

3 Democracy and Greece's Golden Age

TERMS & NAMES

- direct democracy
- classical art
- tragedy
- comedy
- Peloponnesian War
- philosophers
- Socrates
- Plato
- Aristotle

MAIN IDEA

Democratic principles and classical culture flourished during Greece's golden age.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

At its height, Greece set lasting standards in art, politics, literature, and philosophy that are still adhered to today.

SETTING THE STAGE During Athens' golden age, drama, sculpture, poetry, philosophy, architecture, and science all reached new heights. For 50 years (from 480 to 430 B.C.), Athens experienced a growth in intellectual and artistic learning. The artistic and literary legacies of this time continue to inspire and instruct people around the world.

Pericles' Three Goals for Athens

A wise and able statesman named Pericles led Athens during its golden age. Honest and fair, Pericles held onto popular support for 32 years. He was a skillful politician, an inspiring speaker, and a respected general. He so dominated the life of Athens from 461 to 429 B.C. that this period often is called the Age of Pericles. He had three goals: (1) to strengthen Athenian democracy, (2) to hold and strengthen the empire, and (3) to glorify Athens.

Stronger Democracy To strengthen democracy, Pericles increased the number of paid public officials. Earlier, only wealthier citizens could afford to hold public office because most positions were unpaid. Pericles increased the number of officials who were paid salaries. Now even the poorest could serve if elected or chosen by lot. Consequently, Athens had more citizens engaged in self-government than any other city-state. This reform made Athens one of the most democratic governments in history. However, political rights were still limited to those with citizenship status.

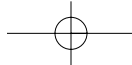
The introduction of **direct democracy**, a form of government in which citizens rule directly and not through representatives, was an important legacy of Periclean

Athenian and United States Democracy

Athenian Democracy	Both	U. S. Democracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens: male; 18 years old; born of citizen parents • Laws voted on and proposed directly by assembly of all citizens • Leader chosen by lot • Executive branch composed of a council of 500 men • Juries varied in size • No attorneys; no appeals; one-day trials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political power exercised by citizens • Three branches of government • Legislative branch passes laws • Executive branch carries out laws • Judicial branch conducts trials with paid jurors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens: born in United States or completed citizenship process • Representatives elected to propose and vote on laws • Elected president • Executive branch made up of elected and appointed officials • Juries composed of 12 jurors • Defendants and plaintiffs have attorneys; long appeals process

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts

1. What does this chart suggest to you about the origins of U. S. democracy?
2. What is the main difference between Athenian democracy and democracy in the United States?



Athens. Few other city-states practiced this style of government. In Athens, male citizens who served in the assembly established all the important government policies that affected the polis. In a speech for the slain soldiers killed in the first year of the Peloponnesian War, Pericles expressed his great pride in Athenian democracy:

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership in a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses. No one, so long as he has it in him to be of service to the state, is kept in political obscurity because of poverty.

PERICLES, *Funeral Oration*

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

A. Distinguishing Fact from Opinion

How accurate do you consider Pericles' statement that Athenian democracy was in the hands of "the whole people"?

Athenian Empire Pericles tried to enlarge the wealth and power of Athens. He used the money from the Delian League's treasury to build Athens' 200-ship navy into the strongest in the Mediterranean. A strong navy was important because it helped Athens strengthen the safety of its empire. Athenian prosperity depended on gaining access to its surrounding waterways. It needed overseas trade to obtain supplies of grain and other raw materials.

Glorifying Athens Pericles also used money from the empire to beautify Athens. Without the Delian League's approval, he persuaded the Athenian assembly to vote huge sums of the league's money to buy gold, ivory, and marble. Still more money went to a small army of artisans who worked for 15 years (447–432 B.C.) to build one of architecture's noblest works—the Parthenon.

Greek Styles in Art

The Parthenon, a masterpiece of craftsmanship and design, was not novel in style. Rather, Greek artisans built the 23,000-square-foot building in the traditional style that had been used to create Greek temples for 200 years. In ancient times, this temple built to honor Athena contained examples of Greek art that set standards for future generations of artists around the world.

Greek Sculpture Within the Parthenon stood a giant statue of Athena, the goddess of wisdom and the protector of Athens. Pericles entrusted much of the work on the temple, including the statue of Athena, to the sculptor Phidias (FIDH-ee-uhs). The great statue of the goddess not only contained precious materials such as gold and ivory, it stood 38 feet tall!

Phidias and other sculptors during this golden age aimed to create figures that were graceful, strong, and perfectly formed. Their faces showed neither laughter nor anger, only serenity. Greek sculptors also tried to capture the grace of the idealized human body in motion. Their values of order, balance, and proportion became the standard of what is called **classical art**.

Classical works such as the Parthenon and the statue of Athena showcased the pride that Athenians had for their city. (See *History Through Art*, page 122.)

Greek Drama

The Greeks invented drama and built the first theaters in the west. Theatrical productions in Athens were both an expression of civic pride and a tribute to the gods.

HISTORY MAKERS

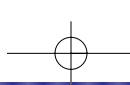


Pericles
494?–429 B.C.

Pericles came from a rich and high-ranking noble family. His aristocratic father had led the Athenian assembly and fought at the Battle of Salamis in the Persian Wars. His mother was the niece of Cleisthenes, an influential statesman.

Well known for his political achievements as a leader of Athens, some historians say Pericles the man was harder to know. One historian wrote,

[Pericles] no doubt, was a lonely man. Among the politicians, including his supporters, he had no friend. He avoided all social activity . . . [and] he only went out [of his home] for official business. . . .



HISTORY THROUGH ART: **Fine Art**

Architecture and Sculpture

The Parthenon, the most magnificent building on the Acropolis, shows the classical Greek ideals of balance and proportion in art. The Parthenon is so harmonious with its site, it appears to grow directly out of solid rock. Its architects knew geometrical principles and how to modify them to please the eye. Its 46 support columns lean slightly inward. Brightly painted sculptural friezes (decorative relief panels) and statues adorned the rectangular building.

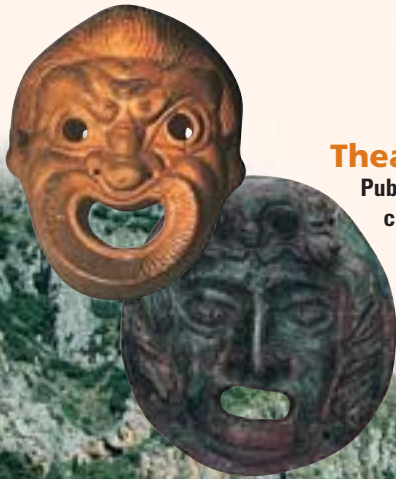


Athena in the Parthenon

Greek statues depicted their gods in idealized human form. Inside the marble temple stood a huge statue of Athena, nearly 40 feet high. It portrayed the goddess in full battle armor, holding a six-foot high figure of victory. This is a copy of the original statue, which vanished during the fifth century A.D.

Theater at Delphi

Public theater performances during the fifth century B.C. were sponsored by the state. Hundreds of theaters were built, such as this one preserved at Delphi in central Greece. Notice how this theater is set directly into the natural setting of the hillside. The masks used by the actors in tragedies and comedies became favorite subjects in Greek art.



Connect to History

Summarizing What are the main things you associate with classical Greek art? Give examples from buildings and sculpture shown on this page.

 [SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R3](#)

Connect to Today

Researching Find buildings and artworks in your local community that show Greek influences. Work in small groups to develop a guidebook to these treasures.

For an Internet activity on the Parthenon . . .

 **NET ACTIVITY**
CLASSZONE.COM



Background

Although women's roles were often central to Greek drama, all the actors were men.

Actors used colorful costumes, masks, and sets to dramatize stories about leadership, justice, and the duties owed to the gods. As part of their civic duty, wealthy citizens bore the cost for producing the plays. The Greeks wrote two kinds of drama—tragedy and comedy.

Tragedy A **tragedy** was a serious drama about common themes such as love, hate, war, or betrayal. These dramas featured a main character, or tragic hero. The hero usually was an important person and often gifted with extraordinary abilities. A tragic flaw—an error in judgment or personality defect—usually caused the hero's downfall. Often this flaw was hubris, or excessive pride.

In ancient times, Greece had three notable dramatists who wrote tragedies: Aeschylus (EHS-kuh-luhs), Sophocles (SAHF-uh-kleez), and Euripides (yoo-RIP-uh-DEEZ). Aeschylus wrote more than 80 plays, of which seven survive. His most famous work is the trilogy *The Oresteia* (ohr-es-STEE-uh), based on the family of Agamemnon, commander of the Greeks at Troy. Sophocles wrote about 100 plays, including the tragedies *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone*. Euripides, author of the play *Medea*, often featured sympathetic portrayals of women in his plays.

Comedy In contrast to Greek tragedies, a **comedy** contained scenes filled with slapstick situations and crude humor. Many Greek comedies were satires, or works that poked fun at a subject. Playwrights often made fun of customs, politics, respected people, or ideas of the time. Aristophanes (AR-ih-STAHF-uh-neeZ) wrote the first great comedies of the stage, including *The Birds* and *Lysistrata*. For example, *Lysistrata*, named for its female lead, portrayed the women of Athens forcing their husbands to end the Peloponnesian War. The fact that Athenians could listen to criticism of themselves showed the freedom and openness of public discussion that existed in democratic Athens.

Spartans and Athenians Go to War

Tensions between Athens and Sparta had been building for years. Hostilities became especially strong as Athens evolved from a limited city-state to a vast naval empire. Many people in both cities thought war was inevitable. Instead of trying to avoid conflict, leaders in both Athens and Sparta pressed for a war to begin, as both groups of leaders believed their own city had the advantage.

Peloponnesian War Sparta declared war against Athens in 431 B.C. When the **Peloponnesian War** between the two city-states began, Athens had the strongest sea power in Greece. Sparta had the advantage on land because the inland city could not easily be attacked by sea. Pericles' strategy was to avoid land battles with the superior Spartan army and wait for an opportunity to strike Sparta's allies from the sea.

Eventually the Spartans marched into Athenian territory. They swept over the countryside, burning the Athenians' local food supply. Pericles responded by bringing residents from the surrounding countryside inside the safety of Athens' city walls. The city was safe from hunger as long as ships could sail into port with food from Athenian colonies and other foreign states.

Sparta Gains the Edge However, two events spelled disaster for Athens. In the second year of the war, a frightful plague killed roughly one-third to two-thirds of Athens' population, including Pericles. In 415 B.C., Athens suffered a second disaster. The Athenian assembly sent a huge fleet carrying 27,000 soldiers to destroy the polis of

SPOTLIGHT ON

The Plague

An unidentified disease struck Athens during the height of the war. The disease caused a terrible plague in 430 B.C.

According to Thucydides (thoo-SID-ih-DEEZ), the plague's symptoms included high fever, inflamed eyes, sore throat, coughing, extreme thirst, vomiting, and red blisters on the skin. As the disease spread, some victims lost their eyes or their fingers or toes. Many thousands died.

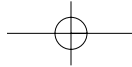
The following excerpt is from Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian Wars:

They became infected by nursing one another and died like sheep. . . . Bodies of dying men lay one upon another. . . . The temples . . . were full of corpses of those who had died in them.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

B. Analyzing

Motives What might have been Pericles' goals in the Peloponnesian War?



Syracuse, one of Sparta's wealthiest allies. The expedition suffered an unmistakable defeat in 413 B.C. The Athenian historian Thucydides recalled: "They [the Athenians] were destroyed with a total destruction—their fleet, their army—there was nothing that was not destroyed, and few out of many returned home." Somehow, a terribly weakened Athens fended off Spartan attacks for another nine years. Finally, in 404 B.C., Athens and its allies surrendered.

War Brings Political Changes After 27 years of war, Athens had lost its empire, power, and wealth. In addition, general confidence in democratic government began to falter. One leader after another proved weak, corrupt, or traitorous. The assembly often changed its decisions and did not stick to a single political program.

Philosophers Search for Truth

In this time of questioning and uncertainty, several great thinkers appeared. They were determined to seek the truth, no matter where the search led them. The Greeks called such thinkers **philosophers**, meaning "lovers of wisdom." These Greek thinkers based their philosophy on the following two assumptions: (1) The universe (land, sky, and sea) is put together in an orderly way, and subject to absolute and unchanging laws, and (2) people can understand these laws through logic and reason.

One group of philosophers, the Sophists, questioned people's unexamined beliefs and ideas about justice, and other traditional values. One of the most famous Sophists was Protagoras, who took a position questioning the existence of the traditional Greek gods. He also argued that there was no universal standard of truth, saying "Man [the individual] is the measure of all things. . . ." These were radical and dangerous ideas to many of the citizens of Athens.

Socrates One of the strongest critics of the Sophists was **Socrates** (SAHK-ruh-TEEZ). Unlike the Sophists, he believed that absolute standards did exist for truth and justice. However, he encouraged Greeks to go further and question themselves and their moral character. Historians believe that it was Socrates who once said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Those who understood Socrates admired him deeply. The majority of citizens, however, could not understand this strange old man and his ideas.

In 399 B.C., when Socrates was about 70 years old, he was brought to trial for "corrupting the youth of Athens" and "neglecting the city's gods." In his own defense, Socrates said that his teachings were good for Athens because they forced people to think about their values and actions. The jury disagreed and condemned him to death. Later, he died after drinking a slow-acting poison.

Plato A student of Socrates, **Plato** (PLAY-toh), was approximately 28 years old when his teacher died. Later, Plato wrote down the conversations of Socrates "as a means of philosophical investigation." Sometime between 385 and 380 B.C., Plato wrote his most famous work, *The Republic*. In it, he set forth his vision of a perfectly governed society. It was not a democracy. In his ideal society, all citizens would fall naturally into three groups: farmers and artisans, warriors, and the ruling class. The person with the greatest

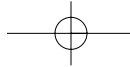
This Pompeian mosaic from the first century A.D. pays tribute to the philosopher Plato (third from the left) as he teaches his followers.



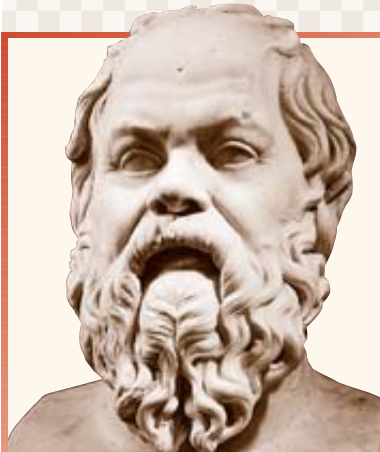
THINK THROUGH HISTORY

C. Making

Inferences Why would philosophers start questioning traditional beliefs at this particular time in Athens' history?

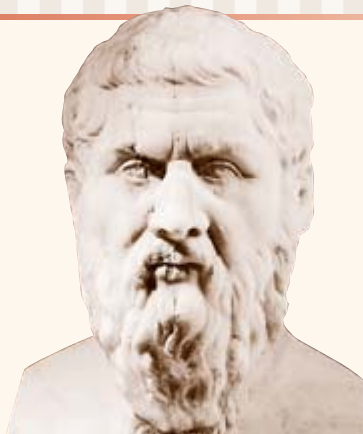


HISTORY MAKERS



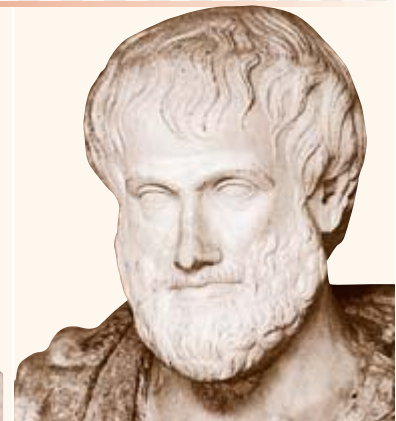
Socrates
469–399 B.C.

Socrates was one of the most powerful thinkers in history. He encouraged his students to examine their beliefs. Socrates asked them a series of leading questions to show that people hold many contradictory opinions. This method of teaching by a question-and-answer approach is known as the *Socratic method*. He devoted his life to gaining self-knowledge and once said, "There is only one good, knowledge; and one evil, ignorance."



Plato
427–347 B.C.

Born into a wealthy Athenian family, Plato had careers as a wrestler and a poet before he became a philosopher. He studied with Socrates. After his teacher died in 399 B.C., Plato left Greece and traveled to North Africa and Italy. He later returned to Athens and founded a school called The Academy in 387 B.C. The school lasted for approximately 900 years. It was Plato who once stated, "Philosophy begins in wonder."



Aristotle
384–322 B.C.

Aristotle, the son of a physician, was one of the brightest students at Plato's academy. He came there as a young man and stayed for 20 years until Plato's death. In 335 B.C., Aristotle opened his own school in Athens called the Lyceum. The school eventually rivaled the Academy. Aristotle once argued, "He who studies how things originated and came into being . . . will achieve the clearest view of them."

insight and intellect from the ruling class would be chosen philosopher-king. Plato's writings dominated philosophic thought in Europe for nearly 1,500 years. His only rivals in importance were Socrates and his own pupil, Aristotle (AR-ih-STAH-t-uhl).

Aristotle The philosopher **Aristotle** questioned the nature of the world and of human belief, thought, and knowledge. Aristotle came close to summarizing all the knowledge up to his time. He invented a method for arguing according to rules of logic. He later applied his method to problems in the fields of psychology, physics, and biology. His work provides the basis of the scientific method used today.

One of Aristotle's most famous pupils was Alexander, son of King Philip of Macedonia. Around 343 B.C., Aristotle accepted the king's invitation to tutor the 13-year-old prince. Alexander's status as a student abruptly ended in 336 B.C., when he became the ruler of Macedonia. You will learn about Alexander the Great in Section 4.

Section 3 Assessment

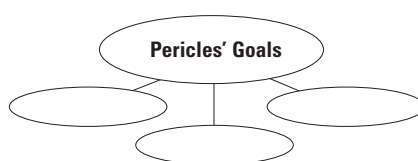
1. TERMS & NAMES

Identify

- direct democracy
- classical art
- tragedy
- comedy
- Peloponnesian War
- philosophers
- Socrates
- Plato
- Aristotle

2. TAKING NOTES

Using a diagram like the one below, show Pericles' three goals for Athens, giving examples.



Which goal had the greatest impact on the modern world?

3. FORMING AND SUPPORTING OPINIONS

Socrates believed in absolute standards for truth and justice. Sophists believed that standards of truth and justice are in the eye of the beholder. What is your opinion? Support your opinion with reasons and examples.

THINK ABOUT

- differences in values
- purpose of law
- circumstances

4. ANALYZING THEMES

Empire Building How does the concept of "hubris" from Greek tragedy apply to the Peloponnesian War?

THINK ABOUT

- Spartans' and Athenians' opinion of themselves
- why "hubris" is a tragic flaw
- why the war started



SOMETHING IN COMMON *across cultures*

Sports Through Time

Throughout history, communities worldwide have valued athletes who possess great physical strength, agility, and balance. In ancient times, the Greeks believed that athletic competitions were a way to please the gods and honor dead heroes. One of Greece's many athletic festivals—the Olympic Games—continues today. Dedicated to the god Zeus, the Olympics began in 776 B.C. The Greeks even suspended wars between city-states so that athletes could compete. This love of sport lives on among different people and cultures throughout the world today.



Olympics in Greece

Every four years, some 40,000 Greeks crowded into the stadium built in Olympia to watch the competitions. The earliest games featured foot races of about 200 yards. Later, athletes also competed in wrestling, boxing, jumping, javelin-and discus-throwing events. Athletes were proud of their bodies and emphasized physical fitness. Myron's famous marble sculpture of a discus thrower is dated about 450 B.C. The sculpture survives in this Roman copy (left) of the Greek bronze.



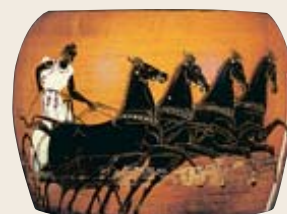
a
closer
look GREEK SPORTS

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Victorious Olympians received a crown made of wild olive leaves.



Olympic chariot racing began in the seventh century B.C. Prizes went to the chariot's owner, not the driver.





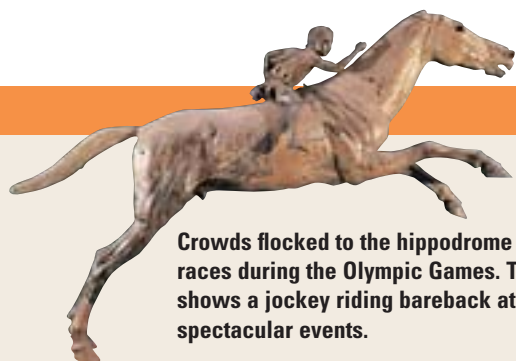
Sumo Wrestling in Japan

Sumo wrestling is a sport that is native to Japan. Originally sponsored by imperial families, it dates back to the eighth century. Sumo's popularity remains strong and today is considered the national sport of Japan. During a match, wrestlers wear loincloths and battle each other inside a 15-foot circle. Many of these athletes weigh more than 300 pounds. All use their size and strength to overpower an opponent.



Mayan Ball Courts in Mexico

This photograph of a site at Chichen Itza in Mexico shows a stone ring Mayans once used when playing an ancient game. During the seventh century, Mayan athletes played a ball game on walled I-shaped courts. Participants wore protective padding around their waist and on one knee. The object was to get a rubber ball through the stone ring without touching it with their hands. The ball court game had close ties to the Mayans' religious beliefs. While the exact rules are unknown, the losers were usually sacrificed to the gods.



Crowds flocked to the hippodrome to watch horse races during the Olympic Games. This bronze statue shows a jockey riding bareback at one of these spectacular events.



Soccer in Nigeria

Soccer is one of the most popular sports in the world. Known as football in some countries, soccer developed in England during the 1800s. Few items are needed to play the game: a ball, an open field, and players who are willing to run. The Nigerian soccer player pictured above was a participant in the 1994 World Cup, an international soccer competition. The World Cup attracts all-star teams from around the world.

Connect to History

Compare/Contrast Choose two of the sports or games illustrated on this page, such as modern soccer and the Mayan ball game. Then compare and contrast them.

 [SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R7](#)

Connect to Today

Analyzing Issues Consider the ancient Greek practice of interrupting conflicts to allow athletes to compete. Write a brief editorial (paragraph) discussing the role of sports and games as a way to promote world peace or reduce hostile behavior.