

Greece

Foundations of Ancient Greece



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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





Where is Greece?





Greece is a very **mountainous** country. Its tallest mountain is **Mount Olympus**, which is 2,918 meters tall.

Several Greek mountains are **volcanic**. When volcanoes erupt, they can destroy settlements, but the ash also makes nearby soil **fertile** and good for growing crops. Flat, open land for farming was scarce, but the Ancient Greeks used what they had to grow food.

A group of islands is called an **archipelago**. The Greek archipelago contains hundreds of islands. Ancient Greeks living on these islands used ships for trade, travel and warfare.



The **Minoans** were one of the earliest Greek civilizations, occupying the island of Crete from around 2000–1600 BC.

Historians today don't think of the Minoans as Greek, because they spoke a different language. However, the Ancient Greeks who lived hundreds of years later still told stories about the Minoan king **Minos** and the fearsome monster that lived on the island: the Minotaur.

The Minoans set up a **trading culture**. They built ships and traded olive oil, wood and pottery with other nations in and around the Mediterranean Sea.





The decline of the Minoans



Minoan civilization came to an end around 1600 BC. Historians believe that a huge volcanic eruption on the island of **Thera** around this time could have been responsible.

The eruption would have caused earthquakes and **tsunamis** in Crete, destroying crops and devastating the local population.

Although the eruption happened over 3,000 years ago, we can still see its effects in modern satellite images.



What do you notice about this photo?



The Trojan War

The **Trojan War** was fought by the Ancient Greeks against the city of **Troy** in around 1200 BC. Troy no longer exists, but archaeologists believe it was in western Turkey.

The war inspired many legends about the events that took place, including gods and goddesses as major characters. The *Illiad*, a famous epic poem by the Greek writer **Homer**, is about the Trojan War.

The exact events of the Trojan War are disputed by historians, but Homer's dramatic, exaggerated version is now well-known.



The Trojan War



“**Archaic**” comes from the Greek word “**archaios**”, which means “old.” It is the name given to the period between 800 and 480 BC, when some of the most recognizable features of Ancient Greek society developed.

During this time, Greece became more **urbanized**: cities formed, and Greek influence began to spread across the Mediterranean.

The nation was divided into several different city-states. These city-states often fought among themselves, but they also created their own unique cultures.





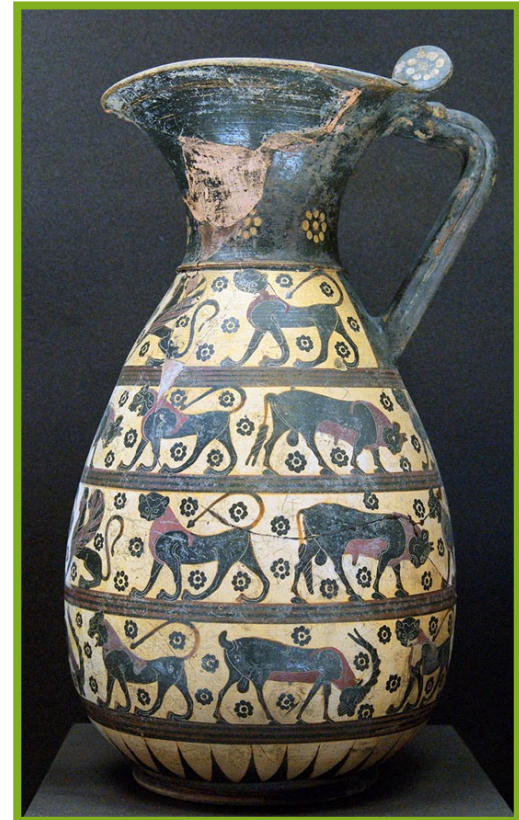
Greek city-states



Trade was an important aspect of Ancient Greece's economy, and key trading ports such as Corinth and Athens could become very powerful. Greeks traded between city-states and with other nations. Highly valued Greek goods included:

- olive oil
- wine
- cheese
- figs
- perfumes
- pottery.

The Greeks also **imported** goods that they could not produce themselves. Wood for shipbuilding was rare in mountainous areas, so it was imported from other nations. **Slaves** were also valuable, commonly from Egypt.



Athens and **Sparta** had very different ideas and ways of life. This led to rivalry and even all-out war between them.

Unlike Athens, Sparta was ruled by two kings. While one was away conquering foreign lands, the other stayed behind to keep order. Spartan life centered on the army: boys lived in **barracks** from the age of seven, and girls also took part in physical training so that they would have strong children.

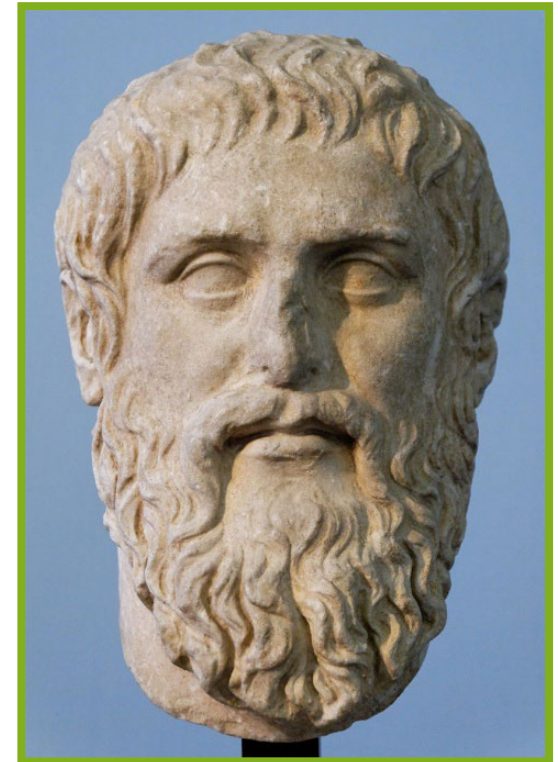
Athenian boys also underwent military training, but it was only mandatory to serve in the army in times of war. During peacetime, the focus was on education and philosophy.



Besides its democracy, Athens was also a seat of **learning**. Only boys were allowed to have an education, although this was expensive and only wealthy families could afford it.

One of the schools in Athens was called the **Academy**. Students learned to read and write, and they also competed in physical exercises and boxing.

Older students were taught philosophy by **Plato**, the school's founder. One of the Academy's most famous students was **Aristotle**, who eventually set up his own school, called the Lyceum.



In Sparta, once boys turned seven, they were enrolled in a tough program called the **agoge**. This was a form of military training, to prepare them for becoming soldiers in the army.

Spartan boys were taken from their families and housed together in army **barracks**. They lived away from home until they were thirty years old.

Life in the agoge was difficult. Recruits were only given enough clothing to stop them freezing in winter. They were fed very little, and were encouraged to steal extra food.



Why might stealing have been encouraged?



Athenian women had few rights. Most wealthy women could not even leave their homes without their husband's permission.

Some women learned to read and write, but most were **illiterate**, as they were not allowed to go to school or receive an education.

Athenian women were taught how to sew and weave cloth. They made rugs and wall hangings to decorate their homes.

Poor women also had to go to market and cook food, but wealthy women had **slaves** to do this for them. Slaves would also see to their mistresses' dress and hairstyles.



Spartan women had more freedom than their Athenian counterparts. As their husbands and sons were away in the army, they had to look after the household. Most of the daily chores were done by **Helots**: Spartan slaves.

Women's responsibilities included dealing with business and finances. Spartan women were also allowed to **own land** in their own name.

As children, girls took part in physical activities like running and boxing, so that they would have strong, healthy children.



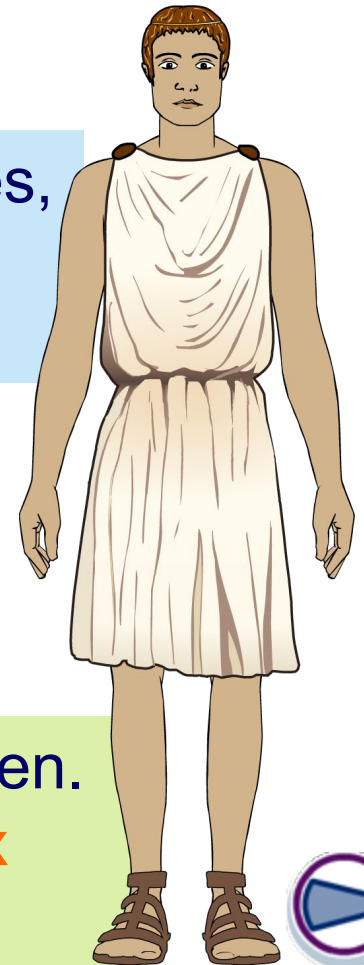
What does this statue show?

Ancient Greeks wore simple clothing by modern standards. Most people wore a rectangular sheet of cloth, folded in half and fastened at the shoulders. This was called a **chiton**. It was often worn with a belt around the waist.

Wealthy women wore longer, less practical clothes, because they did not do much manual labor. This longer style of dress was called a **peplos**.

Men would often wear a draped cloak, called a **himation**, to protect them from the sun in summer and cooler weather in winter.

Most clothing was made from wool or linen. Linen was woven by women from **flax** imported from abroad, usually Egypt.



Keywords

