

## Lesson Three - Ancient Greece Achievements and Spread of Culture

- 6.54** Explain the rise of Alexander the Great and the spread of Greek culture.
- 6.55** Analyze the causes and effects of the Hellenistic culture of Greece.
- 6.56** Describe the myths and stories of classical Greece; give examples of Greek gods, goddesses, and heroes (Zeus, Hermes, Aphrodite, Athena, Poseidon, Artemis, Hades, Apollo), and events, and where and how we see their names used today.
- 6.57** Compare and contrast the Titans with the Olympian gods and explain the surrounding Greek mythology.
- 6.58** Explain why the city-states of Greece instituted a tradition of athletic competitions and describe the sports they featured.
- 6.59** Describe the purposes and functions of the lyceum, the gymnasium, and the Library of Alexandria, and identify the major accomplishments of the ancient Greeks. · Thales (science) · Pythagoras and Euclid (mathematics) · Hippocrates (medicine) · Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (philosophy) · Herodotus, Thucydides, Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, and Euripides (history, poetry, and drama) · the Parthenon, the Acropolis, and the Temple of Apollo (architecture) · the development of the first complete alphabet, with symbols representing both consonants and vowels

### Greece Achievements

#### Philosophy

##### Socrates

Socrates was born near Athens around 470 BCE. He did not leave behind any writings of his own, so most of what we know about him and his ideas comes from descriptions of him in the works of other writers. Socrates was born poor. He is believed to have served in the Athenian military and as a member of the Council of 500, part of the Athenian government. But he is most well known for his role as a philosopher and teacher.

Although Socrates had many followers, he did not consider himself a teacher, and he never took money for his services. He claimed to be ignorant on most subjects. He taught his followers by asking questions and engaging them in a debate about their ideas. For example, Socrates might ask “What is courage?” The person, confident of his opinion, would provide an answer. Socrates would then ask a series of questions that would force the person to examine their opinion and to think more deeply about the issue being discussed. Through this process the person would learn more about themselves, the topic being discussed, and many related topics and ideas. This approach to teaching is known today as the Socratic method. The Socratic method is used as a teaching method in many schools and as a primary method of teaching in law schools.

##### Plato

One of **Socrates**'s most important students was **Plato**. As a young man, Plato wanted to be a politician. However, he changed his mind after observing what he believed to be immoral behavior in some political leaders. He later became a student of Socrates. After Socrates was executed, Plato became disillusioned, or disappointed, with Athenian society and traveled for several years. After his travels, he returned to Athens and set up a school called the Academy on the edge of the city. Under Plato, the Academy offered instruction in mathematics, science, and **philosophy**. As the Academy developed it established courses and a curriculum. The Academy was not open to all citizens, and it aimed to prepare its students for roles as statesmen, or political leaders. Some historians consider the Academy one of the first models for modern universities.

In addition to founding the Academy, Plato also wrote a series of dramatic works called the dialogues. In many of these dialogues, Plato imagines Socrates engaging in debates over important moral and ethical issues. These dialogues are an important source of information about Socrates. Although Socrates is often the main character in the dialogues, historians disagree about whether the dialogues are intended to represent what Socrates believed or to represent Plato's views.

##### Aristotle

Just as **Plato** was a student of **Socrates**, **Aristotle** was a student of Plato. Aristotle was born in a small town in northern Greece and, at the age of 18, entered Plato's Academy. He remained there for 20 years and became the most learned student at the school. Indeed, Plato referred to Aristotle as “the intelligence of the school.”

Aristotle became the first philosopher to analyze the process by which a person can assume that one idea is true based on the assumption that two or more ideas are true. This process of logical inference is referred to as syllogism.

The following is an example of a syllogism: All animals die. A deer is an animal. Therefore, a deer will die. Aristotle believed people should use the logical process of analysis and research to learn about subjects. The principle of logical inference promoted by Aristotle influenced the scientific method, a process scientists use to devise experiments that test hypotheses and draw logical conclusions from them.

After Aristotle left the Academy, King Philip II of Macedonia asked Aristotle to tutor his son Alexander. Aristotle accepted the position and taught Alexander for about seven years. Aristotle then formed his own school, called the Lyceum, where he taught his philosophy. The school would help spread his ideas.

1. What were the three main philosophers of ancient Greece?

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2. What were the accomplishments of each:

Socrates -
Plato -
Aristotle -

## Math and Science

The Greeks developed and discovered important mathematical concepts that are the foundation of modern geometry. Pythagoras, a mathematician and philosopher who lived in the sixth century BCE, led a movement to study the nature of numbers. He and his followers derived the Pythagorean theorem. This famous equation,  $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ , shows the relationship between the sides of a right triangle and is still used to calculate everything from the heights of tall buildings to the diagonal on a TV screen. Three hundred years later, Euclid recorded geometric proofs into a book called Elements, which became the basis for the study of geometry.

Thales of Miletus (circa 635 BC – 543 BC) was a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher. He is generally considered the first philosopher in the Greek tradition and is considered the father of science as well. He is numbered among the Seven Sages of Greece. Thales is remembered for arguing that water is the essence of all things. This argument is significant because it is the first attempt to explain the physical world without reference to a supernatural power. Prior to Thales all such explanations relied on gods or other mythological forces.

Hippocrates, a doctor who lived during the classical period, studied the causes of diseases and their possible cures. He also wrote about the roles and responsibilities of doctors in relation to their patients. In one work, Hippocrates wrote an oath that swore to protect patients from harm and live an ethical life. Today, doctors still make a similar pledge, called the Hippocratic Oath, before they are licensed to practice medicine.

1. Describe the accomplishments of the following

Pythagoras -
Euclid
Thales -
Hippocrates -

## Art and Architecture

When the Greeks returned to Athens after the Persian wars they begin to rebuild portions of the city. Much of the building focused on military structures, such as the famous long walls that connected the city to its port. However, the administrative and religious buildings on the city's Acropolis, a large hill that could be easily defended and was the center of most Greek city-states, were also rebuilt. These buildings, especially the Parthenon, a temple dedicated to the goddess Athena constructed in the Doric style, remain as some of the best examples of the architecture of ancient Greece.

The architecture of ancient Greece has had a significant influence on Western architecture. The Romans adopted much of the Greek style, and influences can still be seen today. Many important government buildings in Washington, D.C., such as the White House and the U.S. Supreme Court Building, use the classic Greek styles.

2. Define the purpose of the following.

Acropolis -
Parthenon -

## Language and Literature

Literature was an important element of Greek culture. The ancient Greeks wrote many types of literature but were most well known for their poetry and drama. One of the best-known poets was a man named Homer. During the 700s BCE, Homer wrote two of the most influential works ever: the Iliad and the Odyssey. These works are epic poems, or poems that have a long narrative.

Greek historians kept careful records of important events and wars. One of the most influential historians was Thucydides. He wrote about the conflicts between Athens and Sparta in History of the Peloponnesian War. This was the first known record of a political and moral interpretation of war policies. Thucydides work remains an authoritative source of ancient Greek history.

Herodotus was called the “Father of History” by Cicero. He wrote about the ancient empires of Babylon, Egypt, and Persia, and about the Ancient Greeks. During his life, Herodotus probably told his stories in front of large numbers of people in Greek cities. Some men at the time did this for pay. He is now most famous for his writings about the wars between the Persian Empire and the Greek city-states. He told the story from the Greek side, although the war was mostly finished when he was still a child.

Another important part of Greek literary culture was drama. Greek drama included two types: tragedy and comedy. The comedies often made fun of situations and people. Aeschylus is considered the greatest ancient Greek writer of comedies. The tragedies were more serious in tone and explored human emotions and passions.

Aristophanes was a Greek comic dramatist. The place and even the exact date of his birth are unknown, but he was probably educated in Athens. He is famous for writing comedies such as The Birds for the two Athenian festivals: the Dionysia and the Lenea. He wrote at least 30 plays, 11 of which still survive, and his plays are the only surviving examples of Greek Old Comedy. Many of his plays were political, and often satirized the well-known citizens of Athens and their conduct in the Peloponnesian War.

Sophocles, one of the best-known Greek playwrights, wrote many tragedies. His best-known works include *Ajax*, *Electra*, *Antigone*, and *Oedipus Rex*. Sophocles also made minor innovations to the dramatic process, such as the inclusion of visual props that helped establish location, and including more than two actors on stage. The importance of the works can be seen in the fact that the plays of Sophocles and other Greek playwrights have been performed and studied for centuries. They and the language they were written in have had a lasting impact on Western culture.

Euripides was an Ancient Greek writer from Athens who wrote about 90 plays. Only 18 of his tragedies have survived complete, more than all other surviving ancient Greek tragedies put together. A nineteenth play, Rhesus is sometimes thought to be by Euripides, but not all classicists agree on this. Euripides was the last of the three greatest Ancient Greek writers of tragedies, the others being Aeschylus and Sophocles.

1. Describe the works of the following writers

Homer-
Thucydides -
Herodotus -
Aeschylus -
Aristophanes -
Sophocles -
Euripides -

## Religion

The Ancient Greeks practiced polytheism, or the belief in many gods. They believed that the 12 major gods and goddesses, known as Olympians, lived on Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece. The Titans are the older kind of "gods" in Greek mythology. The original Twelve Titans were children of Gaia and Uranos. Later they fought

against the newer Olympians, but lost the war. Because of this the Olympians have the power and are more important, and many Titans were put into the Tartaros in the Greek underworld.

The Greeks also believed in other minor gods, as well as beings that were part god and part mortal, known as demigods. Achilles, one of the most famous demigods, was the son of a nymph, or nature spirit, and a human king. Each city-state paid special homage, through acts such as the construction of temples, to one or more deities who they believed in turn protected their city. City-states often held festivals to honor the gods and goddess that protected their cities.

Greek mythology still can be seen in our modern lives. For instance, many movies, TV shows, and novels have been based on Greek mythology. Many common expressions we use today come from Greek myths. We describe extremely difficult tasks as “Herculean,” after the incredibly strong demigod Hercules. We refer to a person’s weakness as his or her “Achilles’ heel,” after the demigod Achilles, whose heel was said to be his only weakness.

In addition, the name of Greek gods and goddesses and other characters in Greek myths are often used to name various objects organizations, companies, and programs. Many constellations, such as Orion and Cassiopeia, have names inspired by Greek mythology. Many planets are named after the Roman versions of the Greek gods. The Apollo space program and the international athletic wear company Nike, named after a Greek goddess for victory, are examples of how Greek mythology influences modern culture. Even the modern Olympic Games can trace their roots to Greek mythology.

1. What is the difference between the Titans and the Olympians?

2. How is Greek mythology present in our culture today?

  


## The Olympics

In ancient Greece, athletic events often played an important part in religious festivals. In fact, some scholars believe the Greeks first organized athletic games as part of funeral rituals during the 1200s BCE. Eventually, the Olympic Games, honoring the god Zeus, became the most important athletic religious festival. The earliest record of an Olympic competition dates to 776 BCE. The competition was open to free Greek men, and participants from many city-states came to compete.

At first, the games only involved running a race of 210 yards. Later, other events were added, including longer races, wrestling, javelin throwing, and jumping. The Greeks held the Olympic games every four years. The games were so important to the Greeks that they measured time in four-year intervals called Olympiads. Also, before each Olympic Games, a truce was declared between all warring city-states to allow the games to be held without interruption.

After Rome conquered Greece in the 140s BCE, the games lost their religious significance. Then, in 393 CE, the Roman emperor Theodosius I banned the games. However, they were revived in 1896 with the Olympic Games in Athens. Since then, the games have become one of the most important international athletic events.

1. Why were the Olympics invented?

2. What games did the Greek Olympics feature?

  


## Alexander the Great

Philip II, the king of [Macedonia](#), conquered Greece in 339 BCE. Philip intended to conquer the Persians as well, but before he could expand his kingdom further, he was murdered in 336 BCE. After his death, his son Alexander, who became known as [Alexander the Great](#), took the throne of Macedonia. At the time, Alexander was only 20 years old. Despite his youth, he was ready to rule. He had studied literature, politics, and battle tactics, and had trained extensively in sports and combat.

In 334 BCE, Alexander began his conquest of the Persians. Before long, his troops faced the Persian army at the Granicus River. Alexander led a charge across the river, and his army soundly defeated the Persians. This victory allowed Alexander to take control of Asia Minor, the peninsula of land at the border of Europe and Asia, which today is the nation of Turkey

After this initial victory, Alexander and his army approached the coast of Syria in 333 BCE and defeated the King of Persia, Darius III. However, Darius managed to escape capture. Alexander and his army continued south into Phoenicia and took control of several port cities. In 331 BCE, Alexander was welcomed to Egypt as a liberator who rescued the Egyptians from Persian control. There, he founded the city of **Alexandria**. He continued his conquest, capturing Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis. During the fighting, Darius III was killed and Alexander the Great became the undisputed, or unchallenged, king of Asia.

Alexander's victories over the Persians did not end his conquests. Alexander led his forces further east to the western border of India. He then returned to Babylon and began to attempt to establish a government that could rule over the vast empire he had created.

Alexander failed to set up a stable government. In 323 BCE, weakened by illness and battle wounds, Alexander died at the age of 32. Alexander's generals fought each other for control of the empire, which was soon broken up into several states. Alexander's conquests, however, had long-lasting effects on the cultures of Asia and Greece.

1. How did Alexander the Great rise to power?


2. How did his conquest help spread Greek culture?


### The Influence of Ancient Greece

Alexander's conquests spread Greek ideas, architecture, and culture throughout the lands he conquered in Asia. In turn, ideas and cultures from Asia influenced Greece. This **cultural diffusion** of Greek and Asian cultures produced a unique civilization called the **Hellenistic age**, which began around 323 BCE and lasted around 200 years.

Hellenistic artists created many great works, such as the sculpture *Winged Victory of Samothrace*. These works blended the ideas of classical Greek artists, the excitement of Alexander's conquests, and the influence of artists from newly conquered lands. The works of many great Greek mathematicians and scientists also sprang from this blending of culture and knowledge. The philosophies of classical Greek philosophers spread to Africa and Asia.

Great works of math, science, **philosophy**, and history were translated into Greek and kept in the Library of **Alexandria** in Egypt. This library was built by the Ptolemaic dynasty, the children of Alexander's general Ptolemy I Soter, who became king of Egypt in the 300s BCE and was considered a pharaoh by Egyptians. The library and its attached museum were centers of scholarship for the Mediterranean world until they were destroyed. Most scholars believe that the library was destroyed around 391 CE.

By 220 BCE, Romans began to gain control of Greece. Eventually, all of Greece was absorbed into the Roman Empire. This is often seen as the end of the Hellenistic age. However, the culture of Ancient Greece continued to influence other civilizations throughout history.

1. What are the causes of Hellenistic culture?


2. What are the effects of Hellenistic culture?
