

Greece: Geography and Culture (2000 B.C.E.-300 B.C.E)

You Mean that the Greeks Believed in Multiple Gods?

Geography of Greece

Greece is located north of the Mediterranean Sea between the Ionian Sea and the Aegean Sea. Today, this region is called the Balkan **Peninsula**. Greece is very mountainous and most of its people live near major bodies of water. Greece has a temperate climate, which means hot and dry summers, and mild and wet winters. Most of Ancient Greece did not have enough usable farm land for the people to eat. The land was good for growing grapes and olives but did not produce enough other crops that survived. The closeness of the Aegean Sea helped the people of Ancient Greece set up **colonies** on Asia Minor and trade with other civilizations.



Modern Map of Greece
Source: <http://go.grolier.com/atlas?id=mgeu015>

Most people in Ancient Greece used the sea as a primary source of food and travel. They were one of the first civilizations to use a money economy instead of bartering for goods and **services**. They also traded with many surrounding civilizations, spreading Greek culture around the world.

Greek Gods

The Greeks believed in many different gods, making them polytheistic. The Greeks told stories and developed **myths** about the gods. Myths helped explain natural **phenomena**, while also telling stories about human qualities and other life events.



The Greek God Zeus
Source: http://go.grolier.com/page?tn=/gomedia/media_popup.html&id=10000892p015&uid=10623074

Myths also provided guidance and advice for how humans should behave. The Greeks believed that the gods had human qualities and argued and fought much like the Greeks. The Greeks depicted the gods in various forms in their painting, pottery, and theater. These gods each represented a different natural phenomena, attribute, or feeling, and the Greeks would pray to each god depending on what they needed. The more important gods were:

- Zeus-King of the gods, god of the sky and thunder
- Hera-Wife of Zeus, goddess of married women
- Apollo-god of sun and music
- Artemis-goddess of hunting and the moon
- Athena-goddess of wisdom
- Aphrodite-goddess of love and beauty



Modern day Athens
Source: http://go.grolier.com/page?tn=/gomedia/media_popup.html&id=10000498&uid=10174472

Greek Government

Because of the mountainous terrain and lack of farmland in Greece, most Greeks lived in individual **city-states** (polis in Greek), such as Athens or Sparta. Because of their inability to easily communicate, these city-states governed themselves independently. Most city-states were first started as a **monarchy** in which a king had all the power. Over time they switched to an **aristocracy** in which landowning families would rule. As the city-states expanded and traded with other countries, powerful merchants would gain and sometimes share power with the landowners in an **oligarchy**. Sometimes when there was fighting between the common and wealthy people, a **tyrant** would take power, appealing to the common people for support.

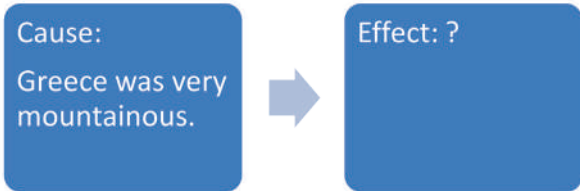
Athens and Sparta

Athens was a city-state that started as an aristocracy. After the rule of several tyrants like Draco and Solon, it became the world's first **democracy**, giving citizens the ability to vote for laws. While Athenian citizens could vote, slaves, foreigners, and women were not considered citizens and could not vote. The Greeks believed that citizens had duties to the government and were expected to serve the government if needed. Athenians encouraged public debate in which citizens were allowed to question and criticize decisions by their leaders. Sparta as a city-state had a strong military tradition. All of its male citizens joined the military and were expected to serve in the military until the age of 30. Because most men were away at war, Spartan women had more freedoms than many women in other city-states. Sparta was ruled as an oligarchy.

<p>Key Vocabulary</p> <p>Peninsula: an area of land surrounded on three sides by water</p> <p>Colonies: a group of people who leave their native country to form a settlement in a new land that is subject to, or connected with, the parent nation or empire</p> <p>Services: work done for somebody else, usually paying customers</p>	<p>Myths: a story that was told in an ancient culture to explain a practice, belief, or natural occurrence</p> <p>Phenomena: supernatural or unexplained events</p> <p>City-State: a city and its surrounding lands that act as a separate country</p> <p>Monarchy: government where the power is held by one person</p>	<p>Aristocracy: government where the power is held by several wealthy landowners</p> <p>Oligarchy: government where a few wealthy individuals hold the power</p> <p>Tyrant: a powerful person who gains control of a city-state by getting the support of the common people</p> <p>Democracy: government where all of the people have a say in making laws</p>
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Quick Review

1. Which answer best completes the chart?



- Effects:
- A. City-states were independent
 - B. There was little farmland
 - C. The sea was the main form of communication
 - D. All of the above

2. Which of the following terms would fit best in the chart below?

- A. Oligarchy
- B. The Peloponnesian War
- C. Democracy
- D. City-State

Sparta	Athens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oligarchy • Strong military 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ? • Favored the arts

3. Which of the following gods or goddesses would you most likely pray to if you were a musician?

- A. Zeus
- C. Apollo
- B. Hera
- D. Athena

4. Identify and explain 2 factors that caused city-states to develop differently.

Connection to Today

Where do you see elements of Greek culture today? Do they occur in movies and stories that we tell? Try to come up with at least three examples.

Resources

- Learn 360
- Exploring Ancient Greece-Land and People (<http://goo.gl/mo6eW>)
 - The Development of Government in Ancient Greece (<http://goo.gl/pjnbT>)