



Ancient Greece was the first civilization in Europe. It **developed** around the eastern part of the **Mediterranean Sea** . Many powerful cities , great thinkers and **scientists emerged** in ancient Greece. It was also the **birthplace** of democracy.

History of Ancient Greece

Aegean civilizations

Civilization in the eastern Mediterranean began at about 3000 B.C. on the island of Crete. The Minoans were great **sailors** who became rich through trading .

At about 1500 B.C. Mycenae, a powerful town on the southern Greek **mainland**, **conquered** and took control of Crete. Three **centuries** later the Dorians **invaded** Greece from the north and **drove the Mycenaeans off** to Asia.

City states

After 1000 B.C. Dorians and Ionians, who **settled** in the eastern part of Greece started to build large cities. These cities had their own **governments** , their own armies and were **independent** .

The two most powerful city states were Sparta and Athens. Sparta was the strongest and most powerful city state with many **soldiers** and a **huge** army. It was only interested in fighting wars. Sparta **united surrounding** villages and sent armies to conquer its neighbours and bring back **slaves** .



Sparta and Athens - two of the most powerful city states

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Athens, on the other hand, **concentrated** on **trade** , science and other fields. It was the first city to form a democratic government.

Persian wars

At about 500 B.C. the Persian **empire** under Darius I invaded many Greek cities on the Asian **coast**. By 490 B.C. the Persians attacked the Greek **mainland** . Greek armies under Spartan **leadership** fought back and **defeated** the Persians.



Peloponnesian War

Under the **rule** of Pericles Athens had become the most powerful city-state and controlled most of the eastern part of Greece. Pericles wanted to make Athens a beautiful city with many temples. **Art**, philosophy and **general knowledge** became important. Sparta thought that Athens would become too powerful. In 431 B.C. it began a war against Athens.

In 430 B.C. a **plague** broke out in Athens and killed a third of its **population**. After becoming weaker and weaker it finally **surrendered** to the Spartan army.

Macedonian rule

As Greek city-states became weaker Macedonia, a **kingdom** to the north of Greece, grew stronger and stronger. After King Philipp II had conquered all of Greece his son, Alexander, came to power in 336 B.C. He **set out to conquer** Persia and got as far east as India. Alexander the Great **spread** Greek ideas and the Greek way of life **throughout** western Asia and the Middle East.

Alexander did not name a **successor** to his empire. After his death many generals fought for power and his **empire** broke up into many **kingdoms**.



Roman rule

In 140 B.C. Rome took over Greece and the city states. They stayed under Roman rule until 395 A.D. and then became part of the Byzantine Empire.



Daily life

Men were the **heads** of most Greek families. Richer families had **slaves** who were **commanded** by the wives. They had to look after the children and do the household work.

Most Greek families **arranged** weddings for their children. Women usually married at an early age, men much later.

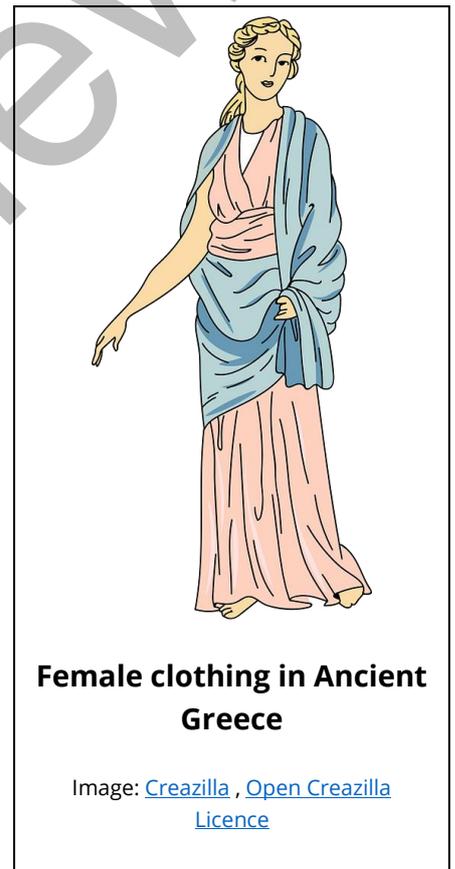
In **ancient** Greece **society** was made up of **citizens** and non-citizens. Citizens were free men and noblemen. They owned land and took part in **government** . Non-citizens were women, slaves and **serfs** .

Only citizens **received** education. Teachers in Athens taught **general** subjects like music, writing, mathematics and reading. They also **concentrated on** physical exercise like running, jumping and **wrestling** . Education in Sparta was different. Boys were sent to military schools so that they could become good **soldiers** .

Greek people ate food made of **grains** , mostly **wheat** or **barley** . Bread was the main type of food. They ate fish and eggs for **protein** and **consumed** vegetables and fruit .

Greek men and women wore **garments** made of **linen** or wool that hung down to their knees. They also wore a **belt** around their **waist** . A woman's garment usually covered her whole legs down to her **ankles** .

Houses were small in ancient Greece. Because of the mild climate many things were kept outside the house. Poor families lived in houses made of dried **bricks** and floors made of dried and hard **mud** . **Wealthy** families had stone floors and separate rooms for cooking, eating and sleeping.



Female clothing in Ancient Greece

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Philosophy, science and the arts

Ancient Greece became famous for its great thinkers and philosophers. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were great men who looked for logical **explanations** of everyday things. Many people in Greece, however, did not believe in what philosophers had to say. In 399 B.C. Socrates was **sentenced** to death because of his **teachings** and because he did not believe in Greek gods.

Famous **playwrights** and **poets** wrote works that are still performed in theatres today. Architects designed beautiful buildings.

Scientists explored medicine, physics, biology and mathematics. They **observed** nature and also **carried out** experiments.

Religion

People in ancient Greece believed in many gods. On one hand gods and **goddesses** were like normal people who showed feelings but on the other hand they **possessed abilities** that humans didn't. They could **foretell** the future and live forever.

Normal people thought that gods and goddesses watched them and **observed** what they did in everyday life. They spoke to the people through oracles, holy places where **priests** had contact with gods. The most important oracle was at Delphi.

Zeus was the most important god. He and his wife Hera lived on Mount Olympus. Other gods and goddesses included

- Aphrodite, the goddess of love
- Eros, god of love
- Apollo, the god of light
- Ares, the god of war
- Athena, the goddess of **wisdom**

Democracy and Politics

The idea of democracy, which means **government** by the people, came from ancient Greece. Athens was the first city to **set up** a democratic government.

All free men were members who **passed laws** and were also allowed to **serve** on a **jury**.

Of the 30,000 **citizens** in Athens 500 were chosen each year to help run the city. They **received** a small amount of money because they could not continue their normal work.