

Contents and background information

ANCIENT GREECE



ANCIENT GREEK BOX 2

We have slightly changed the content of this collection to reflect the requirement of the National Curriculum Programme of Study for KS2 history which states that: Pupils should be taught about:

*Ancient Greece – a study of **Greek Life** and **Achievements** and their **Influence** on the western world.*

We have use the highlighted phrases as headings for different sections in these notes, to help users identify what different objects illustrate.

Everyday life

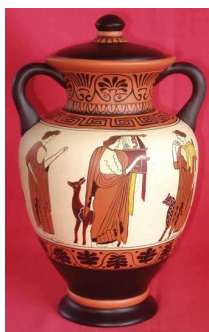
Pottery jug and urn

Much of our knowledge of Ancient Greece comes from illustrations on the remnants of pottery found by archaeologists. Items depicted range from gods and goddesses

to aspects of everyday life.

Pot shapes varied according to the use the vessel was intended for.

Children should examine the scene on the pots and try to explain what they depict.



Oil lamp

Lamps like this would have used the ubiquitous olive oil as fuel. Olive oil was also used in cooking and as a beauty product.



Coins x 4



Each city state in Greece issued its own coins as a symbol of their independence. The four above feature (clockwise from top left) an owl, the symbol of Athens, a horse, Zeus and Persephone. The coins are tetradrachma – tetra = 4 so these are worth 4 drachma (drachma = handful).

At first coins were made of electrum (an alloy of gold and silver), and later solely of silver, or occasionally gold. Coinage was introduced into Greece as early as 650BC from Lydia in Asia Minor (roughly, modern Turkey) where coins were first invented.

Warfare

Helmet

Crested helmets were worn by infantry soldiers. Although the crest here is in metal, in reality they would probably be made of horse hair. Armour varied in style, this is a replica of a Spartan helmet. Other city-states had different styles.

Warfare was a normal part of Greek life. The city-states frequently fought each other and Greece was at war with Persia for many years. So many Greek men had to join an army, and they had to pay for their own armour and equipment. In Athens, boys trained as soldiers between the ages of 18 and 20 after which they could be called up for military service. In Sparta, it was much earlier. Triremes (oar-powered warships) were used to move armies around the many islands of the Empire.

The infantry was the backbone of the Greek armies and they fought in close formations called phalanxes. Larger equipment used included catapults, flame-throwers, battering-rams, and cauldrons of burning coals and sulphur.

Gods, Goddesses and heroes

Religion played a large part in the lives of ordinary people. They believed that all the gods were descendants of Gaia (the earth) and Uranos (the sky). They thought the gods were like humans: they fell in love with each other, married, quarrelled, had children, played music, and in many ways mirrored human characteristics. All the gods had their own spheres of influence (pupils can research these for the major Gods). Many gods had temples and sanctuaries dedicated to them. Money and artistic ability were lavished upon them. Worshippers believed that the gods would look after them if they offered them crops or animal sacrifices.



Plaque of Hermes

Hermes, was the son of Zeus, known mainly as the messenger of the gods and for guiding souls to the underworld, he was also god of travel, business, weights and measures and sport.

Each god had their own spheres of influence which pupils can research for the major Gods.



Gold mask of Herakles (or Hercules)

The greatest hero of all, Herakles, was the son of Zeus, by a mortal woman. As a tiny baby Herakles proved he was a hero by strangling with his, bare hand, two snakes sent to attack him. In adult life, Herakles performed twelve Labours for King Eurystheus. In the first, Herakles killed the Nemean lion, so he is often shown, wearing a lion skin. Although Herakles was strong and courageous, he liked wine and women and had many love affairs.



Plaque of Achilles

Achilles was a hero in the Trojan Wars where he killed the Trojan Hector. Events from the Trojan war are featured in Homer's epic poem the Iliad. Share the stories of Achilles from the children's version of the Iliad included in this collection.



Achievements

Sport / Olympic Games

Sport in ancient Greece was regarded as good training for battle readiness. War was more or less a way of life at the time, both between Greece and other powers and between City States within Greece. Athletic competitions were held in honour of the Gods because they were believed to bestow athletic talent upon men. Athletics also have an early association with funeral games, which may explain their link with the status of hero, which was somewhere between Gods and men. There were four especially prestigious sets of games: the Olympic Games at Olympia (the most prestigious and reputedly founded by Herakles himself), the

Pythian at Delphi, the Nemean at Nemea, to the southwest of Corinth and the Isthmian at Corinth. These four were panhellenic games; that is, they were open to all Greeks not just the local inhabitants. Another famous set, the Panathenaic Games, were held every four years at Athens. Most of our scenes of athletics are actually from Athenian pots. Competition was an extremely important aspect of ancient Greek culture: plays, poems and choral songs were performed in competitions, sculptors for temples were chosen by competition. Just as now, athletics festivals and the places they were held provided an opportunity for both individuals and city states to display their prowess to their rivals.

Long jumper weights

In Ancient Greece the long jump was a standing jump, with no run-up as now. Athletes taking part in the long jump, used stone or lead jumping weights. Athletes probably swung the weights to give themselves extra propulsion on take-off.



The current world long jump record is around 9m while ancient jumps are recorded at more than 16m. You could ask children how they can account for these differences.

Discus

This is a replica of a bronze discus made in the sixth century BCE. The inscription on it says that it was thrown by an athlete called Exoidas who won a contest with it, then dedicated the discus to Castor and Pollux, the twin sons of Zeus. Pollux was a champion discus thrower.



Children could do a rubbing of the inscription and try to identify some of the Greek letters and perhaps even the names.

In ancient Greece throwing the discus usually featured as part of the five event pentathlon and not as an event in itself. The other four events were the long jump, javelin, running and wrestling. If there was a winner after the first three events, the final two did not take place. Although there was a connection between athletics and training for battle, the discus seems not to have been directly relevant to combat, unlike the javelin or wrestling and boxing.

Ancient discuses came in a range of sizes and weights; the average weight was 2.5kgs. Although there is little evidence of the distances thrown, a throw by Phaullos in early 5th century BCE seems to have been regarded as very impressive. It measured only 30m compared with the current world record of over 74m. The difference seems to stem from the throwing action. Greek pots and sculptures give an idea of how the discus was thrown. There is evidence that the thrower bent his body low into the swing, but we have no indication that the spinning movement characteristic of modern discus throwers was ever used.

Chariot races - on replica of Parthenon frieze

Chariots were used in both sport and warfare. In sport, chariot races were run in honour of Apollo.



This stirring description of a chariot-race, which you may want to share with the children, shows why this spectacular event was so popular.

...then, at the sound of the bronze trumpet, off they started, all shouting to their horses and urging them on with the reins. The clatter of the rattling chariots filled the whole arena, and the dust flew up as they sped along in a dense mass, each driver goading his team unmercifully in his efforts to draw clear of the rival axles and panting steeds, whose steaming breath and sweat drenched every bending back and flying wheel together.

Sophocles, *Elektra* 698-760

There were two types of chariot-races: the *synoris* for chariots pulled by a team of two horses and the *tethrippon* for teams of four horses, shown on the frieze. Both were divided into two separate contests, one for horses of any age, the other for colts (young male horses). All the races were of gruelling length, ranging from about two and a half miles for the colts' *synoris* to over eight miles for the open *tethrippon*.

The friezes that decorated the Parthenon were designed by Pheidias, who also designed the statue of Athena. Many of the friezes were brought to Britain by Lord Elgin and are currently in the British Museum. A campaign to have them returned to Greece has raged for many years.

Influence

Architecture

Model of the Parthenon

Central to the Acropolis in Athens, this temple was dedicated to Athena and housed a huge statue of her. It was decorated with friezes such as the miniature version included in the collection, and has many features we associate with classical architecture, such as columns, and pediments.



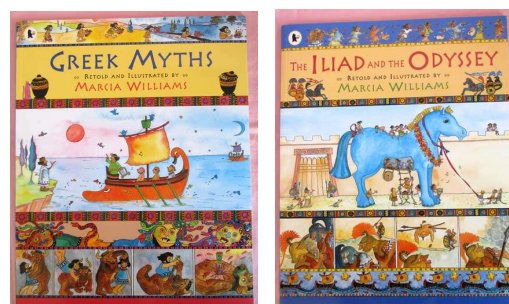
You could embark on a Town Trail to see if your locality has any buildings which have classical features.

(History Centre Greek

Legacy pack has more details of these.)

Myths and legends

Greek mythology books



These books are included to show that Greek stories have survived the centuries and are still enjoyed today. Can pupils think of any modern TV series, books or films which use Greek stories but in different contexts (not just cartoons if possible)?

Justice

Juror's Ballots

In Greek courts each juror (only men could be jurors) was issued with two slightly different bronze tokens which were used for voting. At the end of the trial, one of them was handed in to show whether the juror thought the accused person was innocent or guilty.

Pupils should be asked to find out how juries give their verdicts today.



Water Clock

In Greek courts, certain jurors were given special tasks. One took charge as the judge, four counted the votes and one worked a water clock like the one shown over. This was used to limit the time allowed to each speaker. The upper pot was filled with water and allowed to run through into the lower pot. When all the water had run through into the lower pot the speaker's time was up. **Can pupils think why we do not limit the time given to witnesses and barristers etc today?**



Theatre

Masks - tragedy and comedy

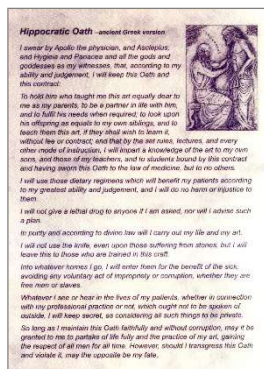
Some Greek theatres survive today. People flocked to them to see dramas in honour of the gods. In Athens, performances for the wine god Dionysos developed into what are now known as plays. By the fifth century BCE, both tragedies and comedies were performed. Many have survived and are still performed today e.g. Euripides and Sophocles. The actors were all men, even taking the female parts, Women were probably not allowed to go to the theatre at all. The chorus, commented on the play's action and music accompanied the plays. Greek tragedies are notoriously gory usually with few people left standing by the end, so we haven't included modern prints of any. Their plays have influenced dramatists ever since, including Shakespeare and modern playwrights like Eugene O'Neill.



Medicine

Hippocratic Oath

Hippocrates is known as 'the father of modern medicine'. He based his practice on practical research as developed by the Asclepiad priests (see votive below) and wrote many scientific and medical texts. Today's doctors sign the Hippocratic Oath by which they abide by ethical standards. **Share**

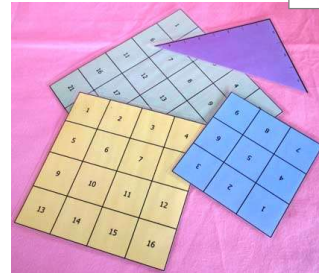


the Greek Hippocratic Oath with pupils. Is there anything they think should be included/ or excluded for a modern version? You could find a modern version and compare the two, are there many differences or did Hippocrates get it more or less right all those centuries ago?

Mathematics

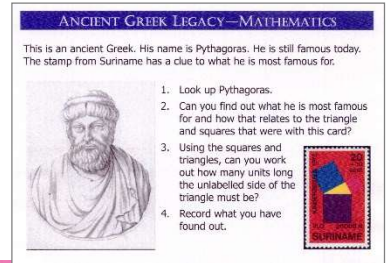
Pythagoras activity

This activity draws pupil's attention to the Greek influence on mathematics today, in terms of geometry.



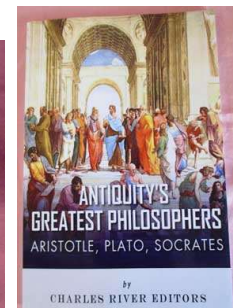
Square and prime numbers activity

Another activity to highlight the Greek's influence on mathematics over the years up until today. This time pupils try to find square and prime numbers in exactly the same way as Greek scholars did centuries ago.



Philosophy

Bust of Plato and Book: *Antiquity's Greatest Philosophers*



Philosophy is possibly the Greek's greatest legacy. This book cover is aimed at prompting pupils to research the 3 names on the cover; Aristotle, Plato and Socrates (The History Centre's *Greek Legacy* pack can help with this.)

Government

Letter from the House of Commons

This letter gives an example of Government at work today – a member of the public has lobbied an MP to try and influence policy and has had a reply about what the MP will do.

Pupils should research how Greek politics worked. Who could be a member of the Assembly? Who could not? What was ostracism? (The *Greek Legacy* pack has some background information that will help.)

