

# ANCIENT GREECE

## 1) Introduce the timeline of ancient Greek history.

Ans: The history of Ancient Greece can be divided up into different periods. The three main periods we will cover here are the Archaic Period, the Classical Period, and the Hellenistic Period.

During the Archaic Period the Greek government began to form with the rise of the city-states such as Athens and Sparta. This was also when the Greeks began to explore philosophy and theatre.

The Classical Period began with the introduction of democracy in Athens. Athens also rose to new heights in art and philosophy. It was during this period that Athens and Sparta fought in the Peloponnesian Wars. Near the end of the Classical Period Alexander the Great rose to power conquering much of Europe and Western Asia.

The death of Alexander the Great ushered in the Hellenistic Period. Greece declined in power until it was finally conquered by Rome.

- ❖ 2900-2000 BC: The Bronze Age when Early Aegean cultures start to emerge
- ❖ 2500 BC: The great Minoan civilization
- ❖ 1200 BC: The Trojan War and the destruction of Troy (Ilium)
- ❖ 1050-750 BC: The Dark Ages of Greece and the fall of the Mycenaean culture
- ❖ 850 - 700 BC: Development of the first Greek Alphabet

### Greek Archaic Period (800 BC - 480 BC)

- 776 BC - The first Olympic Games takes place. The games would take place every 4 years in honor of the Greek god Zeus.

- 757 BC - First Messenian War begins. This is a war between Sparta and Messenia that will last many years.
- 750 BC - Homer begins to write the Iliad and Odyssey. These epic poems become two of the most famous literary works in Greek literature.
- 650 BC - The Greek Tyrants come into power. Cypselus is the first Tyrant of Corinth.
- 621 BC - A lawyer named Draco introduces strict new laws in Athens that are punishable by death. These are called Draconian laws.
- 600 BC - The first Greek coins are introduced.
- 570 BC - Pythagoras is born. He will make major advances in science, math, and philosophy. We still use the Pythagorean Theorem today to help with geometry.
- 508 BC - Democracy is introduced in Athens by Cleisthenes. He establishes a constitution and is often called the "Father of Athenian Democracy". This is one of the great accomplishments of the Greek culture.

### Greek Classical Period (480 BC - 323 BC)

- ✚ 490 BC - The Greeks fight the Persians in the Greek/Persian Wars. Two famous battles are the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC and the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC. The Greeks win and the Persians retreat.
- ✚ 468 BC - Sophocles begins to write plays for the theatre. Soon the theater becomes a very popular form of entertainment in Greece.
- ✚ 440 BC - Famous playwright Euripides wins first prize for the best play in Athens.
- ✚ 432 BC - The temple to Athena, the Parthenon, is completed in Athens on the Acropolis. Today this is the most famous surviving building of Ancient Greece.
- ✚ 431 BC - The wars between Sparta and Athens begin. They are called the Peloponnesian Wars. The wars will last 27 years with Sparta eventually conquering Athens in 404 BC.
- ✚ 399 BC - The famous Greek philosopher Socrates is put to death for corrupting the youth of Athens with his teachings.

- ✚ 386 BC - Greek philosopher and student of Socrates, Plato, founds the first institution of higher learning in the western world. It's called the Academy.
- ✚ 342 BC - The great philosopher, scientist, and mathematician, Aristotle, begins to tutor Alexander (later to be called Alexander the Great).
- ✚ 336 BC - Alexander the Great becomes king when his father, Philip of Macedon is assassinated.
- ✚ 333 BC - Alexander begins his conquests and defeats the Persians.
- ✚ 332 BC - Alexander conquers Egypt. He establishes the new capital of Egypt at Alexandria. Over the next several years Alexander would greatly expand his empire, conquering much of Persia on the way to India.

### Greek Hellenistic Period (323 BC - 146 BC)

- 323 BC - The Hellenistic period begins when Alexander the Great dies. The Ancient Greek civilization begins its decline and the Ancient Romans start to gain power.
  - 300 BC - Euclid, a Greek mathematician, writes Elements. This famous writing will have an impact on mathematics for years to come.
  - 224 BC: Earthquake destroys the Colossus of Rhodes
  - 200-196 BC: First Roman victory over Greece
  - 197 BC: King Philip V of Greece loses to Roman forces at Kynoskephalai
  - 146 BC - Rome conquers Greece making it part of the Roman Empire.
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- ★ 86 BC : The Roman General Sulla captures Athens
  - ★ 33 AD : Crucifixion of Jesus and the origin of Christianity
  - ★ 267 AD : The Goths sack Athens, Sparta, and Corinth
  - ★ 286 AD : The Roman Emperor Diocletian divides the Roman empire in two forming modern Greece (the Byzantine Empire)
  - ★ 641AD : The Slaves overrun Greece

## 2)How did the Minoan Culture distinguish itself?

Ans: Minoan civilization, [Bronze Age](#) civilization of [Crete](#) that flourished from about 3000 bc to about 1100 bc. Its name derives from [Minos](#), either a dynastic title or the name of a particular ruler of Crete who has a place in Greek legend. [Crete](#) became the foremost site of Bronze Age culture in the Aegean Sea, and in fact it was the first centre of high civilization in that area, beginning at the end of the 3rd millennium bc. Reaching its peak about 1600 bc and the later 15th century, Minoan civilization was remarkable for its great cities and palaces, its extended trade throughout the Levant and beyond, and its use of writing. Its sophisticated art included elaborate seals, pottery (especially the famous [Kamáres ware](#) with its light-on-dark style of decoration), and, above all, delicate, vibrant [frescoes](#) found on palace walls. These frescoes display both secular and religious scenes, such as magical gardens, monkeys, and wild goats or fancifully dressed goddesses that testify to the Minoans' predominantly matriarchal religion. Among the most familiar motifs of [Minoan](#) art are the snake, symbol of the goddess, and the bull; the ritual of bull-leaping, found, for example, on cult vases, seems to have had a religious or magical basis. By about 1580 bc Minoan civilization began to spread across the Aegean to neighbouring islands and to the mainland of [Greece](#). Minoan cultural influence was reflected in the Mycenaean culture of the mainland, which began to spread throughout the Aegean about 1500 bc.

By the middle of the 15th century the palace culture on Crete was destroyed by conquerors from the mainland. They established a new order on Crete, with centres at [Knossos](#) and [Phaistos](#). Following the conquest, the island experienced a wonderful fusion of Cretan and mainland skills. The Late Minoan period (c. 1400– c. 1100 bc), however, was a time of marked decline in both economic power and aesthetic achievement.

## 3)What were the main features of the Mycenaean Culture?

Ans: The Mycenaeans entered Greece from the north or northeast c.2000 B.C., displacing, seemingly without violence, the older Neolithic culture, which can be dated as early as 4000 B.C. These Indo-European Greek-speaking invaders brought with them advanced techniques in pottery, metallurgy, and architecture. Mercantile contact with Crete advanced and strongly influenced their culture, and by 1600 B.C., Mycenae had become a major center of the ancient world. The exact relationship of Mycenaean Greece to Crete between 1600 and 1400 B.C. is extremely complex, with both areas evidently competing for maritime control of the Mediterranean. After the violent destruction of Knossos c.1400 B.C., Mycenae achieved supremacy, and much of the Minoan cultural tradition was transferred to the mainland. The Mycenaean commercial empire and consequent cultural influence lasted from 1400 to 1200 B.C., when the invasion of the [Dorians](#) ushered in a period of decline for Greece. Events from 1100 to 900 B.C. are extremely obscure, but by the 9th cent. B.C. the centers of wealth and population showed a decisive shift. Although the Mycenaeans had certain innovations of their own, they drew much of their cultural inspiration from the Minoans. The great Mycenaean cities—Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos, Thebes, Orchomenos—were noted for their heavy, complex fortifications and the massive, cyclopean quality of their masonry, while Minoan cities were totally unfortified. Mycenaean palaces were built around great halls called megaron rather than around an open space as in Crete. Unlike the Cretans, the Mycenaeans were bearded and wore armor in battle. Their written language, preserved on numerous clay tablets from Pylos, Mycenae, and Knossos, appears to be a form of archaic Greek linguistically related to ancient Cypriot. The presence of this script, known as Linear B, at Knossos c.1500 B.C. indicates that Mycenaean Greeks had invaded and dominated Crete during the Late Minoan period before the final collapse c.1400 B.C.

#### 4) Narrate different forms of Greek Polis.

Ans: The polis or city-state, was the geographic and political center of Greek life. At first, each polis was made up of farming villages, fields, and orchards grouped

around a fortified hill called an acropolis. At the top of the acropolis stood the temple of the local god and at the foot was the agora. This was an open area used as a marketplace. As time passed, artisans, traders, and members of the upper class settled near the agora. By 700 B.C., this inner part of the polis had become a city. Together with the villages and farmland around it, it formed a city-state. Each city-state had its own government and laws. Different forms of governance in Polis:

- ‘Tyrannis’ (rule by ‘Tyrants’ or popularly approved political heads)
- ‘Oligarchy’ (rule by small number of rich and powerful citizens)
- ‘Democracy’ (rulers elected by all free adult male citizens)

The average city-state contained between 5,000 and 10,000 citizens. Workers born outside Greece, as well as women, children, and enslaved people, were not citizens. Only citizens could vote, own property, hold public office, and speak for themselves in court. In return, they were expected to take part in government and to defend their polis in time of war or conflict. For Greek citizens in ancient times, civic and personal honor were one and the same. The polis gave them a sense of belonging. They put the good of the polis above everything else. Two of the greatest Greek city-states were Sparta and Athens. Sparta had the strongest army in Greece, while Athens had the strongest navy. However, each developed differently with a different kind of government and a different way of life. Many city states –Athens, Sparta, Thebes, Corinth and others had frequent conflicts among the Polis.

**Decline of Polis:** After the Peloponnesian War, most Greeks began to lose their sense of community. The war had lasted a long time and had cost a great deal of money. People became more interested in making money and having a good time. Soon, bitterness developed between the upper and lower classes within each polis. After the war, Sparta ruled Greece. The Spartans were harsh rulers who angered the other Greeks. As a result, in 371 B.C., a group of city-states led by Thebes (the ἑβζ) overthrew Spartan rule. The rule of Thebes, however, was no better than that of Sparta. It weakened the city-states even more. The Greeks were no longer strong enough or united enough to fight off invaders. In 338 B.C., Philip II of Macedonia conquered Greece.



### 5)Examine Athenian democracy and its shortcomings.

Ans: Northeast of Sparta, another city-state developed that had a very different philosophy about living than the Spartans. This polis, located on the Aegean coast, was Athens. Like Sparta, the location of Athens was strategic. Like all the other Greek city-states, Athens was first ruled by kings. However, about 750 B.C., some Athenian nobles, merchants, and manufacturers took over the government. They set up an oligarchy or form of government in which a few people have the ruling power. Fights broke out between them and the farmers and artisans over land ownership. The upper-class Athenians did not want these fights to turn into an uprising against the government, so they agreed to make reforms. To do this, they had to change the government. The first attempt to change the government was made by Draco a noble. Draco, however, failed because his punishments were too harsh. Then, in 594 B.C., a rich merchant named Solon was chosen to undertake the task. Solon prepared a constitution, or a set of principles and rules for governing. This constitution broke the political power of the rich. Solon set a limit on how much land a person could own and gave landowners the right to vote in the Assembly. The Assembly was given the power to pass laws. Solon erased all debts. He freed all the people who had been forced into enslavement because of debt. Solon offered citizenship to artisans who were not Athenians, and he ordered every father to teach his son a trade. Under Solon, more Athenians began to take part in government. Trade also increased. Still, many people were not happy. The rich thought Solon had gone too far, while the poor thought he had not gone far enough. By the time Solon had left office, he had lost much of his original popularity. About 560 B.C., the government was taken over by another Athenian named Peisistratus. Peisistratus was supported by the lower classes. He divided large estates among farmers who owned no land. He stated that a person no longer had to own land to be a citizen. He also encouraged sculpture and other arts.

A Democratic Constitution: When Peisistratus died, his sons took over as leaders of the Athenian government. Not long after that, their government was overthrown by the Spartans. In 508 B.C., the Spartans themselves were

overthrown by a noble named Cleisthenes. A year later, Cleisthenes put into effect the world's first constitution that was democratic, or favoring the equality of all people. For example, it gave Athenians the right of freedom of speech. The political reforms made by Cleisthenes lasted until the fall of Greece almost 300 years later. Cleisthenes opened the Assembly to all males over 20 years old. Each year, the Assembly elected ten generals to run the Athenian army and navy and to serve as chief magistrates or judges. One of the generals was named commander-in-chief. The Council of Five Hundred handled the daily business of Athens. Members were chosen each year by lot. The names of 500 citizens were drawn from a large pot. No one could serve on the Council for more than two terms. Thus, every citizen had a chance to be a Council member. There were two reasons why the Athenians preferred choosing council members by lot rather than by voting. First, they believed that in an election, people who had money or who could speak well would have an unfair advantage. Second, the Athenians believed that every citizen was smart enough to hold public office. The only exception was in times of war. Then, a skillful general was needed on the Council. Under Cleisthenes, citizens were required to educate their sons. Since there were no public schools, boys either had a tutor or attended a private school. Starting when they were seven years old, boys studied writing, mathematics, and music. They also practiced sports and memorized the works of Homer and other noted Greek poets. When they turned 18 years old, Athenian males became citizens. They went to the temple of the god Zeus and took an oath of citizenship in front of their family and friends. In the oath, they promised to help make Athens a better place in which to live. They also promised to be honorable in battle, follow the constitution, and respect their religion.

**Decline of Athens:** The more powerful Athens became, the more resentful other Greek city-states grew. Anti-Athenian feelings soon spread throughout Greece.

When the Athenians attacked one of Sparta's allies, a group of city-states led by Sparta declared war on Athens. The war, which was called the Peloponnesian War, lasted almost 30 years. It ended in 404 B.C. when Athens surrendered to Sparta. Between the war and a plague that struck during the war, Athens also lost more than one quarter of its people. Much of its land was ruined.



Thousands of young Athenian men left home and became mercenaries or hired soldiers, in the Persian army. When the Spartans took control of Athens in 404 B.C., they set up an oligarchy and chose 30 Athenian aristocrats to rule there. Not long after that, the Athenians successfully revolted and once more set up a democracy. However, Athens was never again as powerful as it had been before the Peloponnesian War.