

This geography shaped Greece in several ways:

1. The country's rough terrain and geographically isolated settlements prevented the Greeks from forming a highly centralized, inland empire like the Egyptians. So they adapted their settlement pattern to the prevailing geography and settled in small, independent city-states nestled in valleys between the mountains, many of which were located near the sea.
2. Only 20% of Greece contained arable land and the country possessed few natural resources. This inspired the Greeks to become a maritime power and take to the sea. This was also true because Greece was surrounded by water and included some 1400 islands. So much of Greece would be a seafaring culture.
3. We also see that a combination of lack of space, closeness to the sea, and lack of arable farm land meant that the Greek civilization would expand in efforts of colonization. Colonization was not necessarily conquering. Greek traders and Greek farmers emigrated throughout the Mediterranean basin and the Black Sea.

Section 2: Homeric Greece

Greeks believed their origins lay in the distant but heroic age detailed by the great Greek poet Homer in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, considered to be the great literary works of Greece. According to these poems, the Trojan War began when Helen, wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta, was abducted by Paris, a prince of Troy. The Trojan War pitted the Greeks against the Trojans. The *Iliad* tells the story of the wrath of the Greek warrior Achilles at Troy. Ultimately, the Greeks overthrew and destroyed Troy. The *Iliad* portrays only a small segment—albeit important—of the last year (the tenth) of the Trojan War. The *Odyssey* picks up where the *Iliad* leaves off. It recounts the adventures of Odysseus on his way home from the Trojan War.

These books were written five hundred years after the events they describe. Most historians view Homer's account as largely fictional although based on historical realities. This does not mean the account of the Trojan War can be discarded. Accounts of the Trojan Wars were highly influential in the ancient world and fundamental to Greek and Roman self-understanding. The Greeks, Romans and other cultures all found their origins in the Trojan War. For these cultures, the Trojan Wars were the "founding acts of European history" (Price and Thonemann, 11).

Homer was the earliest mold of the Greek outlook and character. Greek children grew up learning these epic accounts of the Trojan War and its aftermath. The individuals spoken of in Homer's epics became the heroes of Greek civilization. Homer's epics highlighted the great virtue of early Greek culture—*Arête*—excellence. Homeric characters desired to reach excellence in their life. *Arête* in Greek culture extended to all areas of life, including the life of the

mind; however, in Homer's work, excellence is generally associated with duty and bravery in battle. To Greeks, cowardice brought great shame. So, based on the Homeric epics, early Greek understandings of *arête* applied to bravery and skill in battle.

Click **here** to read an excerpt from Homer's *Iliad*. How is bravery and duty in this battle portrayed? What is the role of the gods?

Homer's epics informed Greek religious life as well. Unlike the Hebrews, the Greeks did not have prophets or works of scripture but Homer gave some definition to Greek religion. There was, however, no official creed or doctrines. Greek religion was immersed in the cults of gods and goddesses. The principal gods resided on Mount Olympus. The chief deity was Zeus. All Greeks recognized these Olympic gods but every city also had their own local gods and rituals. Greeks engaged in sacred ceremonies. For example, followers of Dionysus, the god of wine and agricultural fertility, engaged in ecstatic dances and prayers asking for a good harvest. Greeks offered the gods prayer, offerings and ritual purification (such as ceremonial washing).

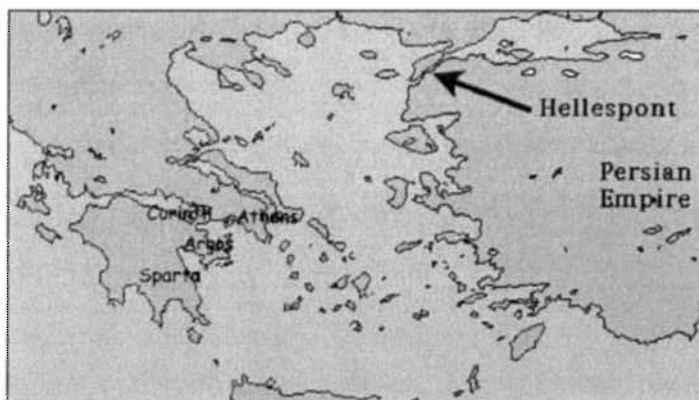
In the Mesopotamian and Egyptian minds, the gods were primarily responsible for the good or evil that befell human. In Homer, the gods are still very active but human beings also are decisive actors. Here we find the beginnings of Greek humanism—an emphasis on human action. This can be seen in the Homeric excerpt. By fate and the actions of the gods, Hector faces death at the hands of Achilles but, at the same time, he still is able to act.

Section 3: The *Hellenes* and Europe

Homer did not to any large degree emphasize the idea of "Greekness"—the idea that the Greeks were a single people in opposition to non-Greeks. In fact, the Greeks of the *Iliad* were not linguistically or ethnically distinguished from the Trojans. However, by the 6th century, there was a growing Hellenistic self-consciousness. The Greeks called themselves the Hellenes. The Greeks claimed that all the various inhabitants of the Greek peninsula and islands descended from the mythical King Hellen.

The Greeks began to see the world as divided into two opposing halves—Europe and Asia. It is from Greek Civilization that the idea of a distinct western or European civilization emerges. Greeks came to believe that Greece stood on one side of a vast cultural divide. By the late 5th century, some Greeks (including the physician Hippocrates) argued that Greeks and Asians were biologically different. They argued that the Asian climate was milder than Europe and therefore Asians were softer and gentler in nature than Europeans. Asians were feebler, less courageous and more susceptible to tyrants and despotic governments. The Greeks began to use a term for all those on the Asiatic side of the world—*barbaroi*—the barbarians.

A narrow strait ran between the Aegean and the Sea of Marmora. This strait is less than a mile wide. The place was called Hellespont by the Greeks. This narrow strait became the dividing line between Asia and Europe in the mind of many Greeks.



On the eastern side of Hellespont lay the great Persian Empire. The clear distinctions between the Persian Empire and Greek Civilization contributed to the growth of Greek self-understanding as a distinct people. This self-consciousness would be even greater as tensions and eventually war developed between Greece and Persia.

Section 4: Persia

By 500 B.C., Persia was one of the greatest empires in the world. It drew on earlier empires such as the Babylonians and Assyrians but it was much larger than these

previous empires. The total population of Greece was just about 2 to 3 million, a fraction of the Persian Empire, which had a population of over 35 million.

The Persian Empire was centered on the king. The Persian king was an absolute ruler. He could not be approached except through elaborate ritual. His word was law. The Persian King Darius once remarked: "what was said to [my subjects] by me, night and day, it was done," (J.M. Cook, 76). When the king died, Persians were expected to shave their hair and the manes of their horses in mourning. Persian kings demanded absolute obedience from their subjects

and their administrators. Any rebellion or disobedience was punished severely. King Darius was once interrupted by an official while the king was with his wife. As punishment for the interruption, the official, a high nobleman, was executed along with his entire clan (Strayer, 120).

A great example of this absolutist rule of the Persian king is demonstrated in the Old Testament Book of Esther. The story of Esther occurs during the reign of the Persian King Xerxes. At this time, the Jewish people are in exile in Persia. Esther provides readers an inside look into the Persian royal court. What the reader sees is an absolutist king who has supreme power. In this book, Esther, who is a Jew, ultimately becomes a queen. This providentially puts her in a position where she is able to save the Jews from genocide in Persia. In this excerpt we see Xerxes's response to Queen Vashti for disrespecting of his authority.

Esther, Chapter 1, reads (NIV):

This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: ² At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, ³ and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present.

⁴ For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. ⁵ When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king's palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest who were in the citadel of Susa. ⁶ The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones. ⁷ Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality. ⁸ By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink with no restrictions, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.

⁹ Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes.

¹⁰ On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him—Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Karkas— ¹¹ to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. ¹² But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.

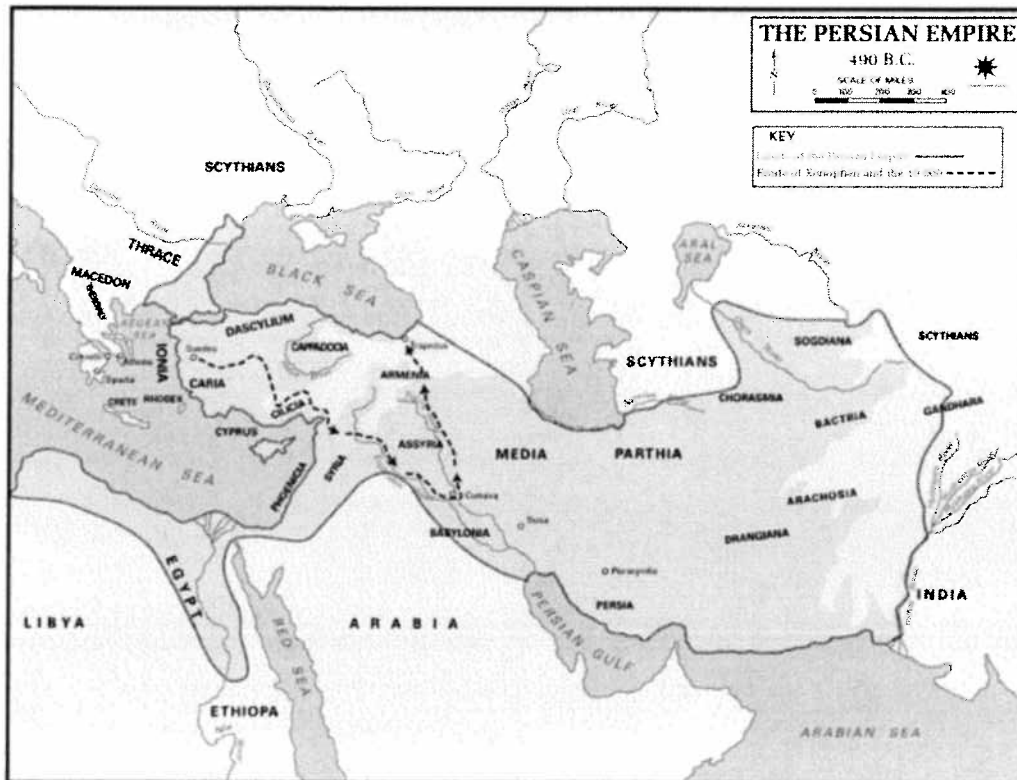
¹³ Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times ¹⁴ and were closest to the king—Karshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memukan, the seven nobles of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.

¹⁵ "According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?" he asked. "She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her."

¹⁶ Then Memukan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, "Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes. ¹⁷ For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, 'King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.' ¹⁸ This very day the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen's conduct will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way. There will be no end of disrespect and discord.

¹⁹ "Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she.."

This passage also points to great extent of the Persian Empire, which according to Esther, stretched from India to Cush (Ethiopia).



In order to keep stability in such a vast empire, a complex administrative system was established. Governors ran the various Persian provinces. A network of spies kept the administration, especially the king, informed. Rebels and rebellions were forcefully stopped. A system of roads was built throughout the empire in order to link it internally. A canal was built to link the Red Sea to the Nile. Elaborate irrigation systems were built in order to sustain agriculture. A standardized tax system was enforced. Even a postal service was established. Herodotus, the famous Greek historian, was impressed by the Persian mail system. He wrote: "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor darkness of night prevents them from accomplishing the task proposed to them with utmost speed." It is this description, first penned for Persian mailmen, that is inscribed on the James Farley Post Office in NYC, which has become an unofficial motto of the U.S. Postal Service.

The Persian Empire was an eclectic cultural and ethnic mix. The Story of Esther and the presence of a large Jewish population indicate this. Generally cultures swallowed up by the Persian Empire were allowed to retain their own distinct customs and religions. One example of this relative ethnic tolerance is the Persian King Cyrus's willingness to allow the exiled Jewish people to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their Temple. Several Old Testament books speak to the Jewish return to their homeland. The following is an excerpt from Ezra.

Ezra 1 (NIV) reads:

1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

2 "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

"The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. ³ Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. ⁴ And in any locality

where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem."

⁵ Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. ⁶ All their neighbors assisted them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all the freewill offerings.

⁷ Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god.^[a] ⁸ Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

⁹ This was the inventory:

gold dishes 30

silver dishes 1000

silver pans 29

¹⁰gold bowls 30

matching silver bowls 410

other articles 1000

¹¹ In all, there were 5,400 articles of gold and of silver. Sheshbazzar brought all these along with the exiles when they came up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Test your understanding of the materials by taking this brief self-assessment:

Quiz Group



After taking the quiz, please continue on to Section 5.

Section 5: The Greek *Polis* / City-State

Greek political and social structure was radically different than the rigid hierarchies, inequalities and absolute monarchs of Persia. Greek social and political life was centered on the city-state, or *Polis*. The *Polis* was a clearly defined territory under the authority of a single political community. The key concept is that of the community, the body of citizens. The city-state was a self-governing community. Greece was not yet one country. Ancient Greece was a collection of city-states. If you asked an ancient Greek where he was from, he would *not* say, "I live in Greece." If he was from Sparta, he would say, "I am a Spartan." If he lived in Athens, he would say, "I am Athenian." By 500 BC, self-identification with a polis was so central to social relations that people began to add their polis to their family names.

In the fifth century BC, at the height of the city-states, the Greeks viewed the city state as the only way to achieve the good life. Historian H.D.F. Kitto has argued the Greeks saw the city-state as "the only framework within which man could realize his spiritual, moral, and intellectual capacities,"

Around 400 BC it has been calculated that there were at least 862 city states. Most of these were extremely small. A polis with a population of over 10,000 would have been unusual. Most city-states were 500-5000 male citizens. The culture of the Greek city states was unlike anything that had existed in Europe before—it was predominately an urban

culture. An estimated 50% or more lived in these city-states. In contrast, in 1700 AD, the estimated urban population of Europe was only 12%.

Strictly speaking not all the Greek City States were cities, with some little more than glorified farming villages; however, living together in community was a key feature. In this way, Greeks in the fifth and fourth centuries were city-dwellers.

Reflecting the idea that the *Polis* was a collection of self-governing citizens, new public spaces emerged. For example, the *agora*, or gathering place, by 600 BC had been clearly developed in Greek city-states and designated as a place for public discussion, debate and other community functions. Increasingly, religion was also more social than spiritual. Religion was about community unity. It was more about binding a community together rather than personal religious feelings or experience.

Each city-state had its own form of government. Some city-states, like Corinth, were ruled by kings (**Monarchy**). Some, like Sparta, were ruled by a small group of men (**Oligarchy**). Others, like Athens, experimented with new forms of government such as the rule of citizens (**Democracy**). Whatever the mode of government, the crucial idea was the sense of belonging to a political community.

City-States drew from the writings of Homer in order to create a communal past and establish a communal identity. Certain heroes from the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* were often thought as being the ancestor of the entire city-state. Sparta, for example, erected shrines and statues of Helen and Menelaus, the husband and wife that sparked the Trojan War. They used the idea of the Trojan War to forge a communal identity. Individual city-states also focused on certain gods and goddesses. Athens bears the name of their patron goddess, Athena. The great Parthenon was erected in honor of the goddess (see below):



The city-states might band together to fight a common foe but they also went to war with each other. Each of the city-states was fiercely independent and in frequent conflict with its neighbors. BUT they had much in common—language and worship of the same pantheon of gods. Every four years the Greek city-states temporarily suspended their persisting rivalries to participate in the Olympic Games, which had begun in 776 BC. Early athletes had competed for individual glory and honor but by the 6th century—they competed on behalf of their city-states.

The Olympics is yet another indicator of growing "greekness". By the 5th century B.C., the games were restricted to "Greeks" only. Growing tensions and eventual war with the mighty Persian Empire would help solidify the self-understanding of "Greek" versus "Non-Greek."

I

Test your understanding of the materials by taking this brief self-assessment; choose the response that fits the definition provided:

Quiz Group



Section 6: Persian War

A number of Greek settlements in the Anatolian seacoast, known to the Greeks as *Ionia*, came under Persian control as Persia expanded. The following map provides an overview of the status of Greek-Persian control:



In 499 B.C., some of the Greeks in Ionia revolted against Persia. They found support from Athens on the Greek Mainland. This angered Persia. Twice in ten years (490 BCE and 480 BC) Persia launched major military expeditions to punish the Greeks. Against all odds, the Greeks held them off.

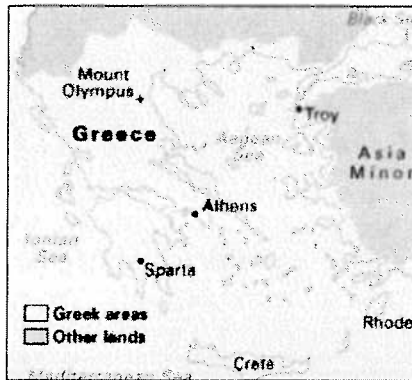
Watch this 30 minute account from this PBS program: **The Greeks: The Crucible of Civilization - Part 2 - Golden Age**. Please watch the segment beginning at the 1:40 mark to the 29:10 mark. (Click on the link and log in with your Regent ID; this is located in the Regent Online Digital Library. The video can also be accessed by navigating to the

Regent Library homepage, click on *Databases* under *Research Tools*, click on the letter "P" under *Browse by Database Title*, and select *PBS Video*.)

The Persian War was a pivotal moment in western history. If the Greeks were defeated, they would most likely have gone into decline. But their surprising victory emboldened them. Athens especially entered into a golden age.

Section 7: Athenian Democracy

Athens had taken a leading role in defeating the Persian forces. Victory over the Persians led to a Golden Age in Athens. The city was located near the coast. It had a great navy. It was a leading commercial center. This led to both economic and military strength.



The Persian War also radicalized Athenian politics, which resulted in the growth of democracy. Democracy had grown over time in Athens. In early Greek history, only wealthy and well-born men had the right to hold public office, vote and even fight in the army. The average *polis* in the period 700-500 B.C. was generally dominated formally or informally by small aristocratic elite, who belonged to wealthy families. Power-sharing occurred only between competing families. At the same time, the period 700-500 B.C. is characterized by the ever increasing participation in the business of politics—*polis* affairs—of the ordinary man.

The 7th century saw the emergence of law-codes in Athens and other *poleis*, which were concerned with limiting power of individuals and wealthy families. By 6th century, class conflict in Athens was very intense, leading almost to civil war. This sparked a number of reforms.

Solon: A reformer named Solon emerged in 594 B.C. and attempted to break the power of a small group of aristocratic families. Athenian politics were pushed in a democratic direction. Debt slavery was abolished, access to public office was opened to more men, and all citizens were allowed to take part in the Assembly, the legislative body of Athens.

Cleisthenes: Fifty years after Solon, a reformer named Cleisthenes, an aristocrat sympathetic to democracy, further pushed Athens in the direction of democracy. He broke the traditional practice of filling offices based on heredity and family ties. He introduced the idea of people serving in political positions being chosen by lottery. Cleisthenes may have introduced the practice of *Ostracism*, where an individual who was believed to be a threat to democracy was exiled from the city-state.

Gradually, the lower class—mainly small scale farmers—obtained citizenship rights. They often did this by fighting in the military. For example, it was men of the poorer classes that helped the Greeks defeat the Persians. This broadened the understanding of political rights in Athens.

The Structure of Athenian Democracy

The Athenian Democracy was direct democracy. This meant that citizens—not representatives—debated and voted on the issues. They declared war, they signed treaties and they chose how to use public funds. These decisions were made in the **Athenian Assembly**, the center of Athenian democracy and where all citizens could participate. Majority vote was supreme.

There was also a **Council of Five Hundred** which managed the courts, military and other public facilities. They also prepared the agenda for the Assembly. The members of this council were chosen by lot (random selection) for a one year term. People could not serve more than twice in a lifetime. This assured that the council of five hundred could never take too much authority into its own hands or become dominated by elites.

There were also 350 **magistrates**, chosen by lot who performed administrative duties: collected fines, policing, street repair, inspections.

Ten **generals** served the military. They were not chosen by lot but elected by the Assembly.

The ancient concept of *arête*—excellence—which had often been equated with courage in battle was increasingly equated for Athenians with the good citizen—a concern for the good of the community which outweighed personal aspirations and goals. Citizens devoted a great deal of time to civic affairs.

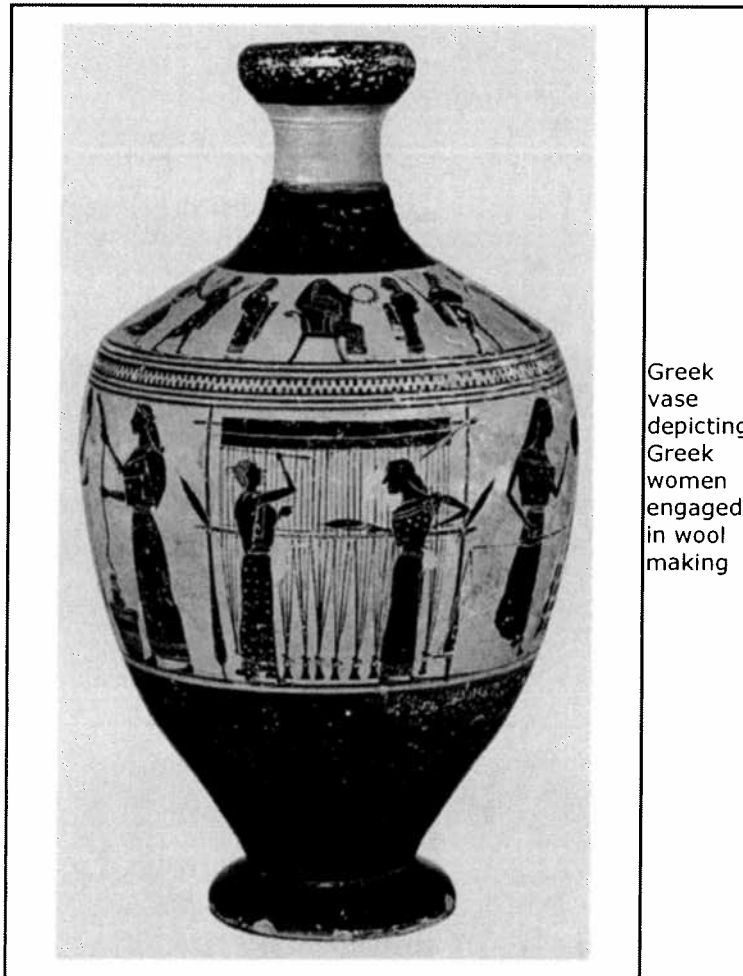
It is important to remember "citizenship" in Athens was quite limited. Women, slaves and foreigners—together more

than 50% of the population—were wholly excluded from political participation. Slaves constituted 1/4 of the Athenian population. Slavery was considered by the Greek to be necessary for the good life. Some had to be enslaved if others were to be free and prosper. They did not see a contradiction between slavery and freedom but believed they complemented one another. Slaves were occasionally Greek but the majority were foreigners gained as prisoners of war or captured by pirates. Despite serious limitations, for the ancient world, Athenian democracy was quite radical.

Athenian Women

Athenian women were especially restricted. Women were barred from holding office. They received no formal education, although some could learn to read and write at home. In legal matters, women had to be represented by a guardian and the court did not refer to the woman by name but only as someone's mother or wife. Women in Athens were often compared to children or domesticated animals.

Athenian women were expected to remain in the house at most times. Men, not women, did the shopping at market. When a woman left the house, she was typically accompanied by a male. They were generally married in their mid-teens to men ten-to-fifteen-years older. Marriage was arranged by a male relative. Their main function was management of domestic affairs and production of male heirs. They could own personal property but land was almost always passed through male heirs. By law, women were forbidden to buy or sell land. Both the male and female could obtain a divorce but children remained with the father after the divorce. Wives spent most of their time in women's quarters, not even dining generally with their husbands.



Greek vase depicting Greek women engaged in wool making

It is clear from Athenian literature and vase-painting that the ideal Athenian woman was silent, obedient, good at sewing, and had almost permanent seclusion indoors.

Test your understanding of the materials by taking this brief self-assessment:

Quiz Group

Section 8: Sparta



Spartan prosperity was founded on the ruthless exploitation of war captives. Sparta's chief means of expansion was to conquer. In the eighth century BC, Sparta conquered Messenia, its neighbor on the Peloponnesian peninsula (Peloponnesus). The Spartans kept the captured Messenians and turned them into state serfs, called *helots*. Helots were owned by the state rather than by individual Spartans. The Spartan economy was centered on agriculture although work was done by the *helots* while the Spartans focused on military training.

The Messenians outnumbered the Spartans 10 to 1. In order to retain power and order, the Spartans transformed their society into an armed camp. They were marked by single-mindedness, discipline and loyalty. The Spartans focused on one craft—how to be a warrior. They had a single minded idea of

arête—fighting courageously for Sparta. The Spartans were criticized by other Greeks for having a limited conception of *arête* that focused only on fighting rather than the life of the mind as well. All boys were removed from their families at the age of seven to be trained by the state in military camps, where they learned the art of war.

Sparta was an oligarchy. The city-state vested most political authority in its Council of Elders—28 men over the age of sixty. They served for life. They were the wealthier and more influential people in society. Sparta emerged as the leading city-states in the Peloponnesian League. This league focused on defense, not aggression. They pursued an isolationist policy.

Sparta and Athens differed drastically in how they viewed freedom. For Spartans, freedom meant preserving the independence of their fatherland; this overriding consideration demanded order, discipline and regimentation.

For Athenians, freedom was more about political freedom. Emphasis was placed on human beings reaching their full potential and the enrichment of personal life. Sparta was not as interested in cultural flourishing. Historians have described Sparta as cultural sterile. In this period, Athens emerged as the leader of Greek civilization.

Spartan Women

While Athens was politically freer than Sparta, Spartan women enjoyed more freedom than Athenian women. A Spartan's central task was reproduction—bearing warrior sons for Sparta. However, to strengthen their body for childbearing, Spartan women were encouraged to take part in sporting events—running, wrestling, discus, even driving chariots.

They were also required to be educated. Their hair was often cut short. Their clothes were considered immodest by other Greeks but they were meant to give Spartan women more freedom of movement. They were not



secluded or segregated from the rest of the population. Because men were always away fighting war or preparing for it, Spartan women had more authority in the running of everyday life.

Law and Structure

Lycurgus is considered to be the individual who established the law and structure of Sparta. Roman historian, Plutarch, wrote of the legendary Lycurgus.

Click **here** to read an excerpt of Plutarch's *Lycurgus*. What are some of the key qualities/aspects of Spartan society? How would you contrast it to Athens?

Figure of a Spartan woman engaging in physical activity.

Section 9: Debating Democracy

Athens has been described as a government by amateurs. Not everyone thought this was a great idea. A foreign king, observing the operation of the public assembly in Athens, was amazed that male citizens as a whole actually voted on matters of policy. He said, "I find it astonishing that here wise men speak on public matters, while fools decide them" (Strayer 124).

Athenian aristocratic critics equated democracy with mob rule—they had no confidence in the common people to make important decisions. Aristocratic leaders in Greece often favored oligarchy—rule by a few—as you found in Sparta. Oligarchs and Democrats would often compete with each other throughout the Greek city-states.

Click **here** to read an excerpt from Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* that documents some of these struggles. How does Thucydides portray the motives of these political leaders?

There were also more philosophical arguments against democracy. Plato, the famous Athenian philosopher and student of Socrates, argued that Athenian democracy was problematic. It was unreasonable to expect the common people to think intelligently about weighty issues. He did not believe the average common person was capable of participating sensibly in public affairs. He also argued that democratic leaders were also chosen for the wrong reasons such as persuasive speech rather than wisdom. Plato also feared that democracy would simply denigrate into anarchy and, perhaps, open the way for tyrant to take power.

Click **here** to read an excerpt of Plato's *The Republic* (Plato can be difficult reading. Take your time and read slowly for understanding. Re-read lines when necessary). Are you able to identify Plato's criticism of democracy in this excerpt?

Plato and Socrates were also disgusted by the practices of the **Sophists** in democratic Athens. The Sophists were professional teachers who wandered from city to city teaching the skills necessary for political engagement—especially in a democracy. They taught rhetoric (persuasive speech), grammar, poetry, gymnastics, mathematics and music. Sophists were not interested in the ideal political state. Rather, they focused on how to practically shape public policy and city politics. Sophists focused on preparing people to get elected or get their opinions adopted. Sophists tended to be moral relativists. Not surprisingly, The Sophists became tutors to political ambitious people, especially in the democracy of Athens. Sophists, according to Plato and others, were another symptom of the problems of democracy.

Click **here** to read an excerpt from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* where Socrates debates with Sophists. How do Socrates and the Sophists differ?

Not everyone agreed with Plato's assessment of Athenian Democracy. Many individuals saw Athenian democracy as what made Athens great. Pericles, a gifted statesman, orator and military commander, was a major figure in Athenian democracy. During his leadership years, Athenians achieved greatness throughout the Aegean Sea. In the opening period of a war with Sparta, Pericles delivered a speech honoring the dead Athenians fallen in battle.

Click **here** to read *The Funeral Oration of Pericles*. Why does Pericles believe democracy makes Athens great?

Next Steps:

After completing all the readings for this week, proceed to the *Commentary* section of this course (if needed) and

then engage in the dialogue under *Conversation*.

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