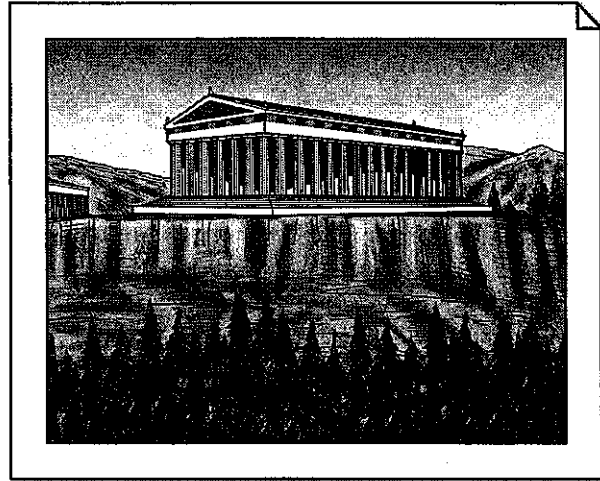




A Struggle for Power

Greece is made up of a small, mountainous peninsula on the Mediterranean Sea and many small islands. The mountains and sea kept early Greek communities separate from each other. For this reason, it was difficult to bring all the Greek people together under one government.

By 750 B.C., Greek communities had grown into city-states. The Greek word for city-state is *polis*. The *polis* was a town, city, or village and its surrounding countryside. Athens and Sparta were the two most famous Greek city-states, and they were very different.



Sparta was a strictly controlled military state. Every Spartan worked hard to make sure Sparta's military was the best. All Spartan males had to join the army at age 7. They moved into military barracks and lived there until they turned 30. At 30, men could live at home, but they had to serve in the army until age 60. Women were expected to exercise and stay fit so that they could have healthy male children. To keep citizens from learning new ideas, Spartans were not allowed to travel outside the city-state. New ideas were thought to be dangerous to the military state. Sparta had the most powerful army in Greece, but it had little art or freedom.

The government of Athens was different from Sparta's government. Early Athens had a democratic government. In a democracy, the citizens make government decisions by voting. Every male citizen in Athens voted on major issues. Male citizens had meetings every ten days. At these meetings, they passed laws, elected public officials, and made decisions about war for Athens. Athens became the center of Greek culture. Art, architecture, literature, drama, and philosophy grew in a place where new ideas were encouraged.

Athens and Sparta were both powerful, and they both wanted to control Greece. The Greek world became divided as other Greek city-states took sides with the two leading city-states. The Athenian alliance included most of the island and coastal city-states. Sparta led most of the major land powers of central Greece. Therefore, Athens had a stronger navy and the Spartans had a stronger army.

The Peloponnesian War started in 431 B.C. After a 27-year struggle, Athens was defeated. Sparta became the most powerful city-state in Greece.

Geography Shapes Greek Life

BACKGROUND

In ancient times, Greece was not a united country. It was a collection of separate lands where Greek-speaking people lived. Seaborne commercial networks spread ideas as well as resources throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Ancient Greece consisted mainly of a mountainous peninsula jutting out into the Mediterranean Sea. It also included approximately 1,400 islands in the Aegean and Ionian seas. The region's physical geography directly shaped Greek traditions and customs.

THE SEA

The sea shaped Greek civilization just as the Nile River shaped the ancient civilization of Egypt. **In one sense, the Greeks did not live on a land but AROUND a sea.** Greeks rarely traveled more than 85 miles to reach the coastline. The Aegean Sea, the Ionian Sea, and the neighboring Black Sea were important transportation routes for the Greek people. **These liquid highways linked most parts of Greece. As the Greeks became skilled sailors, sea travel also connected Greece with other societies.** Sea travel and trade were also important because Greece itself was poor in natural resources. Greece lacked timber, precious metals, and usable farmland.

THE LAND

Rugged mountains covered about three-fourths of ancient Greece. Mountains divided the land into a number of different regions. The mountain chains ran mainly from northwest to southeast along the Balkan peninsula. **The mountainous land significantly influenced Greek political life.** Unlike the Egyptians or the Chinese, it was difficult to unite the ancient Greeks under a single government. **Greece developed small, independent communities within each little valley and its surrounding mountains.** Most Greeks gave their loyalty to these local communities. In ancient times, the uneven terrain also made land transportation difficult. Early Greek roads were little more than dirt paths. Much of the land itself was stony and only a small part of it—approximately 20 percent—was suitable for farming. Tiny but fertile valleys covered about one-fourth of Greece. The small streams that watered these valleys were not suitable for large-scale irrigation projects. **With so little fertile farmland or fresh water for irrigation, Greece was never able to support a large population.** It is estimated that no more than a few million people lived in ancient Greece at any given time. Even this small population couldn't expect the land to support a life of luxury. As a result, the Greeks based their diet on basic staple crops such as grains, grapes, and olives. A desire for more living space, grassland for raising livestock, and adequate farmland may have been factors that motivated the Greeks to seek new sites for colonies.

THE CLIMATE

Climate was the third important environmental influence on Greek civilization. Greece has a varied climate with temperatures averaging 48 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter and 80 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer. **In ancient times, these moderate temperatures supported an outdoor life for many Greek citizens. Men spent much of their leisure time at outdoor public events. They met often to discuss public issues, exchange news, and take an active part in civic life.**

Name:	Date:
Topic: Intro to Ancient Greece	Class/Subject: World Studies
When did the Ancient Greeks live?	
What is B.C.? What is B.C.E.?	
Draw a timeline showing when The Ancient Greeks lived. Be sure to label the years correctly...	
What was the climate like in Ancient Greece?	
What did the climate encourage?	
What four features describe the geography of Greece?	
How did the geography and climate affect the development and achievements of the ancient Greeks?	
What is a city-state or polis?	
What is an Acropolis?	
Even though there were many different Greek city-states, what did they all have in common?	
Pro's & Con's—for each of the following, think of one pro and one con for the Ancient Greeks:	
Geography/landscape/poor farming land of Greece PRO	CON
City-states were separated from one another by the land and sea PRO	CON
Greeks use of slavery PRO	CON