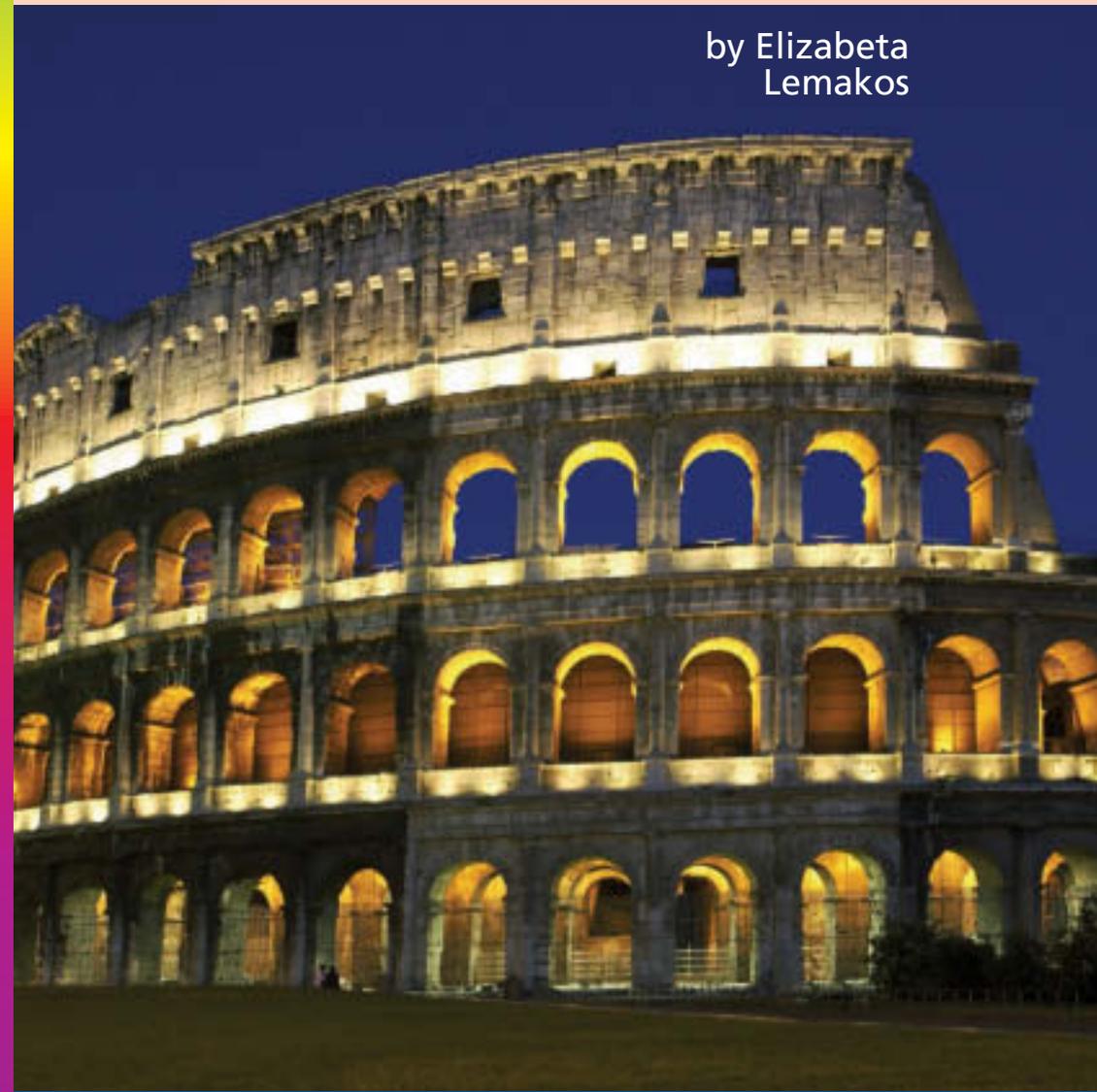


ANCIENT CULTURES and Our Culture

by Elizabeta
Lemakos



Genre	Build Background	Access Content	Extend Language
Nonfiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient Greek Culture • Ancient Roman Culture • United States Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labels and Captions • Map • Time Line • Definitions • Headings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Root Words • Greek Word Part

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Greek and Roman Cultures Alive Today

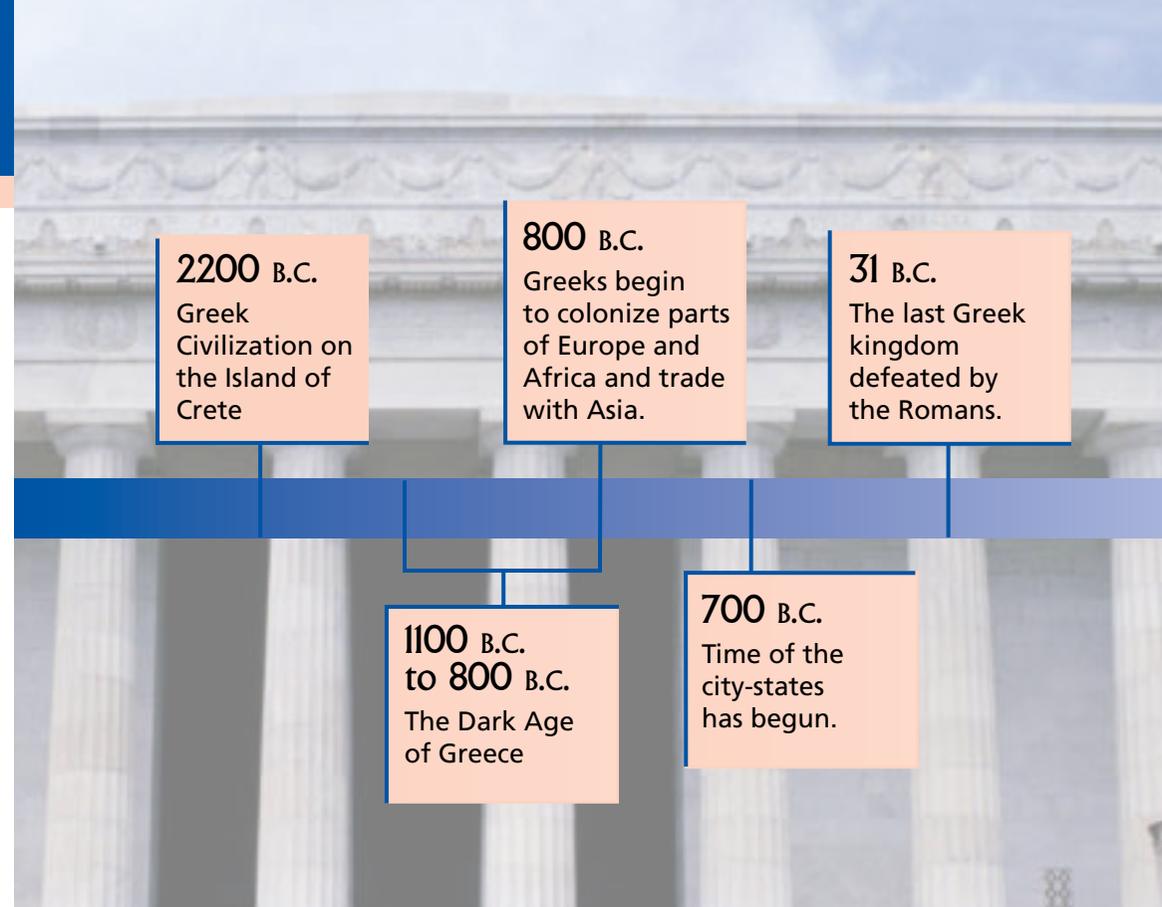
The Olympic Games, theater, history, architecture, and medicine are parts of our lives today. What do they have in common? They are a few of the things today that are influenced by the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome. Many of our ideas about government, literature, medicine, and entertainment come from these two ancient cultures.

The History of Ancient Greece

The First Civilizations

About 4,000 years ago, the first Greeks lived on Crete, a small island off the coast of Greece. They built palaces and large ships. They **traded** with people living in nearby lands, and they fought with those people, too. They lived on Crete for over 1,000 years. Then they mysteriously disappeared.

traded: bought and sold items



The Dark Age of Greece

People today know little about Greece between the years 1100 and 800 B.C. That is why this time in Greek history is called the *Dark Age*. We know that Greece was filled with farming villages that had little contact with the rest of the world.

By 800 B.C., Greek armies began to **conquer** the people who lived in parts of Europe and Africa. The Greek people began to trade with other countries. They learned art, writing, tool making, and shipbuilding from their trading partners.

conquer: to fight with and defeat

The City-States

By 700 B.C., Greece had changed from farming villages to *city-states*. A city-state was usually formed by a small city surrounded by farming areas. Each city-state had its own form of government. Some city-states had democratic governments. All citizens could vote on laws, and they also could vote for their leaders. Other city-states were ruled by kings or groups of old people.

For over 400 years, Greece was a powerful country. Many countries learned about government, art, and science from Greece. Greece's control ended when the Roman civilization began to rise and gain strength.

The History of Ancient Rome

Rome's First Republic

From 753 to 509 B.C., many different kings ruled Rome, the capital city of Italy. By 509 B.C., the *aristocrats*, or rich Romans, had grown tired of kings. The aristocrats wanted more power. They organized the poor people of Rome, called *plebeians* (plee BEE ins), to overthrow the king. They promised the poor Romans more control over their own lives. Together, the aristocrats and plebeians overthrew the king.

The aristocrats made a *republic*. A republic is a system where citizens vote and elect officials to represent them. The Romans could elect senators. The senators would make laws for the people of Rome.

The End of the Republic

By 146 B.C., Rome was the only power in the lands around the Mediterranean Sea. But there was trouble in the city of Rome. The common people of Rome were fighting to own more land. In addition, people in other Italian cities were upset because they did not have much power of their own.

Sulla, a general in Italy's army, became very powerful. He marched to Rome with his army, and he declared himself **dictator** of Rome. For the next 400 years, emperors ruled the Roman world. Some conquered new lands. After 400 years of power, Rome was defeated by enemies from the north, east, and west.

dictator: a ruler who has complete control over a country; no one else has any power

753–509 B.C.
Kings rule Rome.

146 B.C.
Rome rules all of
lands around the
Mediterranean Sea.

44 B.C.
Caesar is killed.

509 B.C.
Roman rich people and poor
people overthrow the king
and begin the first Republic.

49 B.C.
Julius Caesar
becomes Rome's
first Emperor.

A.D. 476
Last Roman Emperor
is removed from
Roman territory.



Chariot racing was an event in the ancient Olympic Games.



Today men and women from all over the world compete in the modern Olympic Games.

Greek and Roman Influence on Our Culture

The ancient Greek and ancient Roman civilizations were conquered, but their cultures did not die. Today, we can see parts of their cultures in our sports, language, architecture, and government.

The Ancient Olympic Games

The Greeks began the Olympics as a religious festival to honor their most important god, Zeus. In the first Olympic Games, athletes played in sporting events including chariot racing, the javelin throw, wrestling, running, discus, and the long jump. Fans came from all over the Greek world to watch the Olympic Games.

The Olympics Today

Today, the Olympic Games are similar in many ways to the ancient Olympics. Athletes still compete in the javelin throw, wrestling, running, discus, and the long jump. People come from all over the world to watch athletes compete in these exciting games.

There are also many differences between today's Olympic Games and those played in ancient Greece. Athletes from all over the world play in the Olympics. They are held in a different city every time they are played. There are both summer and winter Olympics now. Hundreds of new events are included in today's Olympics. Diving, skiing, and ice-skating are some of the events in the modern Olympics that weren't in the ancient Olympics.

Despite these differences, the idea, the spirit of competition, and the excitement of the Olympic Games comes to us from the ancient Greeks.



The Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.



The Parthenon in Athens, Greece



The Metropolitan Opera House in New York City



The Colosseum in Rome, Italy

Greek Architecture

Ancient Greek builders used solid white columns, high-pointed roofs, and carved decorations in their buildings. The Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., clearly shows the Greek style of architecture. Can you find the parts of the building that look Greek?

Roman Architecture

Ancient Roman builders invented cement and used bricks. They also used *arches*, which are curved structures above doors, windows, and gateways. With these materials and structures, the Romans made great temples, palaces, and stadiums. Today, we still use those kinds of materials and structures to make buildings.

Look at the pictures on this page. One of them shows a modern building that uses Roman-style architecture. What parts of Roman-style architecture do you see in this picture? Have you seen this type of architecture in your town? What are the differences between this style and the Greek style on the previous page?

In the architecture of buildings in America, Europe, Africa, and Asia, we can see the influence of ancient Greece and Rome.

Extend Language Root Words

The English language uses many Greek and Latin root words. A *root word* is the main part of the word to which other parts, such as prefixes or suffixes, can be added.

	Root Word	Meaning	Example
Latin	<i>scribe</i>	to write	describe
	<i>dict</i>	to say	diction
Greek	<i>chron</i>	time	chronological
	<i>dem</i>	people	democracy

Can you find words with these roots in this book?



The White House



The Supreme Court



The Congress

Ancient Greek and Roman Ideas in Government

The ancient Greek and Roman cultures had a **significant** effect on governments around the world. For example, the United States government is a combination of a Greek democracy and a Roman republic. Every American citizen votes, as in a democracy, but the citizens also vote for people who will make laws for the country, as in a republic.

Checks and Balances in the United States

To avoid a dictatorship or an empire like the Roman Republic, the United States government uses a system of checks and balances. The president works with the Supreme Court and the Congress to run the country. Each part checks on the other parts. The parts balance one another.

significant: very important

The President of the United States is elected by the people and must follow, or obey, the law. The *Supreme Court* is a group of judges who make sure the U.S. government acts in ways that follow the *Constitution*. The Constitution is a list of laws and rights of the American people. The *Congress* is a group of elected men and women who help the president and Supreme Court by making laws and decisions for the country. Some other democratic countries have governments that are similar to the United States' system in some ways.



Ancient Greeks and Romans played board games like checkers.

The Ancients' Influence on You

So you see, the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome have greatly influenced our culture. Whether it is the sports we play or how we construct our buildings or how we run our government, we use many ideas from the ancient cultures.

How is your life influenced by ancient Greece and Rome? Look around you. Think about your weekly schedule. What sports do you play or watch on television? Do any of those games come from the ancient Greeks? What buildings do you go into each day? Do any of those buildings have arches or bricks that look like those of the ancient Romans? How do the laws and freedoms of this country influence you? How do you feel about the United States government?

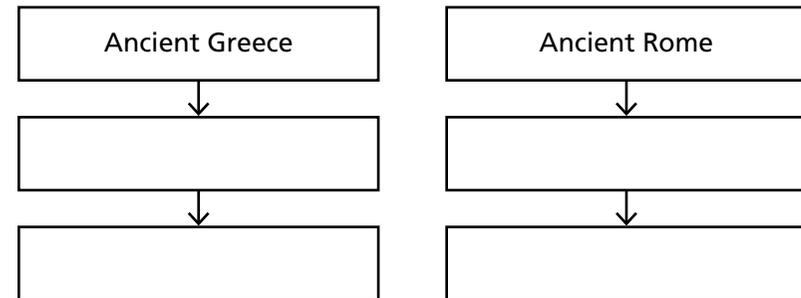
As you think about some of these questions, you will discover just how much the ancient Greek and Roman cultures are alive in you!

Talk About It

1. What parts of the buildings in the pictures on pages 8, 9, and 10 show that modern buildings have been influenced by ancient Greek and Roman buildings?
2. What are the differences between a republic and a democracy?

Write About It

3. On a separate sheet of paper, draw a flow chart that shows how the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome have influenced aspects of our culture today.



Extend Language

Modern languages such as English use Greek word parts in modern words. The Greek word part *-logy* means "the study of ____." *Bio-* means "life," and *biology* means "the study of life." If *psych-* means "the mind," what does psychology mean?

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