

HISTORY · Y4–Y6

Ancient Greece

Knowledge Organiser — KS2 History

Key vocabulary

1

City-state (polis)

An independent city and the land around it. Ancient Greece was made up of many city-states, each with its own laws and government.

2

Democracy

A system of government where citizens vote on decisions. Athens is credited with inventing democracy around 507 BCE.

3

Acropolis

A fortified high area of a city. The most famous is in Athens, where the Parthenon temple stands.

4

Parthenon

A temple built on the Acropolis in Athens (completed 432 BCE), dedicated to the goddess Athena.

5

Mythology

The collection of stories Ancient Greeks told about their gods and heroes.

6

Olympics

Athletic games held at Olympia every four years in honour of Zeus, starting in 776 BCE.

7

Philosopher

A person who seeks wisdom and asks deep questions. Greek philosophers include Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.



8

Spartan

A citizen of Sparta. Spartan boys began military training at age 7. Sparta was a powerful military city-state.

9

Athenian

A citizen of Athens. Athens was known for culture, philosophy, and democracy.

10

Persian Wars

Wars between Greece and the Persian Empire (499–449 BCE). Greece won key battles at Marathon and Thermopylae.

Athens and Sparta

The two most powerful city-states

- ATHENS: democratic government; citizens voted in the Assembly. Famous for art, philosophy, theatre, and science.
- Athenian education focused on reading, writing, music, and physical education.
- The Parthenon, tragedies and comedies, the Socratic method of questioning — all from Athens.
- SPARTA: military-focused. Boys taken from families at age 7 for 13 years of military training (agoge).
- Spartan girls were also trained in fitness — unusual for the ancient world.
- Sparta had two kings and a council of elders. It was not democratic.
- Athens and Sparta fought each other in the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE). Sparta won.

The Greek gods

The twelve Olympians

- The Greeks believed in many gods who lived on Mount Olympus and influenced human life.
- ZEUS — king of the gods; god of thunder and sky.
- ATHENA — goddess of wisdom and war strategy; patron of Athens.



- APOLLO — god of the sun, music, poetry, and healing.
- POSEIDON — god of the sea and earthquakes.
- ARES — god of war.
- APHRODITE — goddess of love and beauty.
- ARTEMIS — goddess of the hunt and the moon.
- HEPHAESTUS — god of fire and metalworking.
- Famous myths: Odysseus and the Trojan War (the Odyssey); Theseus and the Minotaur; Perseus and Medusa; Icarus and Daedalus.

Legacy of Ancient Greece

Ideas that shaped the modern world

- DEMOCRACY: the idea that citizens should have a say in government began in Athens. Many modern democracies trace their origins here.
- PHILOSOPHY: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle asked questions about knowledge, justice, and ethics. Their methods still shape how we think.
- SCIENCE AND MATHS: Pythagoras (geometry), Archimedes (physics), Hippocrates (medicine). Many scientific words come from Greek.
- THEATRE: Greek playwrights invented comedy and tragedy. Theatres were large open-air spaces. Some Greek plays are still performed today.
- THE OLYMPICS: the ancient Games began in 776 BCE. The modern Olympic Games (revived 1896) are directly inspired by them.
- ARCHITECTURE: columns, temples, and proportional design from ancient Greece influenced buildings across Europe and America.
- Almost every subject you study has Greek origins: geography (geo = Earth), biology (bios = life), mathematics (mathema = learning).

