

# Ancient Greece : A Question for the People



Key Stage 2 Education Workshop  
Support Notes for Teachers

### **Workshop structure**

The session consists of two distinct parts.

In the first part of the session the pupils will be exploring the cultural identifiers associated with the city state of Athens during the fifth century BC. By considering themes such as the status of the Ancient Greek Goddess Athena, the legacy of the Battle of Marathon and the role of democratic government the pupils will begin to build up an awareness of what it meant to be an Athenian citizen. The pupils will then have an opportunity to handle a range of primary and secondary sources relating to ancient Athens. The pupils will then apply their understanding of Athenian cultural identifiers to match the objects to key statements about ancient Athens. The sources available for handling will include objects drawn from the British Museum's own collections.

In the second part of the session the pupils will become citizens of ancient Athens, charged with the task of debating the city's response to the approach of the invading Persian army. The pupils will be presented with a selection of possible courses of action, which they will debate and then rank in order of preferred action. As news arrives in Athens about the Persian advance, new options arise and the citizens will need to review the courses of action available to them. This part of the session will culminate with all the citizens being invited to vote on the overall course of action to be adopted by Athens.

The workshop closes with an opportunity to find out what the ancient Athenians actually decided to do in 480 BC as the Persians drew ever closer to their city.

### **Important Note: Object Conservation**

During the course of the workshop the pupils will be handling a range of replica and real objects. Some of these objects are drawn from the collection of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum. The Museum would, therefore, very much appreciate it if pupils attending the workshop could wash and dry their hands before the start of the session to help conserve the objects being handled.

As some of the handling objects are composed of metal and metal minerals we recommend that pupils also wash their hands after the session, particularly if they are due to go straight into their lunch break.

### **Before your visit: preparing for your workshop**

A key theme of the workshop is cultural identity. Identity is strongly defined by objects, environment, beliefs or ways of life that have a special meaning for people in terms of how they see themselves. These factors are known as cultural identifiers.

Before the day of your visit you might like to explore the idea of identity with your pupils.

For example, the pupils could devise a set of identifiers for their school.

School identifiers will indicate what makes the school special for the pupils and what identifies the school to other people in the locality. This might include the colour of the school uniform, the school name and emblem, where the school is located or the nature of the school building(s). You could also look at identifiers for an individual class or year group such as the class/year group teachers, classroom(s) location, class/year group responsibilities or where the class/year group sits in assembly.

### **Ancient Athenian objects in the British Museum**

There are many objects from ancient Athens on display in the British Museum.

A good starting point is the COMPASS website at [www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass) where you can search for objects from Athens in the Museum collections.

Below are a few key galleries which you may like to include as part of your visit.

#### **Gallery 18: The Parthenon Sculptures**

Sculptures from the Parthenon in Athens.

#### **Gallery 19: Olive oil flasks, drinking cups and tombstones**

White-ground flasks and red figure drinking cups showing a range of scenes. (Case 1)

A selection of tombstones commemorating Athenian citizens. (End wall of gallery)

#### **Gallery 68: Coins**

Athenian silver Tetradrachm. (Case 1, Panel 4: The Coming of Coinage, Coins 5 and 6)

Athenian silver coins. (Case 3, Panel 2: Creating a Money Supply, coins 1, 2, 20 and 21)

Athenian gold coins. (Case 2, Panel 3: Raw Materials, coins 13 and 14)

#### **Gallery 69: Life in Ancient Greece**

This gallery contains a wide range of objects relating to everyday life.

Objects from Athens are on display in the following cases:

Trade and transport (case 25), children (case 8), music and dance (case 22), the Athenian hero Theseus (Case 11), an Athenian festival (case 24) and the Gods of Olympus (case 32).

## Follow-up activities

### History

Explore what might have been the cultural identifiers for another Greek city such as Sparta.

A wall display could place Spartan statements alongside Athenian statements.

Remind the pupils of the course of the invasion and set up research on specific aspects:

Marathon, Thermopylae and Salamis, navies and armies, Athenian democracy and Persian monarchy.

Adapt passages written by the Greek historian Herodotus which tell the story of the invasion and explore these with your pupils.

### Citizenship

Discuss the idea of identity in more detail - explore this in its various aspects: group and individual, difference and similarity; consider the value and risks of diversity.

Research the granting of voting rights both in Britain and abroad. What have been the criteria for political participation? Consider who is, or is not, allowed to vote in elections now and explore the reasons.

Discuss how the pupils resolved disputes in the workshop. What are the different ways of making decisions and which are the fairest?

## Curriculum Links

### National Curriculum for History at Key Stage 2

Programme of Study - A European history study : *A study of the way of life, beliefs and achievements of the people living in Ancient Greece and the influence of their civilization on the world today.*

### Citizenship non-statutory guidelines at Key Stage 2

Developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities: *Pupils should be taught to talk and write about their opinions, and explain their views, on issues that affect themselves and society.*

Preparing to play an active role as citizens: *Pupils should be taught to research, discuss and debate topical issues, problems and events.*

## Contact Details

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