



## FACT SHEET

# ANCIENT GREECE

The lands of the ancient Greeks were islands and peninsulas bordering the Aegean Sea. The Aegean Sea was the crossroads of the ancient Mediterranean world. The Greek countryside was mountainous, making land travel hard, but traders, explorers, and adventurers all passed through the islands. The people who settled there formed a single culture. They called it "Hellas." It began about the same time as the Bronze Age in 3500 B.C.

Ancient Greeks lived in city-states. The Greek city-state was a small, self-governing city and the surrounding countryside. There were several hundred city-states in ancient Greece.

The ancient Greeks worshiped many gods. They believed that the gods and goddesses controlled all things. Greek gods were related to each other and had human behaviors, but were more powerful than humans. Greek writers wrote myths explaining life and nature, using the gods and goddesses as characters.

Greeks were skilled sailors, accomplished architects, builders, musicians, playwrights, actors, philosophers, politicians, artists, poets, and soldiers.

## FOOD

Greek children most often ate crusty bread, vegetables, and fish along with goat cheese, olives, fruits, and nuts. Meat was a rare treat that was only available on holidays. Children ate with a knife and spoon. They drank water, goat's milk, and occasionally watered-down wine. Usually men dined only with men and women dined only with other women and their children. Only at special festivals did men and women dine together.

A special dinner began with a plate of fresh, tasty cold foods called meze. This might include pita bread, feta cheese, olives, and hummus, a spread made from chickpeas.

## SHELTER

Greek homes had stone foundations, mud-brick walls, and pottery-tile roofs. The small, high windows were covered with shutters. The house was

built around an open courtyard. In the courtyard there was a well and an altar where members of a Greek family worshiped the gods.

## CLOTHING

The ancient Greeks wore simple clothes made from linen or wool. Boys and men wore a straight tunic called a chiton. It ended at the knee and was pinned at the shoulders and belted at the waist. The chiton was worn so that it covered only one shoulder, leaving the other bare. Girls and women wore ankle-length chitons.

Both men and women wore woolen cloaks called himations. Ancient Greeks usually went barefoot or wore sandals. For exercising and playing sports, men wore no clothes, and women wore a short chiton or nothing at all.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

The influence of Greek architecture, art, literature, history, philosophy, science, and mathematics can be seen throughout the world. The ancient Greeks designed the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns. In literature, epic and lyric poetry was perfected by the Greeks. Greek tragedies and comedies began in ancient Greece. They built large open-air theaters that could seat over 10,000 people.

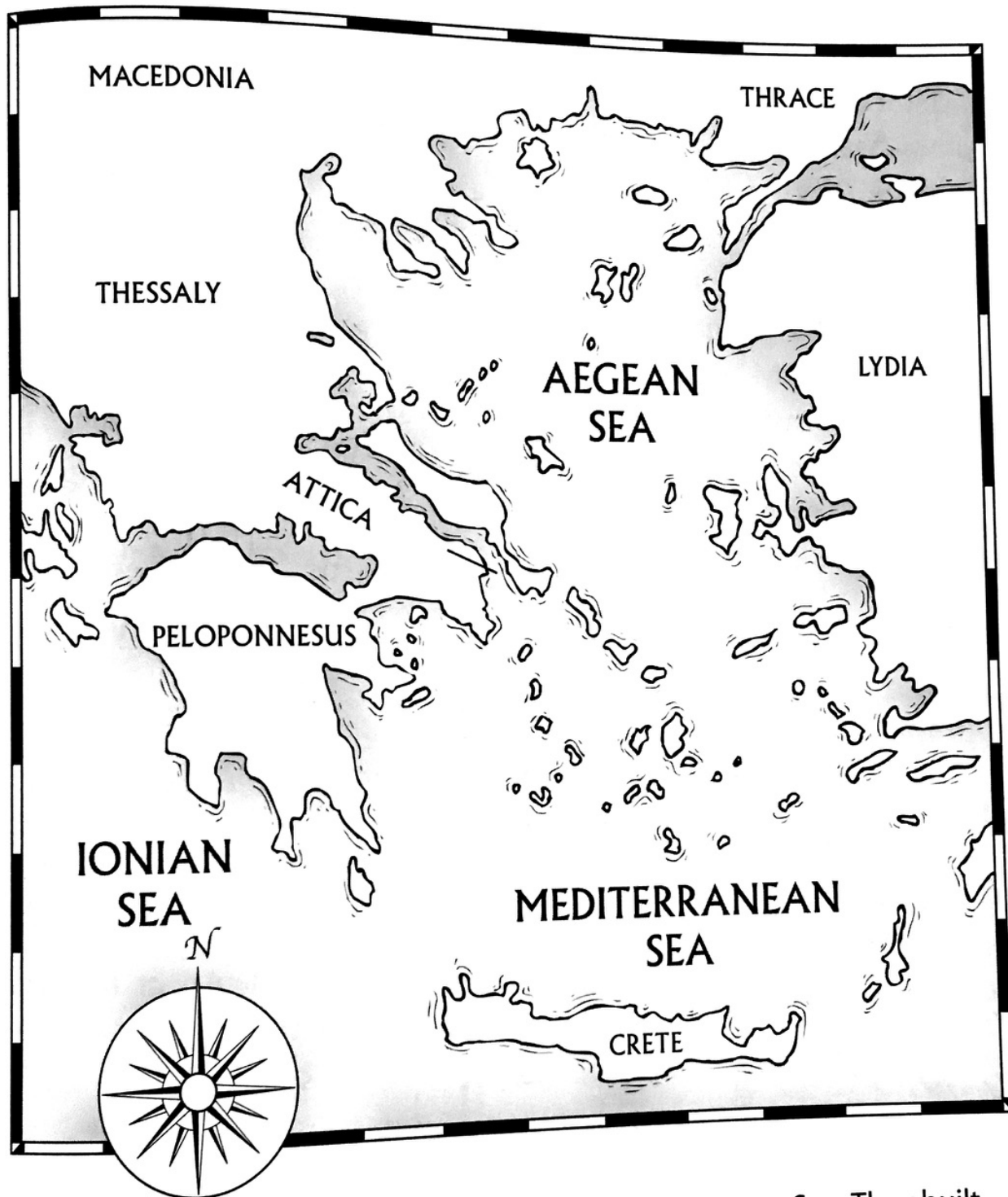
The ancient Greeks had many great philosophers, historians, mathematicians, and scientists. Best known of the philosophers were Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Herodotus was called the "father of history." Pythagorus and Euclid made great strides in geometry. Hippocrates was a famous doctor.

The ancient Greeks believed in a strong mind and body. They had the first Olympics to honor the gods. Each city-state sent their best athletes to compete in discus and javelin throwing, jumping, wrestling, and running.

In addition to all these contributions, the Greeks' ideas about democracy and government have had an important influence on modern societies.



# ANCIENT GREECE



In 3500 B.C., people came to the islands of the Aegean Sea. They built a large civilization on the islands and on the mainland of Greece. The two most famous cities were called Athens and Sparta. Greece has lots of mountains. The biggest mountain is called Mount Olympus.

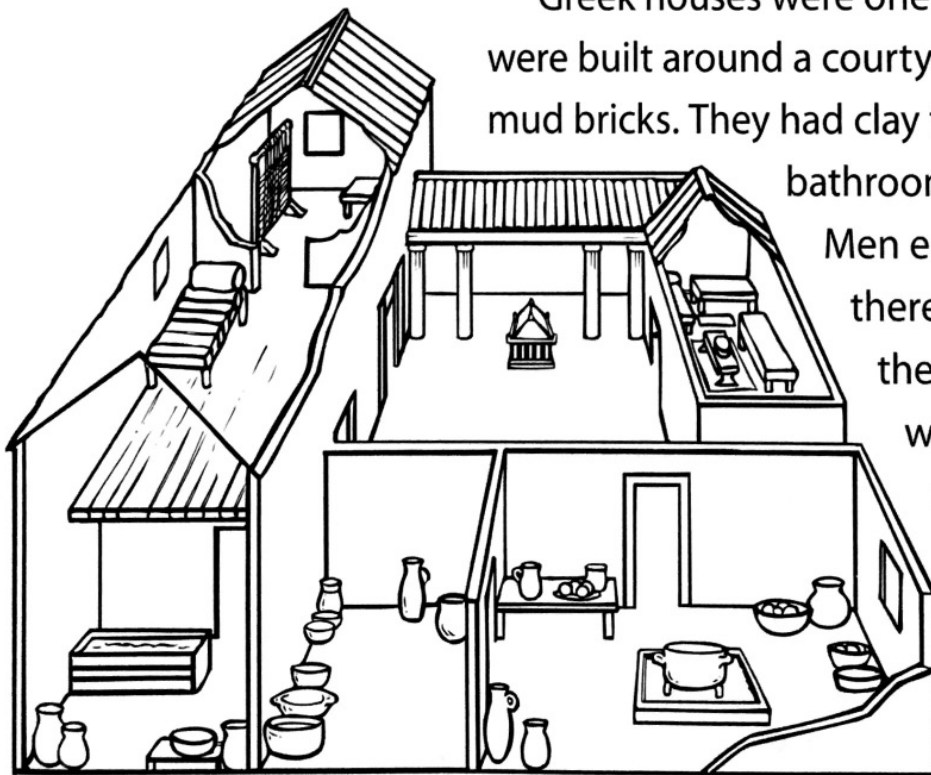


Most people were farmers. They grew wheat and barley for bread and porridge. They got fish, sea urchins, octopus, and squid from the sea. The Greeks drank goat's milk and wine. People went to the agora to buy their favorite foods. The **agora** was a big marketplace. They liked to buy foods such olives, figs, and grapes.



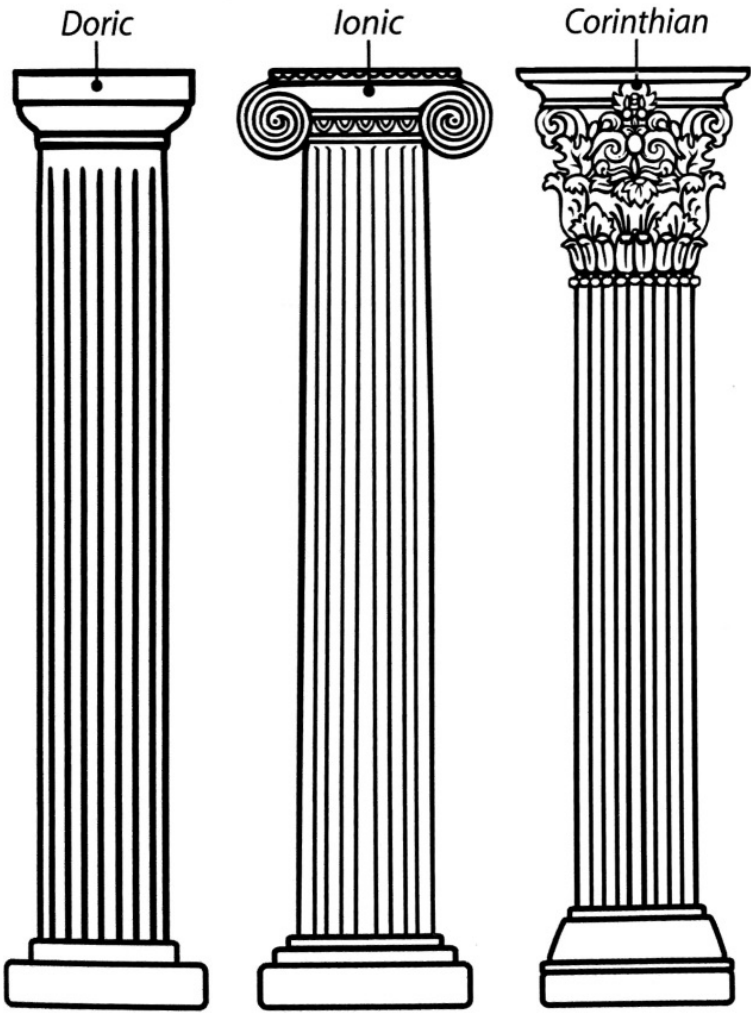
Greek houses were one- or two-story homes. They were built around a courtyard. Homes were made of mud bricks. They had clay tile roofs. The kitchen and bathroom were on the first floor.

Men entertained their guests there, too. The family bedrooms, the servants' room, and the women's weaving room were upstairs.





People wore wool or linen tunics called **chitons**. Women wore long one- or two-piece chitons. Men wore thigh-length chitons. During the winter, people wore cloaks called himations. For exercising and playing sports, men wore no clothes. People wore leather sandals outside. They went barefoot inside the house.



The ancient Greeks had the first Olympics. They gave plays in large outdoor theaters. Greek writers made up stories about the gods and goddesses. They are called **myths**. The Greeks made three types of **columns** for buildings. They are called Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. The Greeks built a beautiful temple called the Parthenon.

