancient Greeks were interested in **astrology** and the movement of planets and stars. Some believed that it was possible to predict the future by watching for changes in the skies.

Around 150 BC, the Ancient Greeks invented a device called an **astrolabe**. This was a way to measure the distance between individual stars and the horizon. Some Greek scientists calculated the distance to the moon by observing shadows during lunar eclipses.



Astrology was a sacred art at this time, because of its connection to the heavens and the gods.

Hippocrates is often called the father of modern medicine. He established the idea of medicine as a profession, and his ideas about the human body were accepted for hundreds of years after his death.

Despite these advancements, most ordinary Greeks still believed that diseases were caused by demons. Many doctors tried to cure patients with sacrifices and prayer.

It was thought that **Asclepius**, the son of the god Apollo, could cure illnesses. People often left models of body parts at his shrine, so he knew which part of them needed healing.



Which body parts do you think were used for which illnesses?

Greece was one of the first early civilizations to use actors to play named character parts onstage.

Ancient Greek plays were divided into tragedies, comedies or satires. They honored the gods or poked fun at society: they were not allowed to mock the gods.

Actors wore **masks** to show their character. Greek theaters could seat thousands of people, so the masks helped to show who was who. Their mouthpieces were shaped to amplify the speaker's voice.

One of the most famous Greek actors was **Thespis**, from whose name we get the word "thespian."





In 507 BC, the city of Athens introduced **democracy**: the people were allowed to have a say in political decisions.

They gathered on a raised platform known as the **Pnyx** to hear speakers argue their views on different topics. Today, the government of the United States is a democracy.

The Greeks also developed the idea of **trial by jury**, which is the right of every American citizen today.

In Ancient Greece, a jury consisted of 200 people. If a person was found guilty, two punishments were suggested, and the jury chose one.



How well do you think this system worked?

The Ancient Greeks used limestone and marble to carve intricate **sculptures**. They are particularly admired for their accurate and realistic models of the human figure.

Greek sculptors developed a new pose called **contrapposto**, which means “counterpose.” Contrapposto statues have their weight on one foot, giving their bodies a distinct curved shape.

The Greeks also used stone for building. A typical feature of Greek architecture are the carved columns seen on temples such as the **Parthenon** at the Acropolis.



What or who does this statue show?

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, his eventual successor **Ptolemy** founded a library in the city of Alexandria in Egypt. His aim was to include a copy of every written work in Greek, and eventually other languages too.

Most of the books were **papyrus** scrolls. They were organized into categories such as poetry, science and math.

The Library of Alexandria was destroyed in a fire, although exactly who was responsible is unknown. It is possible that the Roman general Julius Caesar burned it down when he besieged the city in 48 BC.



Keywords

