



# Ancient Greece

## Greek Society

Greece was divided into citystates (**polis**) that each had their own laws and way of life, but that all spoke the same language. Two of the most well-known city states are Athens and Sparta.

In Athens, Greek styles of art, **architecture**, **philosophy** and theatre were developed - these helped shaped our modern society along with science, language and maths.

Athens had a **democratic** government – this means that the people who lived there made decisions by voting, like we do in Britain.

In Sparta, life was very different; all that was important was being able to defend Sparta in battle.

The first Olympic games were held in 776 in the city-state Olympia.

Religion was very important in ancient Greece. They were **polytheists** - they believed in different gods and goddesses that were in charge of different parts of their lives, such as a god of the sea and a goddess of wisdom. Temples were built in their honour and they featured heavily in the stories of Greek **mythology**.

A **polis** consisted of an **urban** centre, often fortified and with a sacred centre built on a natural **acropolis (citadel)** or harbour.

## Physical features

Greece is made up of the mainland and many islands. Its position by the sea meant that the Greeks were a **seafaring** people. City-states (**polis**) were created and **trade** happened between each of the cities. Greece is a warm country, but winds from the Mediterranean, and rains from the north, kept temperatures liveable and created **fertile** farming conditions.

## Selected Ancient Greek gods and goddesses

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Zeus      | King of the gods, god of the sky, lightning and thunder. |
| Hades     | God of the dead and king of the underworld.              |
| Poseidon  | God of the sea, earthquakes and storms.                  |
| Hera      | Queen of the gods, goddess of marriage.                  |
| Apollo    | God of music, art, knowledge and the sun.                |
| Aphrodite | Goddess of love and beauty.                              |
| Hermes    | Messenger of the gods, god of trade and travellers.      |
| Ares      | God of war.  |
| Athena    | Goddess of wisdom, courage and strategy.                 |
| Demeter   | Goddess of agriculture and harvest.                      |

|               | Vocabulary  |
|---------------|---|
| acropolis     | the <b>citadel</b> of an ancient Greek city   |
| archaeologist | someone who studies the past by exploring old remains   |
| architecture  | the art of planning, designing and constructing buildings   |
| chronology    | the order of events in time   |
| circa         | Latin meaning 'around'. c. 800 BC means around 800 BC.  |
| citadel       | a strong building in or near a city, where people could shelter for safety  |
| civilisation  | a human <b>society</b> with its own social organisation and <b>culture</b> .  |
| climate       | the general weather conditions that are typical of a place  |
| continent     | a very large area of land that consists of many <b>countries</b> . Europe is a <b>continent</b> .   |
| culture       | activities such as the arts and philosophy, which are considered to be important for the development of <b>civilisation</b>                   |
| deity         | a god or goddess  |
| democracy     | a fair political system where all adults vote for an elected government. This government then makes decisions on how to run the country.      |
| empire        | a number of individual nations that are all controlled by the government or ruler of one particular country                                   |
| fertile       | rich in nutrients to support the growth of many plants  |
| invasion      | to try and take over a place by force   |
| merchant      | a person who buys or sells goods in large quantities  |
| military      | relating to or belonging to the army  |
| mythology     | a group of myths, especially all the myths from a particular country, religion, or <b>culture</b> .   |
| philosophy    | the study or creation of theories about basic things such as the nature of existence, knowledge, and thought, or about how people should live |
| polis         | an ancient Greek city-state   |
| polytheists   | the worship of or belief in more than one god   |
| seafaring     | working as a sailor or travelling regularly on the sea  |
| society       | people in general, thought of as a large organized group  |
| trade         | the activity of buying, selling, or exchanging goods or services  |
| urban         | belonging to, or relating to, a town or city  |
| warfare       | the activity of fighting a war  |

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|--------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| T<br>i<br>m<br>e<br>l<br>i<br>n<br>e | 776 BC: The first Olympic games  | 570 BC: Pythagoras is born. He made major breakthroughs in science and maths. | c. 450 BC: Athens becomes a powerful city and controls an <b>empire</b> . | 336 BC: Alexander the Great is King and helps the Greek take place. <b>empire</b> expand further. |
|                                      | c. 750 BC: Early Greek Homer writes in Athens, giving greater power to the people. | 508 BC: Democracy begins  | 432 BC: The <b>Parthenon</b> is completed.                                | 146 BC: Rome conquers Greece, making it part of the Roman <b>Empire</b> . <b>culture</b> thrives. |