**THE GREEKS

         As citizens of the United States of America (4), we owe everything to ancient Greece.  Many of the ideals we so highly cherish aren't American; they're Greek.  It was in ancient Athens that the citizens stood up and declared that they would no longer be ruled by kings.  The people should rule. (4) Americans didn't invent democracy; Greeks did.
        The art of storytelling was perfected in ancient Greece.  The colorful myths and legends of the land gave the poet Homer plenty to work with.  For the first time the plot took a back seat to characterization, language, and presentation.  Literature was born in ancient Greece.  Theater got its start there, too.  The Greeks were the first to stage complex plays that commented on current events.  Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides pushed the boundaries of drama and showed the world that the pen can be mightier than the sword.
          As for the Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle redefined the way that human beings thought about the universe.  Hippocrates founded a school dedicated to the scientific study of the body. (3) Mathematicians such as Pythagoras developed new theories.  Herodotus developed a factual approach for recording past events called history.  Meanwhile, (2)Aesop wrote his moral-driven fables, and the politician Pericles demonstrated how one man can shape a city.
          While all these breakthroughs were happening in Athens, the Greeks in Sparta were working on another development:  the art of war.  Discipline, strategy, honor were all taken to the extreme in the militaristic environment of Sparta.  While the Athenians showed Greece how to think, Sparta showed Greece how to fight.
         (1) All of these ideas and insights got their start in the golden age of ancient Greece roughly 2,500 years ago.  As you keep this information in mind, follow the links below.  They will give you an idea what ancient Greek life was like in the year 500 B.C.**

**CITY-STATES**

 **During the golden age of Greece the term (6) "Greece" was not yet in use. The area called Greece today was dotted with various city-states who had no (6) desire to be united into a larger country. As their name implies, city-states were (5) large areas of land whose inhabitants fell under the rule of the city in the midst. Powerful lords built their castle-like keeps on the highest point of the city and surrounded them with high walls. In times of war, those who farmed the surrounding countryside would flee into the city for safety. Because of this, Athens and the Greek cities were more than just a city; they were the law and protection of the surrounding plains.**

 **The heart of every Greek city was the (7) agora, the marketplace. It was the economic, political, and religious lifeblood of the city. Almost every agora was dotted with statues, temples, public buildings, and trees. In Athens, the agora is where the Assembly of the People met to vote on city issues.**

 **There were frequent, city-wide festivals to honor various gods. Music, drama, and poetry were often exhibited during these, and a multitude of sacrifices made at the temples.**

**GREEK BOYS

         The first decision of any father was whether or not to keep his child.  In Greece (and later in Rome) keeping a child was a conscious choice.  In most cases if the child were a boy, he was kept.  Girls were not so lucky.  Girls were a disappointment, a worry to their fathers.  There was an old Greek saying,(14) "If you have a boy, keep it.  If you have a girl, expose it."  It was perfectly legal for a father to leave his child in some public place (usually a temple) or even in the wilderness outside the city to die.  If a child were to be kept, it would be paraded around the family hearth, the center of the home, and after feasting and sacrificing, named and officially declared a member of the family.
         Boys and girls were educated by their mothers until they were seven or eight years old, and then their lives diverged.  Girls prepared for a life of domesticity, while boys started to attend the schools.  Boys were put under the care of a pedagogue, a male slave or servant who accompanied the boy to and from his classes and beat him if his behavior was less than satisfactory.
         At the schools, which were all private in nature, boys were first taught letters: (26) reading, writing, basic arithmetic, and recitation.  Homer's works, the Iliad and Odyssey, were the typical tools for instruction.  A cultured young man would be expected to quote at length from these epic poems.  The Iliadwas called the "bible of the Greeks" for the importance they placed on knowledge of the poem.
         Around the age of thirteen, boys branched out into musical and athletic training.  A music teacher would instruct them in the art of playing the (19)lyre (a six-stringed harp) and singing.  Here again, Homer was used, as the boys were expected to put Homeric passages to music.  The boys received a separate teacher at the gymnasium, one who developed the boy's bodies and health through exercise.**

**Education ended for most boys in their mid-teens. (27) Only the very wealthy continued their education; their fathers would send them to study with one of the so-called (22) "sophists," who would teach them philosophy and rhetoric.  Sophist means "a lover of wisdom," but this group of teachers was heavily criticized by**[**Socrates**](http://www.mythologyteacher.com/GreekSocrates.html)**, a famous Athenian philosopher.  Sophists taught young men to argue any point, whether or not they truly believed in it. (20)**[**Rhetoric**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rhetoric)**, they said, could be used to make any argument "true"; therefore, there was no ultimate truth in the universe.  Socrates vehemently disagreed and declared he would accept no money for his wisdom, as the hated sophists did.
         Around the middle teen years,(15) a boy's hair, which had always grown long, was ceremoniously cut and dedicated to one of the gods.  Now he was officially a man.
       (16)  Around the age of eighteen, young men left for two years of military duty.  The first half was spent learning archery, javelin-throwing, and the uses of heavy armor and weapons.  The second half would be spent serving in garrison duty.  After this, he was free to return to civilian life, but was (18) subject to "the draft" in times of emergency until he reached the age of sixty.
         When he returned home from his tour of duty, the young man (around the age of twenty now) was free to live a free life among his fellow citizens.**

**GREEK RELIGION

         Most of ancient Greece worshiped the same (34)**[**pantheon**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pantheon)**of gods, but particular city-states selected their favorite god or goddess to honor above all others.  In Athens the Goddess of Wisdom,(38) Athena, was the goddess most honored.  The Parthenon "The Temple of the Virgin" was built for her.
       Greek religion was a buffet-style of worship.  An ancient Greek was not expected to worship to every**[**deity**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Deity)**.  (With dozens of gods, worshiping them all would be too much.)  As long as a Greek recognized some higher power, it (30)did not matter which god or goddess he chose.  Gods and goddesses had certain demographic groups:  unmarried women worshiped**[**Artemis**](http://teacherweb.nixa.k12.mo.us/~zhamby/Artemis.html)**, wives worshiped**[**Hera**](http://teacherweb.nixa.k12.mo.us/~zhamby/Hera.html)**, sailors favored**[**Poseidon**](http://teacherweb.nixa.k12.mo.us/~zhamby/poseidon.html)**, athletes praised** [**Apollo**](http://teacherweb.nixa.k12.mo.us/~zhamby/Apollo.html)**, etc.
         Temples were considered to be the dwelling places of the gods they honored.  Typically they included a statue or image of the god or goddess worshiped.  Cattle, goats, sheep, and swine were sacrificed by the temple priests.  After killing the beasts, the priests would examine its organs. (32) If the organs were still undamaged and healthy, it was considered a good omen.  If the organs were corrupted and rotten, it was an unlucky sign.  This was one means the Greeks had of determining the future.  After the blood had been offered as a sacrifice, the priests took the animal's meat and cooked it. (36) Many sacrifices were followed by a feast, where the cooked meat was served.  In Greece the word sacrifice was**[**synonymous**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/synonymous)**with feast.
         The Greeks also believed in (35) augury, the technique of telling the future by watching the flight patterns of birds.  Sighting certain birds was (33)**[**fortuitous**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fortuitous)**, while seeing others was a bad sign.  (Spotting an owl in daylight indicated death.)
       (29) Two things above all others were sacred to the Greeks: proper burial and hospitality. Anyone who murdered or dishonored a guest in Greece was guilty of a capital offense, as well as anyone who failed to properly bury a dead body.**

**THE DELPHIC ORACLE

         Pythia, also referred to as the Oracle of Delphi, was the most famous prophetess in the ancient Greek world.  She was said to receive her prophecies directly from**[**Apollo**](http://teacherweb.nixa.k12.mo.us/~zhamby/Apollo.html)**, the God of Truth.  Near Delphi, a city-state built into the slopes of Mount Parnassus, stood her temple.  Written in letters of gold over the threshold were many wise sayings, including the two most famous:  "Nothing in Excess" and "Know Thyself."
         Deep within the temple was the Oracle's sanctuary where she perched on a (37)high,** [**gilded**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gilded)**, three-legged stool over a crack in the ground.  Strange fumes came up from this crack, and as the Oracle breathed these fumes, she uttered her prophecies.  Some visitors to the Oracle claimed that she spoke in Greek, while others said she babbled**[**incoherently**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/incoherently)**and another priestess translated.
         The Delphic Oracle was one of the most influential forces in the ancient Greek world. (39) Kings consulted her before they began a war, and young men consulted her before they sought their fortunes.  The last prophecy uttered by the Delphic Oracle was in 393 A.D. when the newly Christianized Roman Empire declared all activity in pagan temples to cease.**

**DEMOCRACY**

**Ancient Athens provided the first working model of democracy.  In Greek *demos* means "the people."  Every Athenian citizen (41)(a group which excluded women, slaves, and free foreigners) could vote on city issues at the assembly of the people.  If you were an Athenian male at least eighteen years of age it was your sacred duty to participate in the Assembly.  This was a (42) direct democracy, not a representative, because citizens voted in person.  Often the voting was done by each citizen placing a certain color of (40) rock into a pot to vote "yes" and another color to vote "no."  Afterward the rocks were counted.  As Athens was the cultural trendsetter for much of Greece, most of the other city-states soon adopted the Athenian model of democracy.**

**GYMNASIUM

         The Greeks placed such a high importance on physical training that no Greek city was without a gymnasium.  This word comes from the Greek word (17) gymnos("unclothed") since all exercise at this facility was done in the nude.  Because of this, women were prevented from attending the gymnasium.
          Certain areas of the gymnasium were reserved for particular sports:  running, jumping, wrestling.  There were special rooms for dressing and bathing. (25) (The gymnasium was the forerunner of the modern workout facility.)  Every Greek man was expected to keep in shape in case he was called up to the military. (War in Greece was almost constant.) Over the years, gymnasiums became more advanced, adding more equipment, sculptures, walkways, and secluded spots where discussion could take place.
     (21)  Athlete, the Greek term for one who participates in physical contests, is still in use today.(47) The pentathlon was a set of five sports that every athlete set out to master.  Running, the oldest sport of all, was the first.  The second was leaping (high jump, long jump, and jumping downward).  Sometimes long-jumpers held round pieces of iron (comparable to modern dumbbells), which they would sling with the momentum of their body to increase their distance.  The (47)third and favorite sport was wrestling.  Finger-twisting, pushing, and choking were all allowed.  Before all gymnastic exercises the body was rubbed with oil to make the limbs supple, but before wrestling it was sprinkled with dust, partly to allow a firm hold and partly to prevent excessive sweat.  The fourth sport was the throwing of the discus, an event that has changed very little over time. (47) The fifth and final sport was the throwing of the javelin.  The (23)dangerous sport of boxing, which was not included in the big five, was also popular. The four fingers of the combatants were bound together with cloth straps.  Many times the athletes would fit the strips with bits of hardened leather, nails, or leaden knobs.   All blows were aimed at the upper part of the body, head, and face.**

**THE OLYMPICS**

**(43) The first recorded Olympic games occurred in 776 B.C.  Every four years, Greeks from all walks of life made their way to Olympia for the Olympic Games in honor of Zeus, the master of Olympus.  Spectators and tourists from far and wide packed the large guesthouse there. (44) A huge contest field, complete with a hippodrome for chariot-racing, was built solely for the purpose of hosting the games.
         Training for the Olympic games was extensive and required a great deal of money.  Most athletes had a professional trainer and traveled from one set of games to another. (The Olympic games were the most popular, but definitely not the only set of games in ancient Greece.)  In order to participate athletes had to swear before the gods that they had been in training for at least ten months.  They then trained an additional thirty days at the training facilities at Olympia.  Athletes could win honors in individual competitions, but their main goal was to win the pentathlon.   This was a contest for best all-around athlete and was comprised of five events:  running, jumping, wrestling, javelin-throwing, and discus-throwing.
    (45)  Women, although excluded from participating or even viewing the Olympics, had their own contest in Olympia.  It was a series of footraces called the *Heraia* (46)(in honor of Hera, Zeus' wife).**

**SPARTA

        The city-state of Sparta was a completely**[**militaristic**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/militaristic)**society.  Strength was the goal of every Spartan. (54) After birth children were examined, and sickly or deformed babies were tossed into a nearby**[**chasm**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/chasm)**.  Around the age of six boys were taken away from their mothers and trained to be warriors.  In special schools older boy instructors taught them running, leaping, wrestling, spear and discus throwing, as well as the Pyrrhic war dance.  Reading and writing were two skills left up to private tutors.  A Spartan only needed to understand enough language for day-to-day living.   Their discipline was designed to strengthen and harden the body.  "What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger" was more than just a philosophy in Sparta.
          The boys-in-training went barefooted and bareheaded wearing only light clothing in all kinds of weather.  They slept in a large room with no roof and a hard floor with only straw for bedding.  Their food supply was extremely limited. (53) Their instructors wanted their hunger to force them into stealing from the agora, which would teach them stealth. Of course, if they were caught stealing, they were beaten.
          One of the most famous stories of Spartan discipline was about a boy who found a (55)fox cub, which he planned to eat.  When he saw his instructor approaching, the boy hid the fox inside his garment to avoid being caught.  As the instructor questioned the boy, the fox began to claw and bite within the folds of the boy's tunic, yet the boy did not cry out.  According to the legend, it was only when the boy fell dead to the ground with his stomach bitten through that the instructor realized what had happened.
         (51) Even if they abided by the rules, boys went through a yearly**[**flogging**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/flog)**conducted at the altar of**[**Artemis**](http://teacherweb.nixa.k12.mo.us/~zhamby/Artemis.html)**to test their ability to endure bodily pain.  Any boy who showed any sign of suffering during the flogging was considered a disgrace.
       (52)  As teenagers the boys were apprenticed to an older Spartan, who "showed them the ropes." The two were expected to form an intense bond, making them both willing to die for the other.  At the age of twenty, young men formally entered the military.  They were not released from the active reserve until the age of sixty.
         (49)Sparta remains one of the few ancient societies that produced no art.**

**HIPPOCRATES (460 B.C. - 370 B.C.)**

**Disease was an enormous problem in the ancient world.  (60)Half of all children died before they were the age of ten.  (Perhaps this is why ancient cultures were so unsentimental toward children.)  Hippocrates (59)(called the "Father of Medicine") was the first to apply the Greek systematic approach to the body.  He rejected the common idea that a sickness was caused by supernatural forces.  Instead he relied on observation and experimentation to understand exactly how the human body worked.  He founded a hospital dedicated to this type of study on the Greek island of Cos.  Although his ideas were primitive (bloodletting and (60)[leeching](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/leeching) being two of them), his**[**Hippocratic Oath**](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/doctors/oath_classical.html)**has become the creed of modern physicians everywhere.**

**ALEXANDER THE GREAT
( 356 B.C.-323 B.C.)

         In 338 B.C. after winning a war against the Athenians, King Philip II of Macedonia (a region of northwest Greece) became the first ruler to unite the squabbling city-states of ancient Greece.  He did not have long to enjoy his success though.  During a wedding feast, he was assassinated by one of his own bodyguards.  A newly formed empire fell into the hands of Philip's twenty-year-old son, Alexander.(63)
         Luckily, Alexander had plenty of ambition.  He had intelligence as well.  Growing up he had been tutored by a famous Athenian philosopher, Aristotle (himself trained by**[**Plato**](http://www.mythologyteacher.com/GreekSocrates.html)**), who found Alexander to be a brilliant pupil.  Early on Alexander showed his military prowess.  At the age of fourteen he**[**thwarted**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/thwart)**a rebellion while his father was away campaigning, and at sixteen he led a squadron of troops against the Athenians.
         After the death of his father, Alexander immediately acted on his desire to (64) spread Greek culture throughout the known world.  He rallied his armies and set out on one of most amazing military careers of all-time.  In only twelve years he conquered the massive (65) Persian Empire and brought the known world (Asia Minor, the Middle East, Mesopotamia, Egypt) as well as part of India under his rule.  Yet one evening as he celebrated his victories, he fell ill and soon after died.  Some speculate his cause of death to be poisoning, but most assume it was a case of**[**malaria**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/malaria)**. (66) At his death he was only thirty-two.
         There are many reasons why Alexander was such a successful conqueror. (67) He was the first leader to use the technique of colonization, creating new cities based on Greek ideals in conquered lands.  He not only brought armies to these new lands, but also engineers, architects, scientists, and philosophers, effectively spreading (64)Greek culture across the world.  Without Alexander the Greek world would never have had the far-reaching impact that it has on the modern world.**

**SOCRATES & PLATO

         Born into the golden age of ancient Greece, Socrates (469 B.C.-399 B.C.) abandoned the trade handed down to him by his father and instead decided to pursue loftier goals--mainly philosophy.  In Greek (70) philosophy means "the love of wisdom," and philosophers, a group that got its start in ancient Athens, dedicated their lives to the pursuit of wisdom.  Soon Socrates had gained a following of students, but unlike the sophists (another group of teachers in Athens) (68)Socrates did not accept money for his services.  Also, while the sophists trained students to argue either side of an argument convincingly, Socrates wanted his students to pursue only the Truth.
         One of Socrates' brightest students was the philosopher Plato (428 B.C. - 348 B.C.), who wrote down many of his mentor's dialogues.  Plato captured Socrates'style of teaching, the Socratic Method.  (72)Rather than handing out answers, Socrates asked questions--question after question after question.  Under his constant questioning, Socrates' students were forced to examine their own ideas and form new ones based on their own understanding.  Socrates wasn't after brainless disciples.  He was trying to create a new breed of thinkers, ones who explored the world with their minds. (69) (In many ways, ancient philosophers are the forerunners of modern scientists.)
         Socrates' students were such good pupils that they mastered his technique and began to use it on their own.  They began questioning everyone, even the government.  At this time the Athenian government was fighting a losing war with Sparta and did not have time for these ungrateful teenagers questioning the way things had always been.  To them philosophy sounded more like rebellion.  A group of powerful politicians brought charges against Socrates,(74) accusing him of corrupting the youth of Athens with his bizarre ideas.  If convicted, Socrates would be forced to drink (71) hemlock, a deadly poison.
          Their charge was more of a scare tactic than anything.  They expected Socrates to back down, but being a man of principle he did not.  Surrounded by his closest friends, Socrates declared that he was willing to die in the name of wisdom and drank the fatal draught.
          After the death of Socrates, Plato founded his own school and kept the philosophical ideals of his master alive.  In time he went on to formulate many of his own ideas and write extensively on various subjects.  Plato's most famous work is The Republic, a dialogue discussing the perfect society.  Plato's school met in a grove sacred to the Greek hero Academus.  (73) They called his school "The Academy".**

**HOMER THE POET

          There is almost no concrete evidence concerning Homer, who is arguably the most influential writer in history.  His two epic poems are the Iliad,(77) the story of the Greek war against the Trojans, and the Odyssey,(78) the tale of Odysseus' ten year voyage home to Greece. (75) Homer lived in the dark age of Greece (c. 750 B.C.), a time when kings ruled the people and the written word was a new invention.  Because this was a time without written history, the only information we have about Homer comes from his poems themselves.  At one point of the Odyssey, Odysseus hears a blind harpist sing about the war at Troy.  The man's song is so beautiful it causes Odysseus to weep.  Some have thought that scene was Homer inserting himself into his story.  From this episode grew the rumor that Homer was a blind poet, (76)wandering the countryside singing for his supper.  During the time Homer was writing, it was also common for a group of writers to sign only one name to their work; therefore, some assume that "Homer" is (76)actually more than one author working in unison.  The third, and strangest, theory about Homer is that he might have been a woman.  In the Odyssey, one critic argues that Homer knows almost nothing about sailing, naming parts of the ship incorrectly and placing them in the wrong locations.  To this critic's mind, this means that Homer (76) must have been a woman, writing about a subject she had never seen.  Whether Homer was a blind man, a group of men, or a woman, he (or she) gave Greece the Iliad and Odyssey, the first two epics of**[**western civilization**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/western%5B1%5D)**.**

**THE ILIAD

          One of Greece's most important myths was about the war fought by the Greeks against the city-state of Troy.  (The real event that inspired the legend of the Trojan War probably occurred around 1,250 B.C.)(80) Troy lay across the Aegean sea from Greece on the tip of Asia.  The horse-lords of Troy were known for their great wealth in gold. (79)  Paris, prince of Troy, "kidnapped" the Greek princess, Helen, while he visited her husband Menelaus in Sparta.  Menelaus recruited the other kings of Greece to cross the sea and retrieve his beautiful wife.  Launching a thousand ships, the Greeks sailed to Troy with revenge as their goal.  What they thought would be a quick skirmish stretched into a ten-year war.
          Homer's**[**epic poem**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epic%5B2%5D)**the Iliad begins nine years into the war and focuses on a brief, but eventful, period of time.  The Iliad is filled with famous characters:  the seemingly invincible Achilles, the wily Odysseus, the noble Trojan prince Hector, and the beautiful queen Helen. Rounding out the cast is the pantheon of Olympian gods, each doing his or her best to win the war for either side.  The Iliad ends with the death of the Trojan prince Hector, but the war is still left unresolved.  Every Greek already knew how the story ended: the Greeks, weary of war, construct a large wooden horse, fill it with fighting men, and wait for the Trojans to bring the structure within their walls.
           The Iliad with its passionate speeches, glorious victories, and violent deaths inspired the city-states of Greece to greatness  The Greeks came to idolize Homer and his heroes.  If a Greek orator wished to prove a point, he would quote Achilles, Hector, or even Zeus himself from the pages of the Iliad.   Homer's poems were revered as the**[**pinnacle**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pinnacle)**of art and were used in the education of every Greek child. (24) For this reason, the Iliad is often called the "bible of the Greeks". (81)(42)**

**THE *ODYSSEY***

**The *Odyssey* is one of the two**[**epic poems**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epic%5B2%5D) **attributed to Homer.  It tells of the Greek hero Odysseus' journey home from the war at Troy.  On his voyage Odysseus angers Poseidon, the god of the sea who curses him to wander aimlessly for ten years.  The hero has countless adventures and escapes many sticky situations by using his** [**ingenuity**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ingenuity)**.
          While the Greeks enjoyed the *Odyssey*, it never achieved the popularity of the *Iliad*.  The Greeks preferred to read about noble heroes dying in battle instead of a wily sailor outwitting monsters.**

**HERODOTUS (484 B.C. - 425 B.C.)

        Herodotus has been called the "father of history." (42)He was the first writer that we know of who tried to find out exactly what happened in the past "so that what people did will be remembered later, so that the great and admirable monuments that the Greeks and the barbarians made would be famous, and, among other things, to write down the reasons why they had a war."
        When Herodotus was a child, the Greeks fought their legendary war against the Persian Empire and surprisingly won.  As an adult, Herodotus decided to go back and investigate exactly how the ragtag alliance of Athens and Sparta was able to defeat the most powerful force on the earth.
        Apart from his histories of the Persian Wars, (83)Herodotus also visited exotic places (including Egypt, Africa and India) and wrote about the cultures he found there.  Truly, he was the first historian.**

**SLAVERY

         Slaves were brought to Greece from (91) "barbarian" nations and sold as servants to the Greeks.  Some slaves came from one Greek city-state conquering another and taking away its able-bodied women and children.  (The conquered men were typically killed.)
         There was a slave market in the midst of the city-state agoras, where citizens could buy or sell slaves. The slave trade was so well developed that even the poorest of citizens (86) had one or two slaves.  The extremely wealthy would easily have a hundred.  Not all slaves were**[**domestic**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/domestic%5B1%5D)**. (90) Others worked on countryside farms, toiled in the mines, manufactured pottery or armor in the city factories, or rowed on the Athenian war ships.
         Slaves had few to no rights.  Athenians were noted for being very "**[**humane**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/humane)**" (87)toward their slaves.  Even though slaves were the property of their master, the master could not kill one of his slaves without suffering a penalty.  In order for a slave to die, he or she must be tried before a court of law.  During the course of a lawsuit,(89) slaves could be tortured (usually stretched on the**[**rack**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rack%5B3%5D)**) (88)in order to obtain information about their masters.  But slave evidence was considered highly**[**circumstantial**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/circumstantial)**, since most of them would freely admit whatever the torturer wished to know, true or not.
         Slaves could visit temples and attend the city festivals, but were barred from the gymnasium and the city assembly.  Many slaves were given their freedom in their master's will, and some even managed to buy their freedom.
          Even though they were "enlightened," the Greeks saw nothing wrong with owning slaves.  They simply believed that some of peoples of the earth were destined to serve others.**

**DEATH & BURIAL

        The Greeks viewed the burial of the dead as one of man's most sacred duties.  Furthermore, they believed that if (92)a body went unburied, its soul could never find rest in the Underworld, wandering aimlessly in the land of the dead.  Any Greek who happened upon a dead body was, at the very least, obligated to throw a handful of dust over it.  This would be enough to pacify the spirit.  If a general neglected to (93) provide for the burial of the slain (friend or enemy, Greek or barbarian), he was deemed guilty of a**[**capital**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/capital%5B2%5D) **offense.**

**It was the duty of women to tend to the dead bodies of family members.  The eyes of the body were closed and a coin was placed inside the mouth.  (This is the coin that all souls must pay the boatman Charon in the Underworld, so that he will ferry them across the River Styx.)  The body was washed, anointed with oil, and dressed in white for viewing.
         Professional mourners were sometimes hired to sing**[**dirges**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dirge)**for the departed, as family and friends paid their last respects.  Before sunrise on the day following the funeral, the body would be carried to the place of burial followed by a procession of family and friends.  The females of the family would cut their hair before the procession began to show they were in mourning.
         Following the burial there was a meal, where the mourning family and friends remembered the virtues of the deceased and passed over their faults.  Speaking evil of the dead was a cultural**[**taboo**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/taboo%5B2%5D)**.  For the next twelve days the family would visit the tomb and pour**[**libations**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/libation) **of honey, wine, oil, milk, or water over the grave.  Most families returned yearly on the anniversary of the person's birth or death to place**[**garlands**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/garland)**on the grave.**

**GREEK WARFARE

        The city-states of ancient Greece were in an almost constant state of war with one another.  Allies quickly became enemies, and enemies quickly became allies.  As the Greek philosopher Plato said, "Only the dead have seen the end of war."
         Athens and Sparta, the two most powerful city-states in their day, vied for supreme political influence in Greece.  Athenian and Spartan men trained continually to be ready for military duty.  Sparta's main strength lay in its ground troops, (98)while Athens's powerful navy controlled the seas.  The two rival city-states were forced to put their differences aside when King Xerxes of Persia attempted to conquer Greece (480 B.C.).  The tide was turned in the Persian Wars when the legendary 300 Spartans led by King Leonidas slowed Xerxes' advance at Thermoplyae.(100)  The Persians were later ultimately defeated at the Battle of Salamis by the superior strategy of the Athenian navy.  After the Persian Wars, Athens and Sparta went back to their old rivalry and soon were once again warring with one another.
          The average Greek soldier (99) was called ahoplite or "one who provides his own armor" since Greek men were expected to provide their own armor.  Their weapons consisted of an oval shield suspended from the shoulder-belt and wielded by means of a handle, a bronze breast and back plate, a helmet and greaves of bronze, (sometimes a spear about six feet long) and a short sword.  Most hoplites had an attendant slave that carried their armor to and from the battle field.
    (101)  The phalanx was the dominant formation used by the ancient Greeks in battle.  A line of hoplites were placed side-by-side, their shields nearly interlocking and their spears jutting forward.  Behind them several other lines were drawn up in a similar fashion.  The strength of this formation was its ability to resist an enemy charge.  Enemies, racing forward, would practically impale themselves on the extended spears.  When the front line of the phalanx fell, the next line would step forward to take its place.
          War ships were built long and slender to increase their speed.  Also constructed to be light, they were easily carried from one body of water to another.  A long line of slave rowers sat on either side and propelled the crafts with long oars.  Their strokes were kept in time with the (97) piping of a flute.  Most warships had eyes painted or carved onto the bow.  Also on the bow, on level with the water, was a iron-clad beak, usually with three spikes sticking out.  This was the offensive weapon of the ship.  A sea victory was achieved by ramming enemy ships and punching a hole in their sides, driving them onto rock, or disabling their rowers or oars.**

**GREEK THEATRE

         It's been a long journey from the drama of the Greeks to modern entertainment. Greek plays would bore most modern audiences stiff. They had no gory death scenes (all the carnage occurs off-stage), no sex, no special effects (apart from lowering an actor in on a rope).  In spite of its lack of "frills," the theatron (hillside theatre) in Athens, which seated 14,000 (102)spectators, was frequently filled to capacity.  It was an impressive crowd even by modern standards.
         Actors were required to have massive lungs in order to reach "the cheap seats." Their costuming did give them a bit of help. All actors wore masks made with exaggerated features (those at the top needed to be able to make them out). The mouthpiece (103) cut into each mask acted as a megaphone, projecting the actors' voices even further than they could on their own.
         The masks also helped for those problematic female roles, because women were not allowed to participate in the theatre. An actor wearing a feminine mask with blonde tresses attached played the female roles. (Even 2,000 years later in Shakespeare's time, women were still forbidden to act.) Some parts required actors to wear padded robes and raised boots to increase their size. Acting (as we know it) would be nearly impossible in this get-up. While modern actors rely on facial expression, Greek actors had to rely on hand gestures and voice inflection to mimic emotion. Yet, because of the limitations put on acting, the playwright's words came center-stage.
          The chorus was an integral part of every Greek play. As the name suggests, (107)the chorus was a group of twelve to fifteen men who sang and danced in response to the actor's words and actions. During the events of the play, (113)they were the voice of the people and public opinion. The democratic Athenians would want to know, "What do the people think of this?" In fact, the very first plays were probably just a chorus, relating all the events of a story solely through song and dance. (114) Thespis, a legendary playwright, allegedly first came up with the idea of adding a speaking part, or an actor who was not a part of the chorus. This revolutionary idea is why actors are now called thespians.
          Before drama really hit its peak, only one speaking character inhabited the stage at a time. Because characters didn't interact and were differentiated by masks, one actor could play all parts. Just imagine a movie made up entirely of monologues--not the most interesting way to tell a story. Modern audiences want to see how characters interact, but the Greeks were so used to the old way, they never dreamed it could be improved upon.
          When the playwright Aeschylus came up with the idea of (109)adding a second character to the stage, it again revolutionized the industry. Now there was the interaction the audience never knew they were missing. Of course, once this innovation hit the scene, no one thought the two-actor approach could be topped until (106) Sophocles wowed them again by introducing a third character to the stage. In this period of rapid innovation, drama was truly born.
          As mentioned before, "special effects" were almost nonexistent. The only device that could remotely qualify was a crane called the mekhane, which allowed gods or magical characters to "fly" out from behind the skene (painted backdrop) and give the audience a shock. Characters committed their grisly murders, suicides, or eye-pluckings entirely off-stage, leaving it to their servants to run back in and recount what happened in full detail.  In fact the Greek word obscene, indicating acts that should not be shown on stage, has made its way into our**[**vernacular**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vernacular%5B2%5D)**.
         Today we are merely adding more bells and whistles to what the Greeks started long ago. Television and film may seem far removed from those humble beginnings, but beneath it all, the goal is still the same: To trigger human emotion (whether it be gasps, screams, tears, or laughter) and give the mind a temporary escape.**

**TRAGEDY, COMEDY, & PARODY

         The Athenian festival of**[**Dionysus**](http://teacherweb.nixa.k12.mo.us/~zhamby/Dionysus.html)**meant a full day of plays, a kind of ancient movie marathon. Playwrights were chosen to compete for the prize of tragedy. The three tragedy playwrights (only three were selected to participate in a single festival) presented four works: three original tragedies and a satyr play. (111) A tragedy was a play that told of the downfall of a noble character and typically ended with a series of deaths.  The philosopher Aristotle said that these depressing plays actually made the spectators happier.  Why?  By experiencing the characters' painful emotions along with them, the audience rids themselves of their own negative emotions. (108) Catharsiswas the term he used for this emotional cleansing.
         After all that emotional-purging (not to mention hours sitting in the sun), the audience needed something light and raunchy to wrap things up and lift their spirits before the long way back to their homes. (104)(110) A satyr play was a crude** [**parod**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/parody)**y of a famous myth, presented with a chorus of anatomically correct satyrs who humorously participated in the actions. Satyrs were half-men, half-goat creatures associated with the god Dionysus,(112) the patron of the festival.
         The Greeks may have adored their soul-cleansing tragedy, but they enjoyed comedy too. (115)Comedies were presented at the Dionysia, and playwrights fought for the prize of comedy. While tragedies and satyr plays often used the old myths as their source, comedies were contemporary jabs at daily life in Athens. The comedic playwrights took shots at everything from philosophers to the city assembly to their fellow playwrights. And, for all their intellectual superiority, the Greeks weren't above crude humor. The "fart joke" is much older than most people think, with the Greek comedies using**[**flatulence**](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/flatulence)**to its full potential.**

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