

Ancient Greece

About Ancient Greece

One of the most interesting eras studied in history is the culture of the Ancient Greeks. The highest point of this civilization was during the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.E. It was during this time that the Greeks really flourished. They had many great ideas which make it easy to see why they are so important to history. Today we still owe a lot of our knowledge to the Greeks, including many words in the English language. Besides language, many other discoveries and ideas came from the Greeks including: democracy, earth science, music, math, sports, and poetry.

The Ancient Greeks lived in an area located in south-western Europe. The land there had many mountains and was close to the sea. The Greeks learned how to be very good at farming as well as sailing ships on the sea. The Greeks lived on many islands and peninsulas, and they began to form cities. These cities were centers of a lot of trading with other peoples. The most famous of these cities were Sparta, Athens, and Corinth. Even though these cities were very different from each other, all of them showed the intelligence and skill of the Ancient Greeks.

Three Important Cities in Ancient Greece

In the city of Sparta, all of the young boys grew up to become soldiers. They trained when they were children to enter the army when they were old enough. The girls went to school as well, learning about their religion, how to take care of a family, and also some things about the army. The money used in Sparta was usually made of iron and it was very important to Spartans that nobody was poor. Spartans believed that the success of the city was more important than the success of any one person who lived in it.

Athens was very different from Sparta, but the citizens still believed that the city was very important. The Athenians built walls around their entire city to keep it safe. The large city inside those walls was very beautiful because there were hills and markets and statues. Athens was especially known for its large schools and theatres. Athenian children spent a lot of time learning in their schools. When they became adults they became teachers and politicians and scientists.

Like Sparta and Athens, the people who lived in Corinth were also very proud of their city. They were excellent builders and craftsmen. They built many buildings, temples, roads, and bridges. Non-Greeks were impressed with their building skills and enjoyed spending time in Corinth. This helped make Corinth very important for trading and business. People from far away came to Corinth and used the markets to buy and sell all sorts of goods. Corinth became a very rich city, and it was very expensive to live there.

Ancient Greece (Cont'd)

Religion in Ancient Greece

The Ancient Greeks believed in a religion that had many gods and goddesses. For the Greeks, each of these gods had a unique and special personality. There were many gods and each god played a role in the daily life of the citizens. The most important of all the gods was named Zeus. The Greeks believed that Zeus was the king of the gods and he ruled the sky and caused thunder and lightning. Zeus had many children, who were also gods. In all of the cities of Greece, there were many statues of Zeus, including one that was fifty feet tall.

One of Zeus' children was the god Apollo. Apollo was believed to be fond of many things, and in English someone who is called "Apollonian" is someone who has many interests. Apollo was the patron of archers and of music. Statues of Apollo show him holding either a lyre (an instrument like a harp) or a bow and arrow. Greeks who prayed to Apollo sang him songs called paeans and hoped that he would speak to them about the future or grant them their requests.

Three Famous Greeks

There were many famous Greeks that developed exciting ideas. The Greeks were very good at writing poems and stories, thinking about science and nature, and for playing sports. One of the most famous Greeks was a man named Socrates. Socrates and his family lived in Athens and when he got older, he would visit the markets and the theatres looking to have exciting conversations with the people he met. Socrates liked to ask questions so that he could learn all sorts of things. There are stories of Socrates asking questions at dinner parties, at the theatre, in courtrooms, and in the market. The questions he would ask sometimes confused the people he was talking to and they had a difficult time finding an answer. He liked to ask what "justice" meant and what it meant for someone to be "wise." He became known as a great philosopher. Students often study his ideas and his life.

Another famous Greek was a poet named Homer. Homer lived a long time before Socrates, but all the Greeks knew about him and his poems. Homer was blind and did not write his poems down, but instead he sang them aloud. His famous poem is called *The Iliad* and it is considered an "epic poem" because it is a very long poem about many different people and places. Homer sang poems about real events and mixed some fiction in with the truth. *The Iliad* tells the story of two generals in the army who are both in love with a beautiful girl named Helen. The story that the poem tells is a tragic one, which means that it is sad and does not have a happy ending. Homer would tell the story over and over again to remind the Greeks that wars have sad endings, and it is better to be peaceful than to go to war.

Name _____

Date _____

Ancient Greece (Cont'd)

Pythagoras was a mathematician. He is the first person to study numbers and geometry. Pythagoras also said that he loved wisdom and knowledge. Many people realized how intelligent Pythagoras was and decided to become his followers. There were at least 300 followers of Pythagoras, and they tried to live together in a community where they could be happy. He also created a very famous formula which is named after him. This formula, or theorem, explains the angles and sides of triangles. Pythagoras used this formula to study the stars in the night sky which struck him as very orderly and beautiful.

Greek Life

The Ancient Greeks also enjoyed competing in sports. They created a tournament they called the Olympic Games. The Games were held every four years. During the time of the tournament, Greece would not wage war and would be at peace. Young competitors would compete in various events including: running, boxing, and discus throw. The winners would be given an olive branch, which symbolized the peace, respect, and honor of winning an event. The winners would also be praised in their hometowns and often have small statues made in their honor.

The theatre was very important to the Greeks. The Theatre of Dionysus, the first theatre, was an open-air theatre in Athens. Every year at the festival, judges would sit in the front row and watch many plays and decide which were the best. The Ancient Greeks had two styles of plays – the tragedy and the comedy. The winning playwrights were given ivy wreaths as their prize for the best play.

These are some of the reasons why Ancient Greece is one of the most interesting periods in history. The Ancient Greeks contributed a lot to modern society through their love of their cities, their love for learning, and their love for humanity.

Name _____

Date _____

Ancient Greece Questions

Multiple Choice

1. Which of the following was NOT a well-known city in Ancient Greece:
 - a. Corinth
 - b. Athens
 - c. Rome
 - d. Sparta
2. Pythagoras was a person known for his skill in this subject:
 - a. History
 - b. Earth Science
 - c. Math
 - d. English
3. This Greek god was the patron of archers:
 - a. Homer
 - b. Apollo
 - c. Zeus
 - d. Dionysus

True or False

- ___ 4. The Greeks enjoyed competing in sports and created a tournament.
- ___ 5. The highest point of the Greek civilization was during the 7th and 8th centuries B.C.E.
- ___ 6. Ancient Greek cities were great centers for trade.
- ___ 7. Walls were built around the entire city of Athens.

Fill Ins

8. This city was known for teaching their young men to become soldiers: _____
9. *The Iliad* tells the story of two generals in love with a woman named: _____
10. Winners of the Olympic Games were given this, which symbolizes peace, respect, and the honor of winning an event: _____
11. This man lived in Athens and became a great philosopher: _____

Ancient Greece Answers

Multiple Choice

1. Which of the following was NOT a well-known city in Ancient Greece:
 - e. Corinth
 - f. Athens
 - g. Rome**
 - h. Sparta
2. Pythagoras was a person known for his skill in this subject:
 - e. History
 - f. Earth Science
 - g. Math**
 - h. English
3. This Greek god was the patron of archers:
 - e. Homer
 - f. Apollo**
 - g. Zeus
 - h. Dionysus

True or False

- T** 4. The Greeks enjoyed competing in sports and created a tournament.
- F** 5. The highest point of the Greek civilization was during the 7th and 8th centuries B.C.E.
- T** 6. Ancient Greek cities were great centers for trade.
- T** 7. Walls were built around the entire city of Athens.

Fill Ins

8. This city was known for teaching their young men to become soldiers: **Sparta**
9. *The Iliad* tells the story of two generals in love with a woman named: **Helen**
10. Winners of the Olympic Games were given this, which symbolizes peace, respect, and the honor of winning an event: **an olive branch**
11. This man lived in Athens and became a great philosopher: **Socrates**