

## The Ancient Greeks

The Ancient Greek civilisation lasted from around 800BC until 146AD when the Romans invaded Greece. The geography of Greece influenced how it developed as a country, with much of its land broken up by mountains or sea. Even today the rough land makes travel difficult. The Ancient Greeks did not think of Greece as a single country – it had never been united by a single leader. Instead, the Ancient Greeks set up independent city-states or **poleis** which were both influenced by and in competition with each other.

The two most famous city-states were Athens and Sparta. These contrasted greatly. Whilst in Athens a **democratic** government ruled, elected by male citizens, in Sparta there was an **oligarchy**, ruled by two kings from two royal families and five **ephors** (a council of overseers). Spartan women had greater freedom than their Athenian **counterparts**, who were discouraged from leaving the home.



Athens was rich in literature and the arts, **advocating** a culture of poetry, song and theatre as well as history and philosophy. In contrast, Sparta **shunned** literature. This means that much of the knowledge that we have of the Greeks and their way of life comes from evidence left by the Athenians, who may not have left behind an **unbiased** opinion.

### Society

If you were rich in Ancient Greece, life was good. The **affluent** lived in large town houses and might have also owned a house in the country. Most families owned household slaves and labourers and even poor families might have owned a few workers to perform **menial** duties. These slaves had no power or status at all but they were not allowed to be beaten or killed. Sometimes slaves were owned by a city-state instead of a family and could be employed to detect **counterfeit** money or even work as part of a police force.

### Religion

Greek religion was **polytheistic**, meaning that they believed in many gods, not just one. Greek mythology **sought** to explain the creation of the earth and the nature of the world. The gods were human-like beings who lived on Mount Olympus and could become involved in the lives of men, coming to Earth to change things and influence people. It was also **essential** to please the gods – happy gods could make things go your way but unhappy gods could make your life miserable. The Ancient Greeks built temples for their gods, not for people to worship in but to house the statues of the gods, which were treated as if they were real.



### Theatre

Plays were very important in Ancient Greece as they often formed part of a religious festival. Theatres were open air and circular with seats for the audience set into steps at the sides. The company was made up of three actors who wore different masks to change characters and the chorus, a group of about fifteen people who stood at the side, talking or singing together to **narrate** the story. Plays could be **tragedies**

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where things often ended unhappily or **comedies** which were funny and usually rude!

## Food

An Ancient Greek diet was very healthy and very simple. Bread, cheese, fruit, vegetables and eggs were eaten regularly. Only rich people could afford to eat meat. The location of most Greek cities meant that fish and seafood was also a popular food choice. Wheat, barley, grapes and olives were grown by farmers. Grapes were eaten or made into wine, and olives were pressed; their oil used for cooking, cleaning and lighting. Sweetmeats, made from dates, figs, nuts, honey and sesame seeds were also a favourite food.

## Art and Architecture

Much of our evidence to show what the Ancient Greeks did in their spare time comes from scenes of everyday life left on surviving art and artefacts. Most families in Ancient Greece had slaves to do the work for them. Consequently many Greeks, especially the rich, had a lot of spare time. Hobbies were a big part of life, particularly sport, which was seen as **crucial** for **maintaining** good health. These pictures of pastimes are found on clay pots, carvings, friezes and frescoes.



The style of architecture developed by the Ancient Greeks is possibly the most influential of any other civilisation. The tall columns supporting heavy **lintels** created grand, breathtaking buildings that still influence architects all over the world today.

## Legacies

Great thinkers were **revered** in Ancient Greece and were known as **philosophers**, no matter what field they studied. Many of the discoveries and ideas that we use today came from Ancient Greece. The Greeks gave us a branch of mathematics – **geometry** – and the rules discovered by many Greek mathematicians such as Euclid, Pythagoras and Archimedes are used to this day.

Astronomers made **revolutionary** discoveries including the fact that the moon was not a source of light but instead reflected the light from the sun. Later, Aristarchus recognised that the sun was the centre of the solar system, not the earth. Archimedes made scientific discoveries about volume and engineering that have never been **surpassed**. The founder of modern medicine was also an Ancient Greek. Doctors today still swear the Hippocratic oath, after Hippocrates' code of medical ethics.



The English language has come to us from all over the world, with origins in Latin among others, but many of our modern-day words use **prefixes** and **suffixes** from the Ancient Greek language and even our alphabet system was invented in Ancient Greece.

The details of our modern lives have been shaped by civilisations around the world: paper money from China, music from Europe and America, medicines and food from the Middle East and materials from the Far East. However, if we look at all the evidence, including architecture, sport, education, theatre, science and philosophy, is it any wonder that Ancient Greece has come to be known as the *cradle* of civilisation?

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## The Ancient Greeks – Follow-Up Work

How did the way in which the text is laid out help you find information quickly?

How are Athens and Sparta similar/different?

Why do you think the geography of Greece meant that it wasn't possible to have just one ruler?

Choose three words to describe the Ancient Greeks. Why have you chosen those words?

What effect do you think the Spartans' lack of written material has had on our view of history?

Why do you think the author has used the word 'cradle' in the last paragraph?

The author finishes the report with a question. What effect does this have on the reader?

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Why did the location of the Greek cities mean that the Greeks ate lots of fish and seafood?

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Name three legacies from the ancient Greeks that we still use today.

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What do you think were the advantages/disadvantages of having a polytheistic religion?

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Would you have liked to live in Ancient Greek times? Why? Why not?

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Find evidence in the text to tell us how the Ancient Greeks felt about slaves.

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What do you think are the differences in meaning of the word 'philosopher' in Ancient Greek times and the way we use the word today?

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Write the meaning of each of these words.

democracy \_\_\_\_\_

counterparts \_\_\_\_\_

advocating \_\_\_\_\_

shunned \_\_\_\_\_

affluent \_\_\_\_\_

menial \_\_\_\_\_

counterfeit \_\_\_\_\_

crucial \_\_\_\_\_

revered \_\_\_\_\_

surpassed \_\_\_\_\_

revolutionary \_\_\_\_\_

essential \_\_\_\_\_

Task A

Find an antonym for the purple word in each case. Make sure you use a different word each time.

In contrast, the Spartans **shunned** literacy.

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Great thinkers were **revered** in Ancient Greece.

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The **affluent** lived in large town houses.

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Participating in sport was **crucial** for good health.

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Even poor families owned a few workers to perform **menial** duties.

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Task B

Use each of your antonyms in a new sentence, using your knowledge from the report to help you.

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Prefixes

The Greeks spoke a different language to us but many of our modern day words have been influenced by them. Lots of our words have Greek prefixes.

A prefix goes at the start of a word. Some Greek prefixes are below. Look in a dictionary and see how many words you can find that start with them. Can you make any educated guesses as to what each prefix might mean?

anti- \_\_\_\_\_

bio- \_\_\_\_\_

geo- \_\_\_\_\_

phot- \_\_\_\_\_

mono- \_\_\_\_\_

tele- \_\_\_\_\_

Suffixes

A suffix goes at the end of a word. Some Greek suffixes are below. Look in a dictionary and see how many words you can find that start with them. Can you guess what each suffix might mean?

-ology \_\_\_\_\_

-meter \_\_\_\_\_

-graph \_\_\_\_\_

-phobia \_\_\_\_\_

## The Ancient Greeks – Oral Teacher Questions

How did the way in which the text is laid out help you find information quickly? **Various answers to include subheadings, illustrations, short factual sentences.**

How are Athens and Sparta similar/different? **Ruled differently, Athenians valued the arts whilst Spartans valued bravery and strength, Spartan women had more freedom whilst Athenian women were confined to the home.**

Why do you think the geography of Greece meant that it wasn't possible to have just one ruler? **Mountainous and rugged, meant that it was difficult for people to travel very far because of the lack of modern roads. No other way of communicating so city-states were all independent.**

Choose three words to describe the Ancient Greeks. Why have you chosen those words? **Various answers, must be justified.**

What do you think is the effect of the Spartans lack of written material? **Because they didn't leave much written evidence we have only the Athenian's version of events. As they were 'rivals', we may have a biased view of how virtuous the citizens of each polis was.**

Why do you think the author has used the word 'cradle' in the last paragraph? **The word cradle conjures up images of babies and birth and the author is suggesting that civilisation was 'born' or started in Ancient Greece.**

The author finishes the report with a question. What effect does this have on the reader? **Any sensible response – hopefully the students will think that the author is suggesting that there are still questions to be asked, that the report isn't finished, maybe encouraging the reader to go and find out more about Ancient Greece.**

Why did the location of the Greek cities mean that the Greeks ate lots of fish and seafood? **Various answers, must be justified. Near the coast or rivers.**

Name three legacies from the ancient Greeks that we still use today. **Any sensible choice.**

What do you think were the advantages/disadvantages of having a polytheistic religion? **Various answers, must be justified.**

Would you have liked to live in Ancient Greek times? Why? Why not? **Various answers, must be justified.**

Find evidence in the text to tell us how the Ancient Greeks felt about slaves. **Indifferent/superior towards them as 'they (slaves) had no power or status' but they were kind masters because 'they (slaves) were not allowed to be beaten or killed.' They were also useful as they did all the work so that people could have free time.**

What do you think are the differences in meaning of the word 'philosopher' in Ancient Greek times and the way we use the word today? **The Ancient Greeks used the word to describe 'thinkers', no matter what subject they specialised in. Nowadays it is used to describe a very specific field of study where a philosophical question is one which has no definite answer and is open to debate.**



Write the meaning of each of these words.

democracy – **government by the people**

counterparts – **a person or thing closely resembling another**

advocating – **defending or supporting**

shunned – **neglected or rejected**

affluent – **rich**

menial – **lowly or degrading**

counterfeit – **fake**

crucial – **extremely important**

revered – **worshipped**

surpassed – **exceeded or be greater than**

revolutionary – **radically new or innovative**

essential – **absolutely necessary**

Task A

Find an antonym for the purple word in each case. Make sure you use a different word each time.

In contrast, the Spartans shunned literacy.

In contrast, the Spartans embraced/loved literacy.

Great thinkers were revered in Ancient Greece.

Great thinkers were despised/disregarded in Ancient Greece.

The affluent lived in large town houses.

The poor lived in large town houses.

Participating in sport was crucial for good health.

Participating in sport was optional/inessential for good health.

Even poor families owned a few workers to perform menial duties.

Even poor families owned a few workers to perform exciting/skilled duties.

Task B

Use each of your antonyms in a new sentence, using your knowledge from the report to help you.

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### Prefixes

The Greeks spoke a different language to us but many of our modern day words have been influenced by them. Lots of our words have Greek prefixes.

A prefix goes at the start of a word. Some Greek prefixes are below. Look in a dictionary and see how many words you can find that start with them. Can you make any educated guesses as to what each prefix might mean?

**anti-** antibiotic, antiseptic, antisocial, antidote, anticlimax – means opposite or against

**bio-** biology, biochemist, biopsy, biofuel, biodegradable – means life or living organism

**geo-** geography, geology, geode, geochemistry – means earth, soil or ground

**phot-** photography, photograph, photon, photosynthesis, photometer – means light

**mono-** monocle, monochrome, monologue, monopoly, monotone – means one or single

**tele-** telescope, television, telephone, telegraph, telephoto – means far away or from afar

### Suffixes

A suffix goes at the end of a word. Some Greek suffixes are below. Look in a dictionary and see how many words you can find that start with them. Can you guess what each suffix might mean?

**-ology** biology, sociology, technology, zoology, mythology – meaning the study of

**-meter** barometer, thermometer, speedometer, altimeter – meaning device or measure

**-graph** autograph, epigraph, telegraph, photograph, choreograph – meaning to write

**-phobia** claustrophobia, hydrophobia, agoraphobia, arachnophobia – meaning a fear of