IT’S ALL GREEK TO ME...

Ancient Greek Civilization—the basis of “Western” culture
Effect of Geography

Isolation
- 1,400 islands in Aegean and Ionian Seas
- Mountainous

Result: cities were fiercely independent, governments varied; frequent wars

But: liquid highways for trade – few natural resources (Mediterranean)
The Mycenaean society established a society on the Greek peninsula beginning with migrations in 2200 B.C.

They were sea traders.

The unifying force that united Greece under their rule was religion, language, culture, intermarry with conquered Greeks.
About 1200 B.C., the Mycenaeans fought the Trojan War with the city of Troy in Anatolia
At the same time, foreigners invaded the Mycenaean homeland
From 1100 to 800 B.C., chaos reigned throughout the eastern Mediterranean
In the absence of a centralized state or empire, local institutions took the lead in restoring political order to Greece
- City-states
Concept of Herodotus to reflect the Greeks’ being of “shared blood, shared language, shared religion, and shared customs”

Established an ethnic identity that set them apart from the “barbarians”

However, *Hellenikon* lacked a common political component...Thus, City-states (*polis*)
The city-state or *polis* was originally a fortified site that provided refuge in war or other emergencies.

- Gradually they attracted increasing populations, took on an urban character, and began to exert authority over the surrounding regions.
- Levied taxes and appropriated a portion of the agriculture surplus to support the urban population.
Cities: The *Polis*

- *Poleis* were different because they developed independently of each other
  - Different traditions, economies, political systems, etc
- Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Thebes are examples
Over the centuries, Greeks personified the supernatural powers they associated with the natural elements into gods. They constructed myths that related the stories of the gods, their relations with one another, and their roles in bringing the world into its present state. As the gods struggled among one another, Zeus emerged as paramount ruler.
Zeus’s court included scores of subordinate deities who had various responsibilities:

- **Apollo**: Truth, Light, Music, Healing
- **Poseidon**: Sea, Earthquakes
- **Athena**: Wisdom, War
- **Apollo**: Truth, Light, Music, Healing
Myths served as foundations for religious cults
• Involved elaborate ritual observances
• Provided a powerful sense of community
• Some admitted only women such as the cult of Demeter
  • Provided opportunities for women who were excluded from legal and political life to play roles outside the home
Agriculture

Olive grove in rocky Greek soil
Good climate but bad terrain (very mountainous)

- Hilly ground: grapes
- Rocky soil: olives
- Good soil: corn and wheat

Sea was very important

- Homer describes various fishing methods using hooks, nets, and harpoon in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*
Aristotle and his pupil Theophrastus were pioneers in the field of botany.

In *The Causes of Plants* and *The History of Plants*, Theophrastus classified 500 plants, developed a scientific terminology for describing biological structures, distinguished between the internal organs and external tissues of plants, and gave the first clear account of plant sexual reproduction.
Economic Exchange

Kyrenia Trade Ship
Greek colonization did not produce a centralized imperial state, but it did sponsor more communication, interaction, and exchange than ever before among people of the Mediterranean

- Greek language and cultural traditions spread throughout the Mediterranean basin

- Trade occurred among the *poleis* and throughout the region

- Shipping was integral to this exchange

- Exported olive oil, wine, and pottery
City-states were usually built on two levels

- On the hilltop was the *acropolis* and below was the living and business area
- The market area called the *agora*
- Trade included
  - Ivory and gems from Egypt
  - Elephants from India
  - Silk from China
  - Wool from countries surrounding Greece
  - Purple dye from the eastern countries
  - Grain from areas around the Black Sea
Greek ship ca 600 B.C.
Greek wealth, especially in Athens, allowed for much specialization, to include in cultural areas

- Architecture
- Philosophy
- Art, Literature, and Theatre
- Technology
- Athletes
The architecture of ancient Greece is the basis for virtually all Western architectural developments

- Invented the entablature, which allowed roofs to be hipped (inverted V-shape)
- Used a technique they called entasis to make their columns look straight
  - Bowed them slightly outward to compensate for the optical illusion that makes vertical lines look curved from a distance
Used three orders (Doric, Ionic, Corinthian) to relate proportionally the individual architectural components to the whole building.
Influence of Greek Architecture

The Parthenon

The Lincoln Memorial
Investigation of the nature, causes, or principles of reality, knowledge, or values, based on logical reasoning rather than empirical methods.

The Big Three:

- Socrates
- Plato
- Aristotle
Socrates—The Search for Truth
- Would be put to death for “corrupting youth”

Plato—The Republic
- Philosopher kings (ideal government)
- Our “reality” is a reflection of the ideal form

Aristotle—The Golden Rule (Everything in Moderation). He was also a scientist
- ‘...AN EDUCATED MAN IS AS SUPERIOR TO THE UNEDUCATED AS THE LIVING ARE TO THE DEAD...’

Many others such as Diogenes who believed poverty is virtuous. Begged for a living and slept in a large ceramic jar in the marketplace. Notorious such as carrying a lamp in the daytime, claiming to be looking for an honest man. Father of the Cynic Philosophy.
Art, Literature, and Theatre

Two of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

Colossus of Rhodes

Statue of Zeus at Olympia
Sculpture and Pottery

- First to carve realistic statues
- Vases tells about their history, values, and interests
Alphabet – expanded Phoenician system
Homer

- Epic: a long poem which tells a story involving gods, heroes, and heroic exploits
  - *Iliad*: Greek perspective on the war against Troy in the 12th Century B.C.
  - *Odyssey*: Experiences of the Greek hero Odysseus as he sailed home after the Trojan War
- Depict not just heroic adventures but also much about Greek travel, communication, and interaction in the Mediterranean basin

Herodotus: The “Father of History”
Theaters were always outdoors and sat thousands of people.

Central character (the tragic hero) suffers some serious misfortune that is logically connected with the hero’s actions (the tragic flaw).

Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides

Theater at Epidaurus held 14,000 people
Greek Tragic Drama

- **Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.)**
  - Transformed the tragedy from a dance-drama led by the chorus to a more sophisticated dramatic form that focused on the role of individual actors

- **Sophocles (496-406 B.C.)**
  - *Oedipus the King*
    - Oedipus’s tragic flaw was hubris
  - Known for his treatment of the individual and addressing complex issues

- **Euripides (485-406 B.C.)**
  - Bold and irreverent
Archimedes: “Give me a lever and I can move the world.”
Greek mathematician and engineer
In the field of geometry, he identified the relationship of a sphere and cylinder’s volume.
Discovered the principle of the lever and the importance of the fulcrum
• “Give me a lever and I can move the world”
Credited with the buoyancy principle, which gives the weight of an object floating in a liquid based on the weight of liquid the object displaces
Hippocrates (460-377 B.C.)

- “Father of Medicine”
- Based his medical practice on observations and on the study of the human body
- Believed that illness had a physical and a rational explanation
  - Rejected the views of his time that considered illness to be caused by superstitions and by possession of evil spirits and disfavor of the gods
- Believed that the body must be treated as a whole and not just a series of parts
Check These Out

One of many Pan-Hellenic festivals that brought together the larger Greek community. In 776 B.C., Greek communities from all parts of the Mediterranean sent their best athletes to Olympia to engage in sports competition. Held every four years for the next thousand years.

Vase ca. 550 B.C. depicting two runners.