

Introduction - What is a city-state?

* Ancient Greece was organized by city-states (polis - Greek word) - independent states that controls its own territory

* Each Greek city-state developed its own personality, laws, goals, and customs over time.



* Ancient Greeks were **very loyal** to their city-state.

* The Greek city-states had in common:

1. Belief in the same gods
2. Spoke and wrote in Greek language

* The city-states came together to fight a common enemy. But

they also went to war with each other.



Corinth

As a coastal city-state, Corinth had a glorious history as a cultural and trade center. Corinth was a monarchy. The people were ruled by a king. The king had many advisors.

Corinth was a trade city in an ideal location that allowed it to have two seaports, one on the Saronic Gulf and one on the Corinthian Gulf. As a result, the city was one of the wealthiest cities in Ancient Greece. The Corinthians developed their own coins and required that traders use them when in their city.

Corinth is perhaps most famous for its architecture. The Corinthians developed the Corinthian order of Greek architecture which is the third major form of classical Greek architecture.



Corinth had a problem with unemployment. To solve this, they created a huge and successful public works program. This gave people work, like building new aqueducts (waterways), while solving other city problems, such as the need for an additional source of drinking water.

Although Corinth's schools were not as fine as those of Athens, their boys were educated in the arts and the sciences. As a child, kids were taught at home. From age 7-14, boys attended a nearby day school, where they studied poetry, drama, public speaking, accounting, reading, writing, math, science, and the flute. Boys attended a higher school if their parents could afford it. All boys went to military school for at least two years.

Literature, culture, art, and businesses thrived in Corinth. Corinth was a highly respected city-state in the ancient Greek world.

Thebes

Thebes was in fact an important city in the Mycenaean Bronze Age though perhaps smaller than Athens, Sparta, and Corinth. Thebes was a little north of Athens, in central Greece. Unlike Athens and Corinth, Thebes was not a seaport - Thebes was a farming city, ruled by an oligarchy of a few rich men who made laws that they were the only ones who could own land.

Thebes was a powerful city-state to the north of Corinth and Athens that was constantly switching sides in the various Greek wars. It was a constant rival to Athens and Sparta for regional dominance. During different times in history they allied with Athens against Sparta and then switched sides to ally with Sparta against Athens.

From 2500 BCE there is evidence of food and wool production and storage in Thebes - grinding stones and terracotta loom-weights and spools, and bronze carpentry tools. Trade, both local and further away, is suggested by the presence of precious goods such as gold, silver, ivory, and stone vessels.

Thebes was famous in Greek legend and literature as well. It is known as the birthplace of the Greek hero Hercules and played a major role in the stories of Oedipus and Dionysus. Also, perhaps the most famous Greek poet of the time, Pindar, lived in Thebes.

A series of bad choices doomed Thebes, though. During the Persian Wars, it sided with the Persians (enemy of the Greek city-states); after the Greek victory, Thebes was punished severely. During the Peloponnesian Wars, Thebes sided first with the Spartans and then against them. After the war, Thebes was punished again. Finally, Thebes rebelled against Philip of Macedonia; his son, Alexander, later invaded and destroyed the city. It was later rebuilt but never the same.

Argos

Argos was one of the oldest city-states in Ancient Greece, but it first became a major power under the dictator Pheidon during the 7th century BC. During Pheidon's reign, Argos introduced silver coins as well as a standard system of weights and measures. Like all Greek city-states, they had their own way of doing things. Their government was a monarchy - Argos was ruled by a king.

According to Greek Mythology, Argos was founded by the god Argos, the son of the god Zeus. Greek myths teach that the land became dry and arid after the gods Hera and Poseidon had an argument over the city. Hera won and became the patron of the city, but Poseidon got his revenge by drying out the land.

The ancient city-state of Argos had a nearby harbor for trade and commerce. But Argos was located on a plain. The weather was hot and dry in the summer, and cold and wet in the winter. The soil was not especially fertile. The people of Argos had to fight to grow food. This they did, quite successfully.

The site that came to be known as Argos was a sacred place for thousands of years. Recent archaeological excavations on the site have uncovered a cemetery with graves dating to as early as 2000 BCE.

Argos was actively involved in the arts. Their magnificent stone sculptures of athletes, rippling with stone muscles, were the envy of many a Greek city-state. Argos was famous for their wonderful musicians and poets. Drama reached new heights in their polis (city-state). In the early classical period, prominent Argos sculptors created a colossal gold and ivory statue of Hera in the Heraeum temple. None of the statue remains, but its head is depicted on coins of this period.

Rhodes

The city-state of Rhodes was formed in 408 BC on a Greek island when three smaller cities (Ialysos, Kamiros, and Lindos) decided to unite and make one large city-state. Its climate is subtropical and healthy. Refreshing westerly winds moderate the summer heat, while the winter is nearly always mild, with long periods of sunshine.

Rhodes' history begins long ago in the mist of mythology. According to the myth, Zeus decided to assign the islands of Greece to the other Gods. The Sun God Helios selected Rhodes, while it emerged from the blue sea, flooded it with his eternal light and made it the most beautiful island. Helios named the island after the nymph Rhode, with whom he fell in love. She was the daughter of the Goddess Aphrodite (afro-dye-tee).

From the Stone Age, Rhodes has been invaded and influenced to a greater or lesser degree by many eastern Mediterranean civilizations, including the Minions (1700-1600 BC), coming from Crete, Phoenicians, and Dorians under the leader Tlepolemos.

The city was prosperous for hundreds of years due to its prime location as a trade port. The city was famous for its shipbuilders as well as its giant statue called the Colossus of Rhodes. The Colossus of Rhodes was considered one of the Seven Ancient Wonders of the World. It was a statue of the Greek Titan Helios and it stood over 100 feet high.

Rhodes became an important naval (navy) power where art and literature grew. Their activities in trade and in the founding of colonies were unparalleled for a time. The fast Rhodian ships sailed to almost every corner of the Mediterranean, bringing home wealth and glory. In order to ensure that navigation was properly ordered, the Rhodians introduced a system of international maritime (sea) law which was one of the most important early legal texts and was still used through the Roman period.

Athens

Athenians thought of themselves as the shining star of the Greek city-states. They were known for their literature, poetry, drama, theatre, schools, buildings, and government.

The Greeks believed that each city-state in ancient Greece had a god or a goddess in charge of it, their special patron. For Athens, the patron was Athena, goddess of wisdom. Perhaps because Athena was their patron, Athenians put a great deal of emphasis on education. Her shrine, the Parthenon, sits on top of a hill in the center of the city.

Girls learned at home from their mothers. They learned how to run a home, and how to be good wives and mothers.

Boys were educated quite differently. Until age 6 or 7, boys were taught at home by their mothers. From 7-14, boys attended a day school outside the home. There, they memorized poetry and learned to play the lyre (harp-like instrument). They learned drama, public speaking, reading, writing, math, and music. After middle school, they went to a four year high school and learned more about math, science, and government. At 18, they attended two years of military school.

Each city-state chose its own form of government. Most Greek city-states were ruled by kings. In Athens, citizens (the men) met each week to discuss problems. They worked on solutions - this means that for about 100 years, Athens was a direct democracy! This means the form of government known as "democracy" formed in Ancient Greece!

Many other city-states compared themselves to Athens. You'd hear people from other city-states say things like, "Our schools are good as those in Athens." Athens was the measuring stick. There was one exception - the city-state of Sparta. No other city-state in ancient Greece was like Sparta. Athens and Sparta had strong dislike for one another because of what they thought was most important in society - sometimes they went to war with one another!

Sparta

Life was very different in ancient Sparta than it was in the rest of ancient Greek city-states. The Spartans were proud, fierce, capable warriors. No great works of art came out of Sparta. But the Spartans, both men and women, were tough, and the Greeks admired strength.

Sparta's government was an oligarchy. The people were ruled by a small group of warriors. The Spartans spoke Greek and wrote Greek but they were different.

In most of the other Greek city-states, the goal of education was to create a strong-minded citizen of that city-state. In Sparta, the goal of education was to create a strong warrior.

All of the ancient Greeks were warriors, but Sparta's warriors were legendary. In Sparta, boys were taken away from their parents at age 7. They lived a harsh and often brutal life in the soldiers barracks. Between ages 18 to 20 each boy had to pass a fitness test. If he did not pass the test, he became a *periodos*. This was a person of middle class who had no political rights and was not even considered a citizen. If the boy passed he served in the military and continued to train as a soldier. Military service lasted until he reached age 60.

Girls went to school too, to learn how to fight. They lived at home during training. Spartan girls went to school at the age of seven. Their school wasn't as tough as the boys, but they did train in athletics and exercise. It was important that the women stay fit so they would have strong sons who could fight for Sparta. The women of Sparta had more freedom and education than most Greek city-states at the time. Girls usually were married at the age of 18.

As adults, Spartan men did not live with their families. They visited their families, but men lived in the soldiers' barracks.

As adults, Spartan women, unlike women in the rest of Greek world, had a great deal of freedom. Many ran businesses. Sparta women were free to move about and visit neighbors without permission from their husbands.

Olympia

Olympia was an ancient Greek sanctuary site dedicated to the worship of Zeus, the leader of the gods. Olympia is the birthplace of the Olympic Games to honor Zeus. It was never just the games, but also the honor, the peace, the struggle and the body - all in one.

Olympia is connected to many gods and myths, and there are different versions on how the Olympic Games got started. According to one version, this was where Zeus struggled with his father Cronus, finally beating him and seizing the throne. As a memory of his victory, Zeus made the games.

The first Olympic Games were held in 776 BC at the Greek city of Olympia. During a three month time, athletes and as many as 40,000 spectators came from all over Greece to participate in the Games. Over time other events were added to the Games such as longer foot-races, wrestling, boxing, chariot racing, discus, javelin, jumping, and the pentathlon. At its peak there were 18 events spread over five days.

Olympia was to be renovated many times, and new buildings were added through the ages. Famous people came here to watch the games, such as Plato and Aristotle. Slaves and women, especially married ones, were strictly forbidden to watch the games, and if a woman was caught as a spectator, she was immediately thrown off Mt. Typaeon. Barbarians were allowed to watch, but not to compete. A competitor had to be a free, unpunished Greek and he had to have trained for the games in his home for ten months, and for one month in Olympia.

A second important event held at Olympia was the Heraia Games for women, held every four years in honour of the goddess, Hera. Children, adolescents, and young women ran in separate foot-races over 500 feet of the stadium track (160 m). Prizes for victors included olive crowns and the right to set up a portrait of themselves on the site.

Because the truce gave the kings and leaders from all over Greece a chance to meet unarmed, Olympia became an important place for political discussions and trade. It also enhanced the feeling of unity amongst the Greeks, along with the language and religion.