

YEAR 6 UNIT 2 – THE ANCIENT GREEKS: What did the Greeks do for us?

Related units:

Year 4 Unit 2: Roman Britain and Year 6 Unit 1: The Mayan Civilisation

Unit overview

In this unit, the children will learn about aspects of political, social and cultural Ancient Greek life. They will focus on some areas in depth, such as the systems of government, religion and the importance of the Olympic Games. They will examine the legacy of the Ancient Greeks, and will have opportunities for further study of areas of interest. While they will gain an overview of the time period, the main focus will be on the Classical period. Elements of the unit can also be used in a study of post-1066 British history and the legacy of Greek culture. The children will utilise a variety of sources of evidence to develop their knowledge and understanding of the time period. Links will be made to prior learning on the nature of empires, particularly *Year 4 Unit 2: Roman Britain*. You may decide to incorporate a visit to a local museum into the unit, and some ideas have been included on potential locations.

The Big Finish provides opportunities for independence and creativity as appropriate for this year group: the children select an aspect of Ancient Greek life and plan their own Big Finish. The learning can be shared with a wider audience within school or beyond.

Key vocabulary

Minoan, Mycenaean, Classical, Hellenistic, Roman Greek, city-state, democracy, architecture, empire, culture, terrain, predict, polis, agora, trireme, monarchy, oligarchy, citizens, slaves, suffrage, stadium, Olympic, revival, marathon, myth, temple, priest, hoplite, phalanx (strong block formation), interpret, legacy, impact.

Knowledge, skills and concepts

In this unit, the children will:

- develop the use of historical terms
- address and devise historically valid questions
- understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources
- construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information
- continue to develop a chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of world history
- consistently answer and ask historically valid questions about similarity and difference.

Cross-curricular links

- **Art and Design:** constructing an Archimedes screw, investigating the design of Greek buildings with columns, making Greek pottery and decorating in a traditional style, mask making for Greek theatre
- **Computing:** researching online
- **Drama:** Greek mythology and comparative links to others
- **English:** Aesop's Fables
- **Geography:** settlements, maps, land use, physical geography and its impact on humans
- **Greek language:** learning simple words and phrases
- **Maths:** dates, timelines impact of the Greek mathematicians (Pythagoras and Archimedes)
- **PSCHE:** equality and suffrage, should the Elgin marbles be returned?
- **RE:** opportunities for comparison of gods and worship in Greek religion with other religions

Related books for wider reading

- *Greek Myths* by Marcia Williams
- *The Odyssey* by Gillian Cross
- *Ancient Greece* by Rachel Minay (*The History Detective Investigates*)
- *Ancient Greece* by Anita Ganeri (*Writing History*)

Assessment

Opportunities for assessment for learning are built in throughout the unit through questioning and activities. The children can both self and peer assess as appropriate using approaches familiar to them. The quiz is intended to be used during week 6, and will review knowledge, skills and concepts acquired during the unit. The Rising Stars Progression Framework Assessment focuses on: *Address and devise historically valid questions about significance*. **The assessment should be undertaken in week 6. Detailed information on the task can be found on the key assessment opportunity sheet.**

Places to visit

- British Museum, London
- World Museum, Liverpool
- Ashmolean Museum, Oxford,
- Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
- Leeds City Museum
- Most regional museums will have some Ancient Greek exhibits and many offer workshops

Subject knowledge and teaching guidance

When we talk about the Ancient Greek civilisation, we are usually referring to the period around four to five hundred years BC, known as the Classical period. However, the period goes back as far as 6000 years BC. The civilisation can be divided into a number of different periods: Minoan, Mycenaean, Classical Greek, Hellenistic, Roman Greek (see timeline). The geography of the area led to the growth of many city states, which were often isolated from each other. They each ruled in their own way, but had many commonalities, including shared gods and language. The most famous city states were Athens and Sparta, but there were many others. Sometimes they came together to fight a common enemy, such as Persia. The territory of Ancient Greece stretched far beyond the boundaries of Ancient Greece to include parts of Italy, North Africa and Turkey. Alexander the Great became King of Macedon in 336 BC and conquered the rest of the city states to form a vast empire. During this time, it even stretched as far as the area we know as Afghanistan. Following Alexander's death, the Empire began to decline, and it became part of the Roman Empire.

There is a large amount of surviving evidence about Ancient Greece, such as artefacts, buildings and the written word.

Athens is often contrasted with Sparta – Athens was more a pioneer of democracy, with Sparta being much more militaristic. Their democracy was not identical to ours today – for example, women were excluded, as were foreigners and slaves. Many Greeks were poor and some places, including Athens, had large slave societies. The Ancient Greeks were pioneers in the fields of mathematics, philosophy, art, drama, science and architecture. They believed in many gods, who had human form and human traits but were immortal. They used these gods to explain the world as they saw it, including such things as natural disasters. The exploits of gods and heroes form the basis of the stories known as Greek myths. The Ancient Greeks were passionate about sport and exercise, and believed that a good physique was very important to their status – their first Olympic Games dated from 776 BC.