Ms. Graham's
Social Studies 6 Classroom

The Legacy of Ancient Greece

Name: _____

Test on: _____

Section 1: Introduction

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Note the Greek architectural features—columns, pediment, and frieze—in the ruins of an ancient Greek temple in Sicily, Italy.

In this chapter, you will explore the advances made by the ancient Greeks in many aspects of their civilization. You will also discover how these achievements continue to affect us today.

There is an ancient story, still told today, about a Greek thinker named Archimedes (ar-kuh- MEE-deez), who climbed into a bath filled to the top with water. As the water overflowed onto the floor, he realized something. The volume of his body could be measured by the amount of water that left the tub. “Eureka!” Archimedes is said to have shouted. In Greek this means, “I have found it!” By being curious and observing events closely, Archimedes had discovered an interesting fact about the natural world.

Curiosity and careful observation are important in the study of science. This way of thinking is one of the gifts that we have received from the ancient Greeks. The Greeks left us valuable ideas in many other fields as well.

Not only have important ideas come from the Greeks, but so have many of the words we use to describe those ideas. The world of the ancient Greeks may seem far away, but it is as close as the thoughts we think and the words we speak. Let’s look at Greek contributions to our lives in the areas of language, government, medicine, mathematics and science, architecture, entertainment, and sports.

Section 1: Introduction

Many English words have Greek roots. For example, the word *telephone* is made up of the Greek words *tel,* meaning "far off," and *phone,* meaning "voice." Use the key of Greek words to help you match the English terms below to their definitions.

_____ *autocracy*
_____ *autograph*
_____ *chronic*
_____ *chronology*
_____ *geology*
_____ *geothermal*
_____ *thermograph*
_____ *thermometer*

A. rule by one person
B. study of the order in time
C. an instrument for measuring temperature
D. study of the structure of Earth
E. relating to Earth's heat
F. somebody's signature
G. lasting over a long period of time
H. an instrument that records temperature

Key of Greek Words

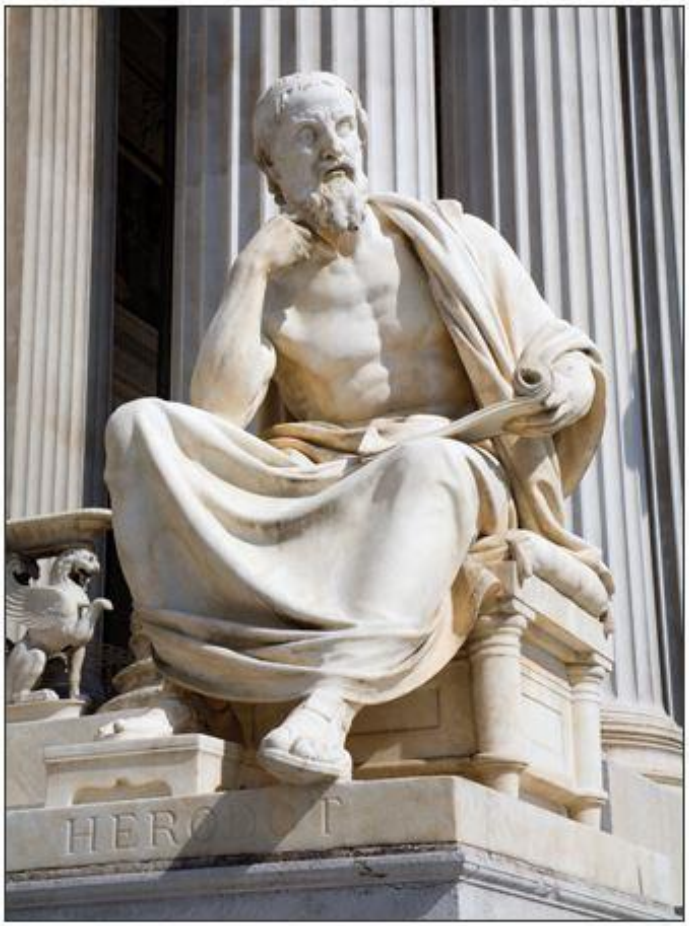
Greek Word	**Meaning**
auto	self
chronos	time
geo	earth
grapho	draw, record, or write
kratos	power or rule
metron	measure
logy	study
thermo	heat

Section 2: Literature and History

Did you know that the word *alphabet* comes from the first two letters of the Greek alphabet, *alpha* and *beta*? Our alphabet grew out of the one that ancient Greeks used. In addition, many English words have Greek roots. For example, the word *telephone* is made up of the Greek words *tel*, meaning "far off," and *phone*, meaning "voice."

Even the way we write sentences comes from the language of ancient Greece. The rules of English grammar, punctuation, and paragraphing are all based on Greek writing. And don't forget literature. The Greeks created drama, including both tragedy and comedy. They also developed historical writing. Modern historians follow in the footsteps of great Greek writers such as Herodotus (huh-ROD-uh-tuhs), known as the "father of history," and Thucydides (thoo-SID-ih-deez).

Thucydides was one of the greatest historians of ancient Greece. He wrote History of the Peloponnesian War, an account of the conflict between Athens and Sparta in the 400s B.C.E. Thucydides himself took part in the war, serving in the Athenian army. Although he was an eyewitness to history, he was careful to present facts rather than his own viewpoint or opinion. He is remembered today as one of the founders of historical writing.



jozef sedmak/iStockphoto

Herodotus is known as the "father of history." He wrote a history of the wars between the Greeks and the Persians.

Section 2: Literature and History

1. Draw and label the most important contribution to literature and history.

2. List other contributions.

3. If your class is doing the activity, write the placard letter. _____

Section 3: Government

Democratic government was a Greek idea. Democracy, or rule by the people, began in Athens. The practice of having citizens serve on juries also began in Greece.

Democratic government in the United States has roots in ancient Greece. There are a number of important differences, however, between American democracy and ancient Greek democracy. For example, in Athens, all citizens debated and voted on every issue. But in the United States, citizens elect representatives to speak for them and make laws. Another difference is that only native-born men could be citizens in Athens. But in the United States, all men and women born in this country are U.S. citizens, and people from other countries can become citizens, too.

Still, the basic **principles** of democracy were developed by the ancient Greeks. Athenians were proud that their government allowed citizens to control their own destiny. This idea remains the basis of democracy today.

Section 3: Government

1. Draw and label the most important contribution to government.

2. List other contributions.

3. If your class is doing the activity, write the placard letter. _____

Section 4: Medicine

For centuries, the Greeks believed that gods and goddesses controlled natural events, including health and sickness. In fact, the earliest Greeks thought that illnesses and accidents were punishments sent by the gods. Ancient Greeks didn't know about the natural causes of disease and healing.

A Greek man named Hippocrates (hih-POK-ruh-teez) changed the way people thought about health and medicine. Hippocrates is often called the "father of medicine." He brought a scientific way of thinking to his work as a doctor. Hippocrates believed that diseases had natural causes. He taught his students to carefully observe their patients and write down what they saw.

Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

Hippocrates emphasized principles of medicine, including ethical conduct. At left, a vase painting shows a Greek doctor treating a patient.

Even more important, Hippocrates established principles of medicine that are still followed.
Today, people who become doctors take the Hippocratic Oath, based on these ideas of ethical behavior. Doctors promise to be honest, to preserve life, and to keep information about their patients private.

The Greeks loved to participate in and watch competitions in sports. Their interest in athletics gave them some knowledge about how the human body moves. But their understanding of the body was limited, partly because it was forbidden to look inside the body to see how it worked. The early Greeks believed that cutting open a human body offended the gods. As these beliefs changed over time, the Greeks made new discoveries.

Several centuries after Hippocrates, Greek medical students were able to name and describe organs inside the body. They discovered that the heart was a pump that sent blood flowing throughout the body. They also learned that the brain was the center of the nervous system.

Section 4: Medicine

1. Draw and label the most important contribution to medicine.

2. List other contributions.

3. If your class is doing the activity, write the placard letter. _____

Section 5: Mathematics

The Greeks loved reasoning, or looking for logical answers to nature's mysteries. Greek scientists often found those answers in the field of mathematics.

One such scientist, Pythagoras (pih-THAG-er-uhs), believed that numbers were the key to understanding nature. He started a school where students developed mathematical **theories**.

Like many Greeks, Pythagoras was especially fascinated by **geometry**. *Geometry* comes from a Greek word that means "to measure land." Geometry began as a system for measuring areas of land. The Egyptians could also measure shapes and spaces, but the Greeks created new and improved methods. Using geometry, they could figure out problems such as how much seed to buy for planting a field or how to lay out a city.

Another famous Greek mathematician was Euclid (YOOklid). His geometry textbook has been used as the basis for the teaching of geometry for more than 2,000 years.

Greek culture produced the first woman to earn fame as a mathematician, Hypatia (hie-PAY-shuh). Born in Egypt in about 370 C.E., she taught Greek philosophy and mathematics in the city of Alexandria.

Section 5: Mathematics

1. Draw and label the most important contribution to mathematics.

2. List other contributions.

3. If your class is doing the activity, write the placard letter. _____

Section 6: Astronomy

Astronomy comes from the Greek word for "star." Astronomy is the scientific study of outer space. Ancient Greeks were pioneers in this field.

People in all civilizations observed the sun, moon, and stars. But a Greek scientist named Aristarchus (ayr-uh-STAHR-kuhs) was the first person to suggest that Earth moves around the sun. This idea upset many Greeks who believed that Earth was the center of the universe.

Another Greek, Hipparchus (hih-PAHR-kuhs), is often called one of the greatest scientists of the ancient world. He studied and named more than 850 stars. He also figured out how to estimate the distances from Earth to both the sun and the moon. His theories allowed later scientists to **accurately** predict eclipses of the moon.

Section 6: Astronomy

1. Draw and label the most important contribution to astronomy.

2. List other contributions.

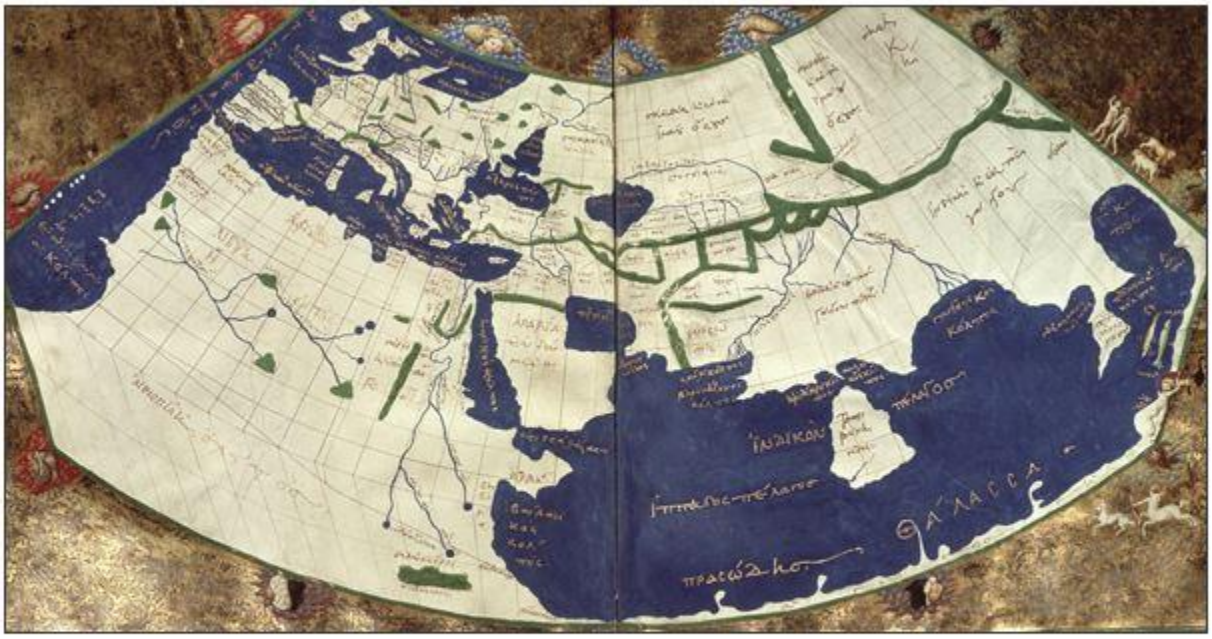
3. If your class is doing the activity, write the placard letter. _____

Section 7: Geography

The study of geography has roots in ancient Greece. The word *geography* comes from Greek words that mean "writing about the earth." The Greek historian Herodotus created the first map of the known world, in about 450 B.C.E. To gather the information for his map, Herodotus asked geographic questions. He found some answers to his questions by traveling and talking with other travelers. He organized the information by displaying it on a map.

Another great geographer of ancient times was Ptolemy (TAH-luh-mee), a Greek scientist who lived in Alexandria, Egypt. He wrote a book called *Geographia* that listed about 8,000 places around the world. His book contained maps that showed how to represent the curve of Earth on a flat surface.

Ptolemy also designed a system of lines drawn on a map called latitude and longitude. With this system, he recorded the specific locations for the thousands of places he listed in his book. Centuries later, Arab scholars would further develop the study of geography, especially in the field of mapmaking.



Giraudon / The Bridgeman Art Library

A 15th-century mapmaker created this replica of Ptolemy's map of the world. Compare it with a modern world map. Can you find Africa?

Section 7: Geography

1. Draw and label the most important contribution to geography.

2. List other contributions.

3. If your class is doing the activity, write the placard letter. _____

Section 8: Biology

Ancient Greeks developed the science of **biology**. About 600 B.C.E., Greek thinkers believed each event has a cause and an effect. They used this idea to study the natural world.

Curiosity led Greeks to study plants and animals. Scientists learned about the anatomy, or body structure, of animals and humans. This knowledge helped doctors in their medical studies.

The Greeks identified plants and also named their parts. The Greeks learned that plants reproduce by spreading seeds. Greek doctors used plants, such as herbs, as medicines and for pain.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle was fascinated by living things. He collected information about many types of animals and plants. Then he organized animals into groups, such as “those with backbones” and “those without backbones.” He divided plants into such groups as “herbs,” “shrubs,” and “trees.” The way we classify, or group, animals and plants today reflects the work of Aristotle.

Section 8: Biology

1. Draw and label the most important contribution to biology.

2. List other contributions.

3. If your class is doing the activity, write the placard letter. _____

Section 9: Architecture

The word *architecture* comes from a Greek word that means “master builder.” Greek architecture was one of the achievements of the Golden Age of Athens. One feature was the way that the Greeks used columns to make their temples look balanced and stately. Another feature was the pediments, the triangular shapes where roof lines come together. And a third architectural feature was the decorated bands called friezes.

Today, Greek styles are still used in many buildings. They are common in public structures such as government buildings, schools, churches, libraries, and museums. The U.S. Capitol has elements of Greek architecture, such as columns and pediments. The building that houses the U.S. Supreme Court is another example of a public structure inspired by Greek architecture.

You can also see Greek building styles in homes and stores. For example, many houses have covered porches. The design of these porches reflects a feature of Greek architecture called a stoa. This is a covered line of columns.

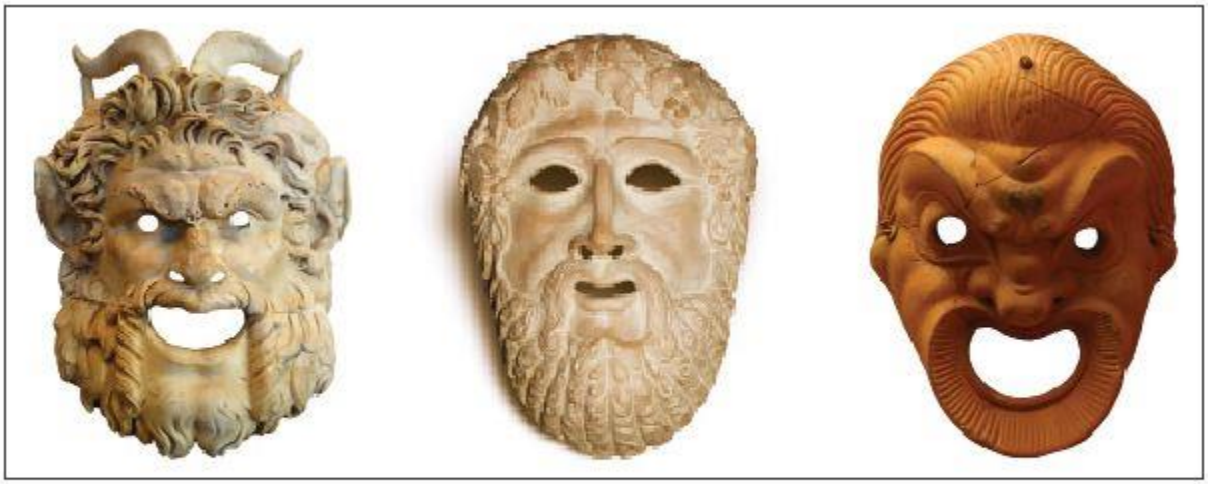
Section 9: Architecture

1. Draw and label the most important contribution to architecture.

2. List other contributions.

3. If your class is doing the activity, write the placard letter. _____

Section 10: Theater



L: Alexey Biryukov/Shutterstock M: rog-traveller/Shutterstock R: Ariy/Shutterstock

Greek actors wore masks that showed which character they were playing.

The word *theater* comes from a Greek word that means "a viewing place." Greek theaters were built as semicircles. The rows of seats rose steeply from the stage so that everyone in the audience could see and hear. These ideas are used in theaters built today.

The Greeks even invented special effects. For example, they used hoists to lift actors off the stage, so that they appeared to be flying. They also created scenery that revolved, or turned. Revolving the scenery let them quickly change where the action in a play was taking place. Perhaps the greatest Greek contributions to the theater are their stories and plays. Writers throughout the ages have been inspired by Greek myths and stories. Greek dramas are still performed all over the world.

Section 10: Theater

1. Draw and label the most important contribution to theater.

2. List other contributions.

3. If your class is doing the activity, write the placard letter. _____

Section 11: Sports

Many modern sports trace their roots back to ancient Greece. The most famous example is the Olympic Games.

The first Olympics were held in 776 B.C.E. to honor the Greek god Zeus. Today's Olympic Games reflect ancient Greek customs. During the opening ceremony, an athlete lights the Olympic flame. This custom comes from the time in ancient Greece when the first Olympic athletes lit a fire on the altar of Zeus.

Many modern Olympic events grew out of Greek contests. One example is the pentathlon. *Pentathlon* is a Greek word that means "five contests." The Greek pentathlon included the footrace, discus throw, long jump, javelin throw, and wrestling. The Greeks invented this event as a test of all-around athletic skill. Although the five contests are different today, the pentathlon is still an Olympic event.

Blue Jean Image/SuperStock

Two Chinese athletes take part in the torch relay to light the flame for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Section 11: Sports

1. Draw and label the most important contribution to sports.

2. List other contributions.

3. If your class is doing the activity, write the placard letter. _____

Summary

In this chapter, you learned how ancient Greek civilization affects today's world.

Literature, History, and Government
The modern alphabet, English grammar, drama and historical writing, and democratic government all trace their roots to the ancient Greeks.

Medicine
Hippocrates applied scientific thinking to medicine and established a code of ethics used by doctors today. Centuries later, Greek medical students made discoveries about the heart and the brain.

Mathematics
Pythagoras and Euclid made important advances in geometry that are still taught today.

Astronomy and Geography
Greek scientists suggested that Earth moves around the sun. They named hundreds of stars and estimated the distances from Earth to both the sun and the moon. Greeks created the first maps and the system of latitude and longitude that is still used today to find locations on Earth.

Biology
Greeks developed the scientific study of plants, animals, and humans called biology. The way we classify animals and plants is based on the work of Aristotle.

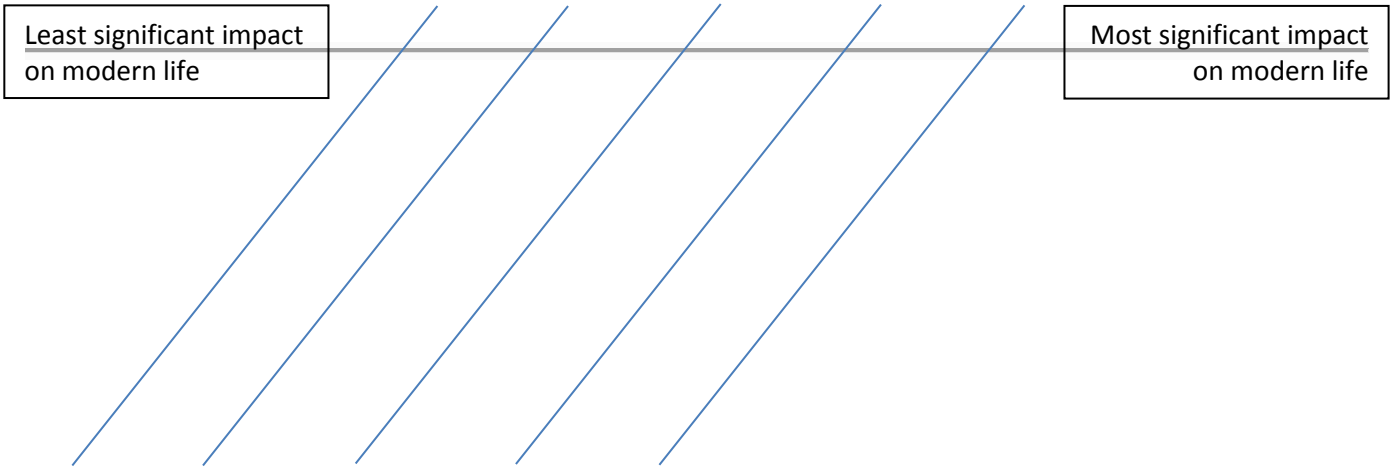
Architecture, Theater, and Sports
Greek building styles, including columns and pediments, are seen today in public and private structures. Greek plays, stories, and myths are read today. Even the Olympic Games first began in ancient Greece.

Summary

Along the spectrum from least to most significant, consider the impact on life today of the contributions that ancient Greeks made in each of these areas:

- Literature and History
- Mathematics
- Biology
- Theater
- Government
- Astronomy
- Architecture
- Sports
- Medicine
- Geography

Choose five items to place along your spectrum. For each item you choose, label the spectrum



Write one sentence per item explaining your placement.

Reading Further: Painting the Gods

Because the ancient Greeks left behind stone images of their deities, we can see how this ancient culture pictured its gods and goddesses. Classical Greek sculpture is so realistic, the figures so distinct, it is easy to assume that we are seeing these sculptures as they appeared in their original form.But now, experts in the fields of art and archaeology are proving us wrong. How is a German archaeologist challenging our ideas about ancient art? What did these statues actually look like when they were created?

Marie Mauzy / Art Resource, NY

This is the original marble statue Peplos Kore as she looks today in the Acropolis Museum in Athens. The statue was created around 530 B.C.E.

The colors are dazzling. The young woman is wearing a long yellow-gold dress with a detailed design of animals in shades of red, green, and blue. Her hair hangs down in auburn braids. Her red lips are curved in an inviting smile.

The woman (or is she a goddess?) is called the Peplos Kore. A *kore* is a type of ancient Greek statue depicting a female figure. This one was carved in marble by an unknown artist, around 530 B.C.E. She once stood on the acropolis, the hill above Athens, among the temples the Athenians built to honor their gods. She is still in Athens today, in the Acropolis Museum. But if you look for her there, you won't see her in her richly colored dress. The original statue is now plain white marble. The painted copy is made of plastic. It is a creation of two German archaeologists, Vinzenz Brinkmann and his wife, Ulrike Koch-Brinkmann.

People have viewed white marble Greek sculpture for 500 years or more. But Vinzenz Brinkmann believes his brightly colored copies are more similar to what the ancient Greeks created. What's more, art historians think he's right!

Why White Marble?

Few Greek sculptures have survived from ancient times. Wind, rain, and the passage of time have worn away the colors that once brightened them. These same factors have also damaged the buildings in which the sculptures stood. For a thousand years after the fall of the Roman Empire, people didn't care much about ancient art. Temples were torn down to recycle the building stone. Marble statues were burned to produce lime, which could then be used to make mortar, glass, and other useful things.

In the 1400s, interest in ancient Greek art revived. People found ancient statues buried under the ground and pulled them from the sea. When artists such as Michaelangelo saw these statues, they assumed that bare white marble had been the style of the ancient artists. So leaving stone in its natural color became the standard practice.

As more ancient art pieces were uncovered, experts sometimes noted traces of color on their surfaces. But this color faded or disappeared when the sculptures were exposed to light and air. Sometimes art restorers scrubbed the color off because people of this time considered bare stone more beautiful. But there was evidence showing that the Greeks had not agreed. One example of the Greek preference for color is found in a play by the Athenian dramatist Euripides, who lived in the fifth century B.C.E. In the play, the beautiful Helen of Troy wishes that the gods had made her ugly, “as a statue from which the color has been wiped off.”

Many art experts understood that ancient Greek sculpture and buildings had been brightly painted. Now and then, scholars tried to picture how these statues must have looked. A few 19thcentury artists made copies of Greek statues and colored them in the current style of the artists’ time. These efforts were laughed at or ignored. White marble was how people preferred to think of ancient Greek art. Besides, how could anyone know what the original colors had been?

Enter Vinzenz Brinkmann

Vinzenz Brinkmann believed he could figure out what colors had appeared on pieces of Greek art. Beginning in the 1980s, he and his team of archaeologists researched the pigments that Greek artists had used to color ancient statues. He used special lamps, high-tech cameras, and computers to bring out traces of the original colors. In some cases, the color had completely faded. But even then, Brinkmann’s cameras often revealed changes in the chemistry on the surface of the stone.

These changes were like clues in a detective story. They showed what minerals artists had worked with in making the original pigments. The ancients used a mineral called malachite to make green. They used cinnabar to make red.Arsenic traces on the stone showed that the color had been gold or yellow.

Behold the Gods!

After years of research, Vinzenz Brinkmann was ready to repaint Greek sculptures, to show them in their original colors. Of course, he would not touch the actual ancient statues. He used laser technology to make reproductions of the statues he wanted to study.

Vinzenz Brinkmann/Wikimedia Commons

This re-creation of Peplos Kore shows how Vinzenz Brinkmann believes she looked in ancient Greece. He figured out the missing colors through scientific research.

First Brinkmann made three-dimensional scans of the statues. Then he used the data from these scans to create full-size copies. They were made from a kind of plastic that looks like marble.

To paint the reproductions, Brinkmann chose an archaeologist-artist he knew well—his wife, Ulrike Koch-Brinkmann.She was assisted by other artists. They used only pigments the ancients would have used. There were some details for which Vinzenz Brinkmann could not confirm the original color. Ulrike left these areas white.

When the Brinkmanns had finished more than 20 reconstructions, they decided to present their work. In 2003, the couple opened an exhibit at a museum in Munich, Germany, that specializes in Greek and Roman sculpture. The museum displayed the colored copies side by side with the original ancient white marble statues. The exhibit traveled to other museums in Europe. By 2007, it had reached the United States. The exhibit was called “Gods in Color.”

The colorful sculptures caused a sensation. As one art critic put it, “The exhibition forces you to look at ancient sculpture in a totally new way.”

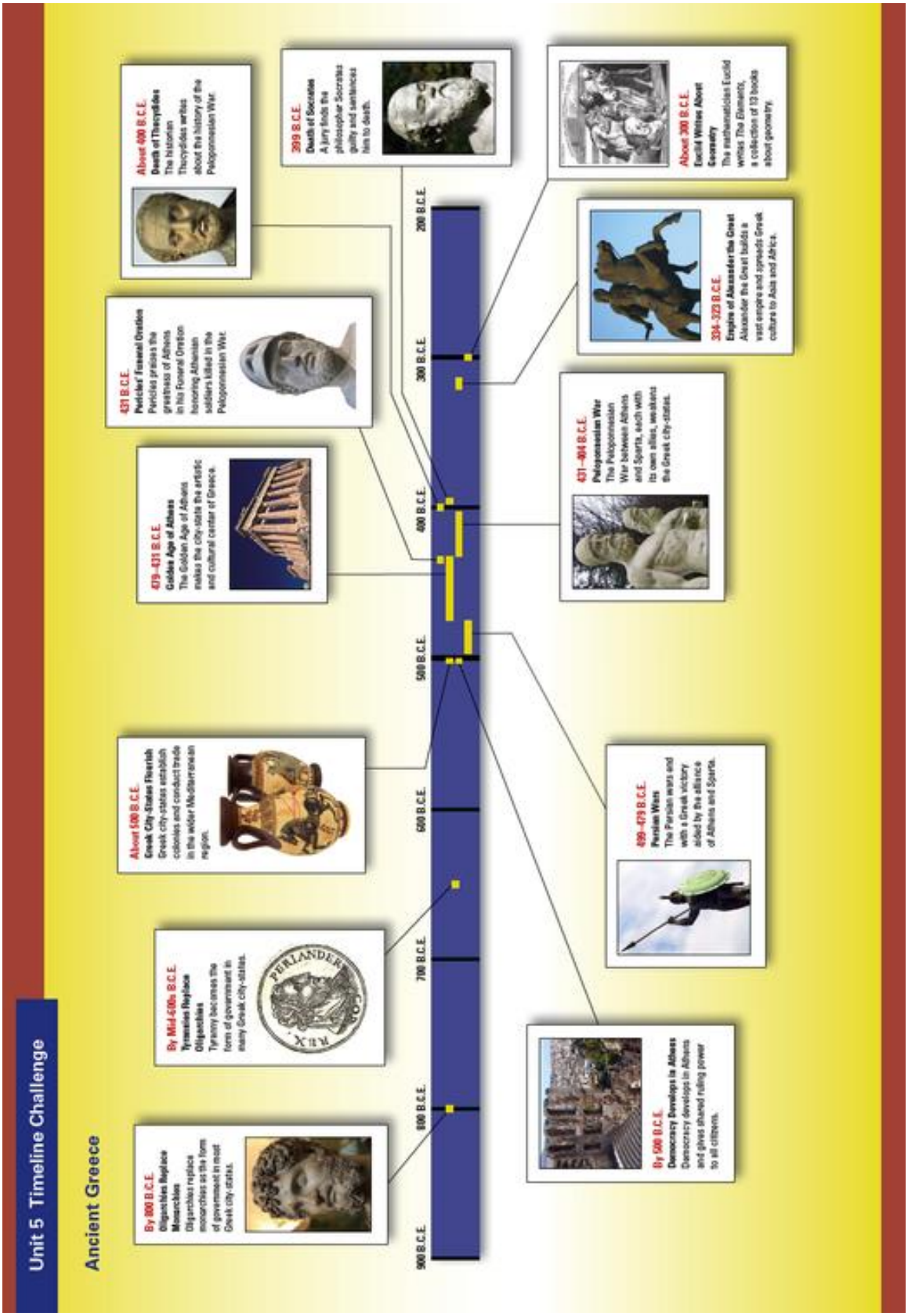
Several of the sculptures were copied from originals in the temple of the goddess Aphaia on the Greek island of Aegina. There is a battle scene featuring warriors in deadly combat. Eyes are drawn to the figure of a kneeling archer. He wears a full-body tunic with a pattern of diamonds in red, green, blue, and yellow. His gold helmet is decorated with a flower. He shoots gold-tipped blue arrows from a red and gold bow.

Another battle scene is carved on the lid of a sarcophagus, or stone coffin. It depicts the famous king Alexander the Great fighting the Persians. In the center, Alexander wears a red and blue tunic, a gold helmet, and red and gold leggings. His white horse rears up above a fallen warrior who holds a gold shield trimmed in red. Alexander raises his sword to strike. To his left and right, Persian and Greek soldiers fight to the death.

The Brinkmanns’ work is changing the way people think about ancient Greek art—and about the ancient Greeks. Today, when we look at bare white marble statues of Zeus, Apollo, or Aphrodite, we think of how they might have once been painted. And that leads us to wonder what the Greeks*really* thought about their gods and goddesses.

Even Greece itself has embraced these colorful images of its past. When the Brinkmanns’ collection arrived in Athens, many government officials turned out to welcome it. Cameras snapped as Vinzenz Brinkmann posed some of his pieces on the acropolis. It was as if the gods and the heroes of ancient Greece were returning home after a long journey.

Timeline Image



Enrichment Essay: The Lasting Influence of Greek Literature

The following story is a fable. A *fable* is a story that teaches a lesson, sometimes called a *moral*. As you read, think about what the fable's lesson might be.

An eagle was caught by a serpent. A man saw the eagle with the serpent wrapped around it. He freed the eagle from the serpent's grasp. The serpent became angry with the man. He put poison from his fangs into the man's drinking cup. When the man was about to take a drink, the eagle swooped down and grabbed the poisoned cup from his hands. The eagle flew away and hid the cup where it could never be found.

What do you think the moral of the story is? Think about the saying, "One good turn deserves another." What do those words have to do with the fable?

This story is one of Aesop's fables. Aesop's fables are part of the rich legacy of Greek literature. The ancient Greeks wrote some of the best stories and plays the world has ever known. We still read Greek literature today. And as you'll see, ancient Greek writings continue to influence our language as well as our literature.

Mythology and Epic Poetry

Mythology was an important part of the culture of ancient Greece. The early Greeks created myths to explain events in the world around them.

Greek myths have inspired countless writers, artists, and musicians. Many famous writers have used themes and characters from Greek mythology in their work. They include William Shakespeare, the American playwright Eugene O'Neill, and the Irish novelist James Joyce.

In their myths, the Greeks told stories of gods and heroes. Some of these stories were arranged into epic poems.

The two best-known epic poems of ancient Greece are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. They were written in the eighth or ninth century b.c.e. According to ancient tradition, their author was a blind poet named Homer.

These two famous poems and other stories from Greek mythology have given us words and phrases we still use today. Let's take a look at some common terms and their roots in Greek mythology and poetry.

"Achilles' Heel"

The story of the *Iliad* takes place toward the end of the Trojan War. The Trojan War was a long struggle between Greece and the city of Troy in present-day Turkey. The main character of the *Iliad* is Achilles, the greatest of the Greek warriors.

Achilles is so strong and skilled in battle that it seems no enemy can defeat him. In the *Iliad,* he kills many Trojans, including their great hero, Hector.

There is another story about Achilles that Homer does not tell. According to this story, Achilles had one weak spot—his heel. He died, the story says, when he was shot in the heel by a poisoned arrow. Today, the term "Achilles heel" means a person's weak spot. And the tendon that connects our calf muscles to our heel bone is called the Achilles tendon.

"Trojan Horse"

At the end of the *Iliad,* the Trojan War is still going on. But the Greeks eventually defeated the Trojans by tricking them. Homer tells this tale in his second great work, the *Odyssey*.

The hero of this book is Odysseus, the king of Ithaca, a Greek city. Odysseus is famous for his cleverness. After 10 years of war, he makes a plan to help the Greeks get inside the great walls that surround Troy.

The Greeks build a huge wooden horse and put it just outside the walls. Then the Greek soldiers leave their camp outside the city. The Trojans believe that the Greeks have given up and gone home. They don't know that Odysseus and some other soldiers are hidden inside the wooden horse.

The Trojans decide that the great horse was built to honor the gods. They bring the horse inside Troy to dedicate to the goddess Athena.

That night, while the Trojans are celebrating the end of the war, Odysseus and his soldiers climb down out of the horse. They unlock the city gates to let in the rest of the Greek army. Taken by surprise, the Trojans are defeated.

Today we call something that seems harmless but hides a danger inside it a "Trojan horse." For example, some people write computer programs that look useful but actually have something inside them that can harm other programs. This kind of destructive program is known as a Trojan horse.

"Odyssey"

Homer's *Odyssey* tells of the adventures of the Odysseus as he tries to make his way home after the Trojan War. Time and again, events keep Odysseus from getting home. He encounters monsters and half-human creatures. He battles a one-eyed giant called a Cyclops as well as the sea monster Scylla. For a time, a goddess keeps him captive on her island. Finally, 20 years after the fall of Troy, Odysseus returns to Ithaca with the help of the goddess Athena.

The word *odyssey* is taken from the title of Homer's epic. Today it is used to mean a long voyage, especially one with many troubles and adventures.

Drama

As you learned when you studied Athens, the Greeks excelled in drama. They wrote both comedies and tragedies. Comedies are amusing and have happy endings. Tragedies are serious and sad. In many tragedies, fate or some flaw leads to the downfall of the main character.

One of the great playwrights of ancient Greece was Sophocles. His most famous play is a tragedy called *Oedipus the King*. The main character, Oedipus, is the king of Thebes. He is a happy man and a popular king. He is married to Jacasta, the widow of King Laius.

Oedipus doesn't know that he is really the son of Laius and Jacasta. When Oedipus was just a baby, an oracle warned Laius that he would be killed by his son. To keep this from happening, Laius had the baby tied up and left to die. But Oedipus was rescued by a shepherd who brought him up as his own son.

Before Oedipus became king, an oracle told him that he would kill his father and marry his mother. Oedipus never intends to do either of these things. But gradually he realizes that an old man he had killed during an argument was King Laius. Even more sadly, Oedipus learns that Laius was his father—and that Jacasta, his wife, is his own mother.

When they learn the truth about their relationship, Jacasta and Oedipus are stricken with grief and shame. Jacasta hangs herself. Oedipus digs out his eyes with Jacasta's brooch. He cries out to the people:
Send me to another land or kill me!
Let the deepest sea cover me over.
Do not touch anyone as cursed as me!
You have nothing to fear, for I alone
Must carry the weight of my dreadful sin.

In *Oedipus the King,* both fate and tragic flaws play a role in the downfall of Oedipus. Many things happen to Oedipus that he can't control. But pride and arrogance also cause some of his problems. The ideas of fate and tragic flaws continue to inspire writers today. And both comedy and tragedy remain the basic forms of drama.
Aesop's Fables
Aesop was a legendary figure in ancient Greece. He was said to have been born a slave in about 620 b.c.e. Over the years, his name became attached to many fables that are still famous today.

Many popular sayings come from Aesop's fables. For example, Aesop told a story called "The Milkmaid and Her Pail." In the story, a milkmaid is walking with a pail full of milk on her head. While she walks, she daydreams about how much butter she can make with the milk. She thinks that when she sells the butter, she can buy a lot of eggs. The eggs will then hatch into chickens. And the chickens will bring even more money, so she can buy a new dress.

While the milkmaid is lost in thought, something unexpected happens:
She tossed her head scornfully, and down fell the pail of milk to the ground. And all the milk flowed out, and with it vanished butter and eggs and chicks and new dress and all the milkmaid's pride.
What do you think the moral to this story is? Does the phrase "Don't count your chickens before they hatch" sound familiar? Some other popular sayings that come from Aesop are "Honesty is the best policy," "Birds of a feather flock together," and "Looks can be deceiving."

As you can see, the Greeks left a lasting mark on our literature and our everyday language as well. Even though you may think you don't know any Greek, chances are that you use words and sayings that come from ancient Greece.

Enrichment Activity

Create a poster advertising a public reading of ancient Greek literature at your local bookstore. Your poster must be eye-catching and include the following:

- an interesting title that will encourage people to attend the reading
- information about the date, time, and location of the reading
- a visual to represent each of these types of ancient Greek literature: mythology and epic poetry, drama, and Aesop's fables
- a caption for each visual that briefly describes the type of ancient Greek literature
- at least two examples of the lasting influence of ancient Greek literature
- writing that is free of grammatical and spelling errors
- other colorful and creative touches to make the poster more realistic

Glossary

accurately: correctly, without any mistakes

biology: the study of living things; their structure, growth, and function

geometry: the branch of mathematics involving points, lines, planes, and figures

latitude: a measure of how far north or south a place on Earth is measured from the equator

longitude: a measure of how far east or west a place on Earth is from an imaginary line that runs between the North and South Poles

medical: relating to the practice and treatment of medicine

principle: a strong belief on the right way to act

theories: a proposed explanation for something

volume: the amount of space an object fills