

MEET THE GREEKS!

GREEK MEN: Men ran the government, and spent a great deal of their time away from home. When not involved in politics, the men spent time in the fields, overseeing or working the crops, sailing, hunting, in manufacturing or in trade. For fun, in addition to drinking parties, the men enjoyed wrestling, horseback riding, and the famous Olympic Games. When the men entertained their male friends, at the popular drinking parties, their wives and daughters were not allowed to attend.

GREEK WOMEN: With the exception of ancient Sparta, Greek women had very **limited freedom outside the home**. They could attend weddings, funerals, some religious festivals, and could visit female neighbors for brief periods of time. In their home, Greek women were in charge! Their job was to run the house and to bear children. Most Greek women did not do housework themselves. Most Greek households had slaves. Female slaves cooked, cleaned, and worked in the fields. Male slaves watched the door, to make sure no one came in when the man of the house was away, except for female neighbors, and acted as tutors to the young male children. Wives and daughters were not allowed to watch the Olympic Games as the participants in the games did not wear clothes. Chariot racing was the only game women could win, and only then if they owned the horse. If that horse won, they received the prize.

GREEK BABIES: The ancient Greeks considered their children to be "youths" until they reached the age of 30! When a child was born to ancient Greek family, a naked father carried his child, in a ritual dance, around the household. Friends and relatives sent gifts. The family decorated the doorway of their home with a wreath of olives (for a boy) or a wreath of wool (for a girl).

GREEK GIRLS: In Athens, as in most Greek city-states, with the exception of Sparta, girls stayed at home until they were married. Like their mother, they could attend certain festivals, funerals, and visit neighbors for brief periods of time. Their job was to help their mother, and to help in the fields, if necessary.

GREEK BOYS: In most Greek city-states, when young, the boys stayed at home, helping in the fields, sailing, and fishing. At age 6 or 7, they went to school.

SLAVES: Slaves were very important to ancient Greek daily life. Slaves cleaned and cooked, worked in the fields, factories, shops, in the mines, and on ships. Even the police force in ancient Athens was made up of slaves! Most slaves lives were not that different from a poor Greek citizen's life.

There were things a slave could not do. They could not go to school, or enter politics, or use their own name. They were given a name by the citizen who owned them. They were the property of their owner, not citizens of ancient Greece.

People became slaves in many ways. Some people became slaves when captured in battle. Some were the children of slaves. Some were Greek infants, abandoned on a hill or at the gates of a town, left to die, or to be rescued by someone passing by. Some children were sold into slavery by poor families, and some children were kidnapped. Slaves were so important to the culture of ancient Greece, that some historians believe there were as many slaves as citizens!



TOYS: Ancient Greek children played with many toys, including rattles, little clay animals, horses on 4 wheels that could be pulled on a string, yo-yo's, and terra-cotta dolls.

PETS: Birds, dogs, goats, tortoises, and mice were all popular pets! Cats, however, were not!



GREEK HOUSES: Greek houses, in the 6th and 5th century B.C., were made up of two or three rooms, built around an open air courtyard, built of stone, wood, or clay bricks. Larger homes might also have a kitchen, a room for bathing, a men's dining room, and perhaps a woman's sitting area. Although the Greek women were allowed to leave their homes for only short periods of time, they could enjoy the open air, in the privacy of their courtyard. **Much of ancient Greek family life centered around the courtyard.**

The ancient Greeks loved stories and fables. One favorite family activity was to gather in the courtyard to hear these stories, told by the mother or father. In their courtyard, Greek women might relax, chat, and sew. Most meals were enjoyed in the courtyard. Greek cooking equipment was small and light and could easily be set up there. On bright, sunny days, the women probably sheltered under a covered area of their courtyard, as the ancient Greeks believed a pale complexion was a sign of beauty.



FOOD: Along the coastline, the soil was not very fertile, but the ancient Greeks used systems of irrigation and crop rotation to help solve that problem. They grew olives, grapes, and figs. They kept goats, for milk and cheese. In the plains, where the soil was more rich, they also grew wheat to make bread. Fish, seafood, and home-made wine were

very popular food items. In some of the larger Greek city-states, meat could be purchased in cook shops. Meat was rarely eaten, and was used mostly for religious sacrifices.



CLOTHING: Greek clothing was very simple. Men and women wore linen in the summer and wool in the winter. The ancient Greeks could buy cloth and clothes in the *agora*, the marketplace, but that was expensive.

Most families made their own clothes, which were simple tunics and warm cloaks, made of linen or wool, dyed a bright color, or bleached white. Clothes were made by the mother, her daughters, and female slaves. They were often decorated to represent the city-state in which they lived. The ancient Greeks were very proud of their home city-state. Now and then, they might buy jewelry from a traveling peddler, hairpins, rings, and earrings, but only the rich could afford much jewelry. Both men and women in ancient Athens, and in most of the other city-states, used perfume, made by boiling flowers and herbs.

The first real hat, the broad-brimmed *petasos*, was invented by the ancient Greeks! It was worn only for traveling. A chin strap held it on, so when it was not needed, as protection from the weather, it could hang down ones back.

HAIR STYLES: Both men and women enjoyed using mirrors and hairbrushes. Hair was curled, arranged in interesting and carefully designed styles, and held in place with scented waxes and lotions. Women kept their hair long, in braids, arranged on top of their head, or wore their hair in ponytails. Headbands, made of ribbon or metal, were very popular. Blond hair was rare. Greek admired the blonde look and many tried bleaching their hair. Men cut their hair short and, unless they were soldiers, wore beards.

Barber shops first became popular in ancient Greece, and were an important part of the social life of many ancient Greek males. In the barber shop, the men exchanged political and sports news, philosophy, and gossip!



DANCE: Dance was very important to the ancient Greeks. They believed that dance improved both physical and emotional health. Rarely did men and women dance together. Some dances were danced by men and others by women. There were more than 200 ancient Greek dances; comic dances, warlike dances, dances for athletes and for religious worship, plus dances for weddings, funerals, and celebrations. Dance was accompanied by

STORIES: The ancient Greeks loved stories. They created many marvelous stories, myths, and fables that we enjoy today, like "Odysseus and the Terrible Sea" and "Circe", a beautiful but evil enchantress. *Aesop's Fables*, written by Aesop, an ancient Greek, are still read and enjoyed all over the world! To read some great fables, myths and stories, go [here!](#)



EDUCATION: Both daily life and education were very different in Sparta, than in Athens or in the other ancient Greek city-states. With the exception of the Athenians (who thought Athens was the best!), Greeks from other city-states had a grudging admiration for the Spartans. They wouldn't want to be Spartans, but in times of war, they most certainly wanted Sparta to be on their side. The Spartans were tough, and the ancient Greeks admired strength.

ATHENS: In ancient Athens, the purpose of education was to produce citizens trained in the arts, to prepare citizens for both peace and war. Girls were not educated at school, but many learned to read and write at home, in the comfort of their courtyard. Until age 6 or 7, boys were taught at home by their mother or by a male slave. From age 6 to 14, they went to a neighborhood primary school or to a private school. Books were very expensive and rare, so subjects were read out-loud, and the boys had to memorize everything. To help them learn, they used writing tablets and rulers.

In primary school, they had to learn two important things - the words of Homer, a famous Greek epic poet, and how to play the lyre, a musical instrument. Their teacher, who was always a man, could choose what additional subjects he wanted to teach. He might choose to teach drama, public speaking, government, art, reading, writing, math, and another favorite ancient Greek instrument - the flute.

Following that, boys attended a higher school for four more years. When they turned 18, they entered military school for two additional years. At age 20, they graduated.

SPARTA: In ancient Sparta, the purpose of education was to produce a well-drilled, well-disciplined marching army. Spartans believed in a life of discipline, self-denial, and simplicity. They were very loyal to the state of Sparta. Every Spartan, male or female, was required to have a perfect body. When babies were born in ancient Sparta, Spartan soldiers would come by the house and check the baby. If the baby did not appear healthy and strong, the infant was taken away, and left to die on a hillside, or taken away to be trained as a slave (a *helot*). Babies who passed this examination were assigned membership in a brotherhood or sisterhood, usually the same one to which their father or mother belonged.

Spartan Boys: Spartan boys were sent to military school at age 6 or 7. They lived, trained and slept in their the barracks of their brotherhood. At school, they were taught survival skills and other skills necessary to be a great soldier. School courses were very hard and often painful. Although students were taught to read and write, those skills were not very important to the ancient Spartans. Only warfare mattered. The boys were not fed well, and were told that it was fine to steal food as long as they did not get caught stealing. If they were caught, they were beaten. They boys marched without shoes to make them strong. It was a brutal training period.

Legend has it that a young Sparta boy once stole a live fox, planning to kill it and eat it. He noticed some Spartan soldiers approaching, and hid the fox beneath his shirt. When confronted, to avoid the punishment he would receive if caught stealing, he allowed the fox to chew into his stomach rather than confess he had stolen a fox, and did not allow his face or body to express his pain.

Somewhere between the age of 18-20, Spartan males had to pass a difficult test of fitness, military ability, and leadership skills. Any Spartan male who did not pass these examinations became a *perioikos*. (The *perioikos*, or the middle class, were allowed to own property, have business dealings, but had no political rights and were not citizens.) If they passed, they became a full citizen and a Spartan soldier. Spartan citizens were not allowed to touch money. That was the job of the middle class. Spartan soldiers spent most of their lives with their fellow soldiers. They ate, slept, and continued to train in their brotherhood barracks. Even if they were married, they did not live with their wives and families. They lived in the barracks. Military service did not end until a Spartan male reached the age of 60. At age 60, a Spartan soldier could retire and live in their home with their family.

Spartan Girls: In Sparta, girls also went to school at age 6 or 7. They lived, slept and trained in their sisterhood's barracks. No one knows if their school was as cruel or as rugged as the boys school, but the girls were taught wrestling, gymnastics and combat skills. Some historians believe the two schools were very similar, and that an attempt was made to train the girls as thoroughly as they trained the boys. In any case, the Spartans believed that strong young women would produce strong babies.

At age 18, if a Sparta girl passed her skills and fitness test, she would be assigned a husband and allowed to return home. If she failed, she would lose her rights as a citizen, and became a *perioikos*, a member of the middle class. In most of the other Greek city-states, women were required to stay inside their homes most of their lives. In Sparta, citizen women were free to move around, and enjoyed a great deal of freedom, as their husbands did not live at home.

No marvelous works of art or architecture came out of Sparta, but Spartan military force was regarded as terrifying. Thus, the Spartans achieved their goal.

SPARTA



YOU ARE A SPARTAN! Be proud! You have endured unbelievable pain and hardship to become a superior Spartan soldier and citizen! Taken away from your parents at age 7, you lived a harsh and often brutal life in the soldiers barracks. You were beaten by older children who started fights to help make you tough and strong. You were often whipped in front of groups of other Spartans, including your parents, but never cried out in pain. You were given very little food, but encouraged to steal food, instead. If caught stealing, you were beaten. To avoid severe pain, you learned to be cunning, to lie, to cheat, to steal, and how to get away with it! Some of you are members of the Spartan secret police (*Krypteia*) and enjoy spying on slaves. If you find a slave who is showing signs of leadership, you have orders to kill them immediately. You are fierce, capable and proud of your strength. You know you are superior and are delighted to be Spartan!

SPARTAN GOALS AND BEHAVIOR AT THE OLYMPICS: Win at all costs. Lie, cheat, do whatever it takes. If you can't win, at least beat your archrival, those silly citizens of Athens. You are the proud and fierce Spartans! March in unison whenever possible. Plot secretly with other Greek city-states to sabotage any Athenian chance at victory. Cheer only for your fellow Spartans at each event. Lie, cheat, steal, but do not get caught, because that is the Spartan way. Good luck at the games.



ATHENS



YOU ARE AN ATHENIAN! Be courteous. You have been superbly educated in the arts and the sciences, and trained to be extremely productive and capable in times of peace or war. You are an achiever. Until age 6 or 7, you were taught at home by your mother, or by a male slave. From age 7-14, you attended a day school in the neighborhood where you memorized Homeric poetry and learned to play that magnificent instrument, the lyre. You learned drama, public speaking, reading, writing, math, and perhaps even how to play the flute. You attended four years of higher school, and learned more about math and science and government. At 18, you attended military school for two additional years! You are proud to be an Athenian! Famed for its literature, poetry, drama, theatre, schools, buildings, government, and intellectual superiority, you have no doubt that your *polis*, Athens, is clearly the shining star of all the Greek city-states.

ATHENIAN GOALS AND BEHAVIOR AT THE OLYMPICS: You know your archrival, those horrible Spartans, will do anything to win, even lie and cheat, but you are Athenians - you would never stoop to such boorish behavior. Cooperate with your fellow Athenians to defeat those brutish Spartans, and do your personal best! Say witty things to

impress representatives from other city-states. Be courteous to all Greeks, no matter what inferior city they represent. You are Athenians, the clever, creative, courteous representatives of that shining example of all that is fine and noble, the *polis* of Athens. Good luck in the games!