

Lesson 1: The Geography of Greece

Vocabulary

agora an outdoor marketplace in ancient Greece

plunder goods taken during war

A Mountainous Land

Many ancient civilizations formed near rivers. The rivers would overflow in the spring and make the soil good for farming. Greece did not depend on a river. Greece is a rugged, mountainous land with no great rivers. It does not have much good farmland. Greece is located in the southeastern corner of Europe. It is on the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula. Greek-speaking people also lived on islands in the Aegean Sea. The sea separates Greece from the western edge of Asia.

A Land Tied to the Sea

Greece is surrounded by the sea on three sides. The Aegean Sea is to the east. The Ionian Sea is to the west. This sea separates Greece from Italy. The Mediterranean Sea is to the south. It links Greece with Asia, North Africa, and the western part of Europe. Greece's coastline has many excellent harbors. The Greeks were great sailors and traders. Most people in ancient Greece lived along the coast and in the land's few river valleys. There the Greeks raised animals and grew crops such as grapes, olives, and barley. The Greeks traded with other peoples across the seas. Trade allowed Greek ideas to spread. It also allowed the Greeks to learn from other cultures.

Independent Communities

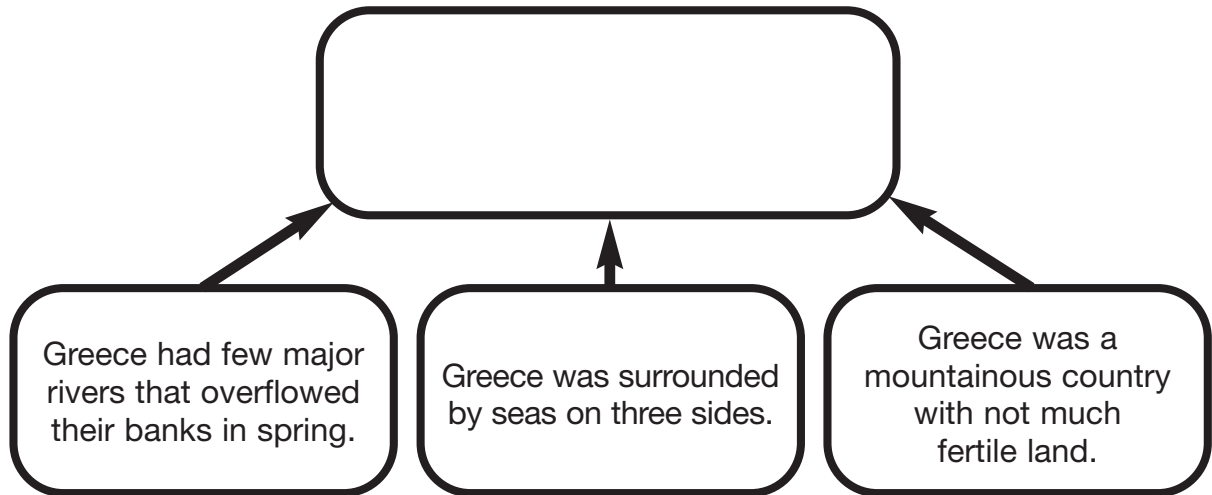
Geography affected how life in Greece developed. Uniting the country under one government was difficult. Ancient Greeks did share the same language and religion. Mountains divided Greece into different regions and kept people apart. Therefore, many independent cities sprang up. Each city did things its own way. The climate of Greece is pleasant, and the Greeks had an outdoor way of life. The **agora**, or outdoor marketplace, was common in cities. The Greeks watched plays in outdoor theaters. Political meetings, religious celebrations, and sports contests also were held outdoors.

Two Early Greek Civilizations

The Minoan civilization was on the island of Crete, in the Mediterranean Sea. By 2500 B.C., the Minoans had a written language. They also could weave cloth and make pottery and jewelry. The Minoans controlled trade in the Aegean Sea. By 1600 B.C., the Minoans were powerful. Minoan ships protected the kingdom from invaders. Then the Minoan civilization grew weak. No one knows why. About 2000 B.C., groups of people went to the Greek mainland. Over hundreds of years, new city-states sprang up. The greatest early city-state was Mycenae. It became the center of civilization in the eastern Mediterranean. Mycenae was powerful and well defended. Its ships captured the ships of other cities. The Myceneans took **plunder**, or goods taken during war.

Lesson 1: Review

1.  **Main Idea and Details** Write an appropriate main idea in the box for the three supporting details shown below.



2. What was the Minoan civilization?

3. What are the three seas that border Greece?

4. What effect did mountains have on the peoples in Greece?

5. **Critical Thinking: Make Generalizations** In your own words, describe the importance of the sea to the people of Greece.

Lesson 2: The Greek City-States

Vocabulary

myth a traditional story that may be about gods and goddesses

immortal able to live forever

aristocracy a government controlled by a few wealthy families

democracy a government run by the people

The Power of Greek Myths and Legends

The Trojan War was fought between the Greeks and the people of Troy, a city in western Asia. The story of the war is a blend of myth and legend. **Myths** are stories that may be about gods and goddesses. Legends are stories about heroes. Gods and goddesses helped heroes on both sides of the Trojan War. The ancient Greeks tried to keep their gods and goddesses happy. The war started when Helen was carried off from the city-state of Sparta to Troy. To end the war, the Greeks built a giant, wooden horse. The Trojans thought it was a gift and pulled the horse into the city. Greek soldiers were hiding in the horse. They opened the gates of Troy for the Greek army. Homer composed two poems about the war—the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Myths and legends were passed down by word of mouth.

The Gods of Mount Olympus

The Greeks developed many myths. Myths helped them explain things that happen in nature and life. The Greeks thought that most gods lived on Mount Olympus, in northern Greece. They thought that their gods were **immortal**, or able to live forever. The Greeks also believed that their gods had special powers. The Greeks held athletic contests every four years to honor Zeus, the king of the gods. The contests, held in the city of Olympia, became known as the Olympic Games.

Democracy Begins in Greece

Kings ruled some Greek city-states. In others, the government was an **aristocracy**. It was controlled by rich families. Around 500 B.C., democracy began to develop in some city-states. **Democracy** is a government run by the people. The city-state of Athens was governed by the Assembly. The Assembly was made up of all citizens older than 18. Later 500 citizens were chosen to serve on a council for a year. The Assembly had to approve the council's decisions. Only citizens could be part of the Greek democracy. Slaves, women, and workers born outside of Athens were not considered citizens. They could not own property, vote, or testify in court.

Rivals: Athens and Sparta

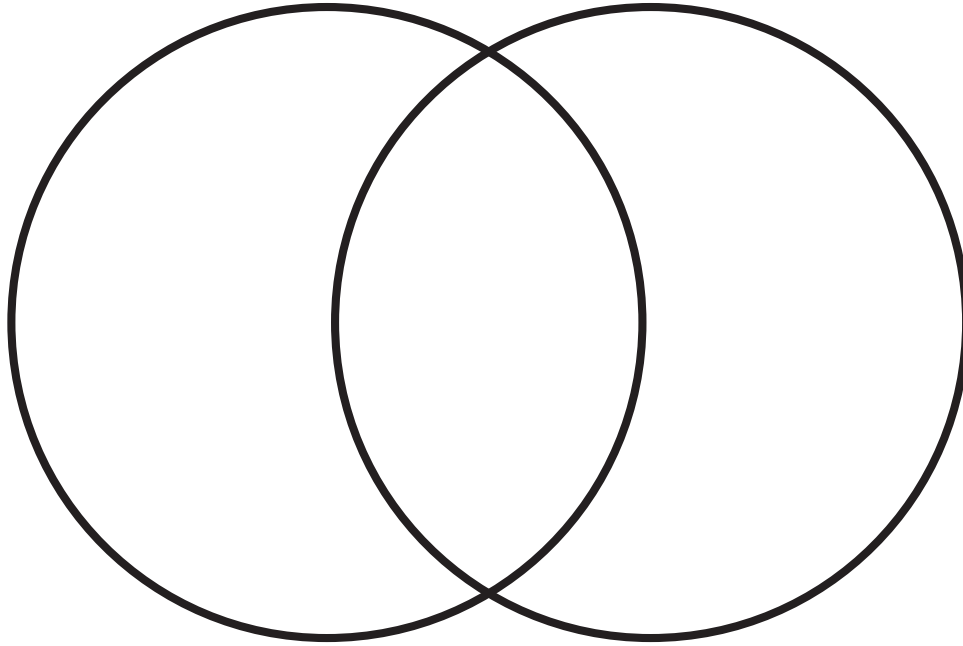
The citizens of Athens had to defend the city during conflicts and take part in government. The city-state of Sparta was a military state. It conquered other city-states and forced their people to become slaves. The army was the center of life. Only healthy babies were allowed to live. At seven years old, Spartan boys began difficult training for a life in the army.

Women in Sparta

Sparta expected its women to be strong and responsible. Spartan women played many sports. They wanted their sons to fight bravely in battle. Spartan women had more rights than women in other city-states. They could own property. However, they could not take part in government.

Lesson 2: Review

1. **Compare and Contrast** Compare and contrast Athens and Sparta.



2. Where did the Greeks believe that most gods lived?

3. What is an aristocracy?

4. What does the story of the Trojan War tell us about the Greek attitudes toward their gods and goddesses?

5. **Critical Thinking: Evaluate Information** If you had the choice, would you rather grow up in Athens or in Sparta? Why?

Lesson 3: The Golden Age of Athens

Vocabulary

marathon a long race based on an ancient Greek legend

philosopher a person who studies truth and knowledge

reason logical thinking

plague a fast-spreading disease that is often deadly

mercenary a hired soldier

The Greeks Clash with the Persians

In 490 B.C., Persia attacked the Greek mainland with a huge army. Persia was the most powerful empire of its time. The Persian and Athenian armies battled on a plain northeast of Athens called Marathon. The Athenians won. According to legend, a warrior ran 25 miles to Athens with the news. Today the **marathon** is a long race based on the Greek legend. The Athenians and the Spartans were enemies. But they knew the Persians would attack again. They joined forces to fight the Persians. In 480 B.C., the Athenian ships destroyed the Persian fleet in the Battle of Salamis. This battle ended the war.

The Golden Age

After defeating the Persians, Athens entered a period known as the Golden Age. Athens built beautiful new temples, statues, and monuments. Greek **philosophers** such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle studied truth and knowledge. Greek philosophers respected **reason**, or logical thinking. They thought people could figure out why things happened in nature. They did not think things happened just because the gods caused them to. Greek physicians studied the causes of sickness.

The Greeks Fight Against Each Other

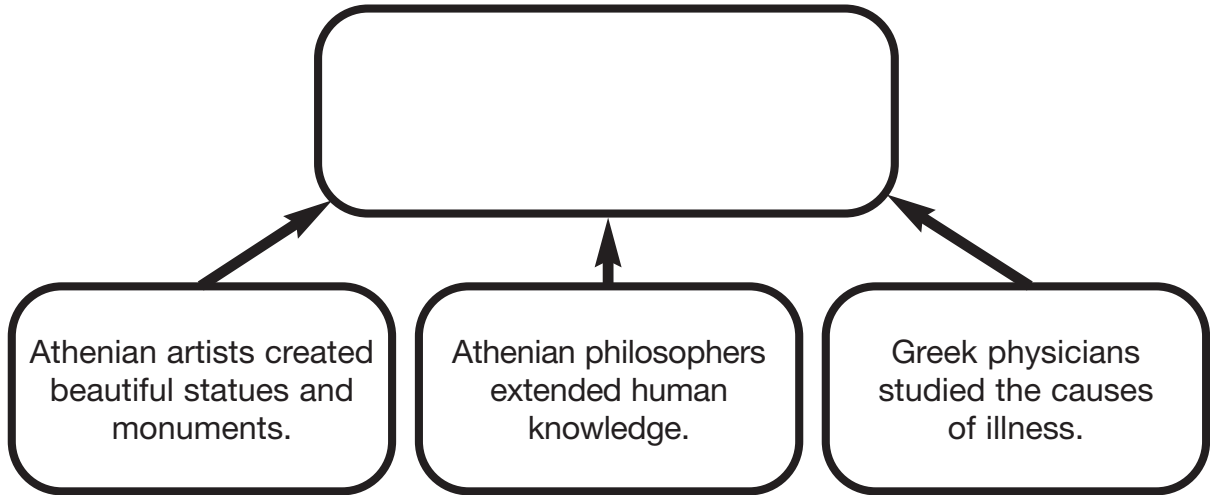
Athens was the most powerful Greek city-state during the Golden Age. Athenian leaders formed an alliance, or group that works together, called the Delian League. The Athenians forced some city-states to join the League. They used the League's money to put up buildings in Athens. This angered other city-states. Sparta led the angry city-states. A war between Sparta and Athens began in 431 B.C. It was called the Peloponnesian War. Sparta had great power on the land. Athens' navy had great power on the sea. This made it hard for either city-state to win the war. Then a **plague** broke out in Athens. A plague is a deadly, fast-spreading disease. The plague killed thousands of people including the leader of Athens. Athens surrendered in 404 B.C.

Decline of the Greek City-States

In Greece, hard times followed the war. Many young Greek men became **mercenaries**, or hired soldiers, in the Persian army. Athens regained its strength in trade, but all of Greece was weakened. Sparta had lost many soldiers in the war. In 371 B.C., Sparta lost a battle against the Greek city Thebes. Macedonia was to the north of Greece. Macedonia grew in power and became a threat to Greece.

Lesson 3: Review

1.  **Main Idea and Details** Fill in the missing main idea in the blank box.



2. What was the Delian League?

3. Why was the Battle of Salamis important to Greece?

4. What were some of the fields of study in which Athens excelled during its Golden Age?

5. **Critical Thinking: Solve Complex Problems** What advice would you have given to the leaders of Athens that might have helped them avoid the problems that developed? Use the word **reason** in your answer.

Lesson 4: Alexander the Great

Alexander's Conquests

Philip II was the king of Macedonia. After he was killed, his 20-year-old son Alexander became king. Two years later, in 334 B.C., Alexander invaded the Persian Empire. During a major battle, Alexander told his army not to retreat from the larger Persian army. He showed his leadership by ordering his army to attack the Persians. The Persians ran away. Alexander's army had won. Alexander then conquered Syria and Phoenicia. Alexander also took over Egypt and was crowned pharaoh.

A Great Empire

In 331 B.C., Alexander's army fought and beat the larger Persian army again. Alexander then led his army eastward. The army won every battle it fought. Five years after his march started, the soldiers were in India. They were very tired and ready to stop fighting. Alexander marched his army back toward Greece. He died on the way back. The empire he created was huge. It spread across Europe, Asia, and Africa. During his nearly 13 years in power, Alexander spread Greek culture. He also took on many Asian ways. A new civilization rose from this blend of Greek and Asian cultures. We call this period the Hellenistic Age. The young king is remembered as "Alexander the Great."

The Hellenistic Age

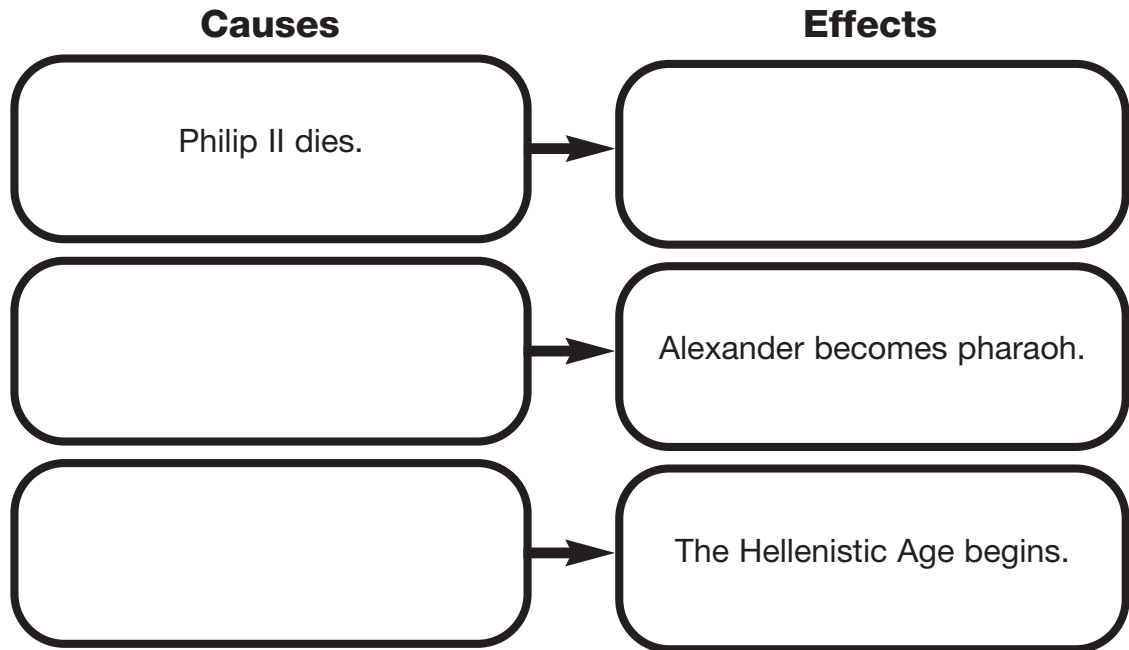
After Alexander's death three of his generals divided the empire among themselves. For 300 years, Hellenistic culture spread. New cities were founded in Europe, northern Africa, and western Asia. The cities became centers of Greek culture. Trade grew between Hellenistic cities and far-off parts of the world. Alexandria was a city in Egypt. It became the greatest center of trade and learning. It had the busiest port of its time and a great library.

Discovery and Invention

During the Hellenistic Age, Greek science and mathematics reached their peaks. Hippocrates was a doctor who looked for natural causes of diseases. Today he is often called the father of medicine. He believed a good diet and lifestyle were needed for good health. Archimedes was a famous inventor and mathematician. He made discoveries about levers. He also improved pulleys for carrying heavy objects. Pythagoras was a mathematician whose ideas about numbers led to the study of geometry. Euclid was the most important mathematician of his time. Students today still study his system of plane geometry.

Lesson 4: Review

1. Cause and Effect Fill in the missing causes and effect.



2. How did Alexander become king of Macedonia?

3. How did Alexander display his leadership qualities?

4. What was Hellenistic culture, and how did it begin?

5. **Critical Thinking: Solve Complex Problems** How might the discoveries made by Hippocrates have changed people’s lives during the Hellenistic Age?
