



It's Greek to Me!

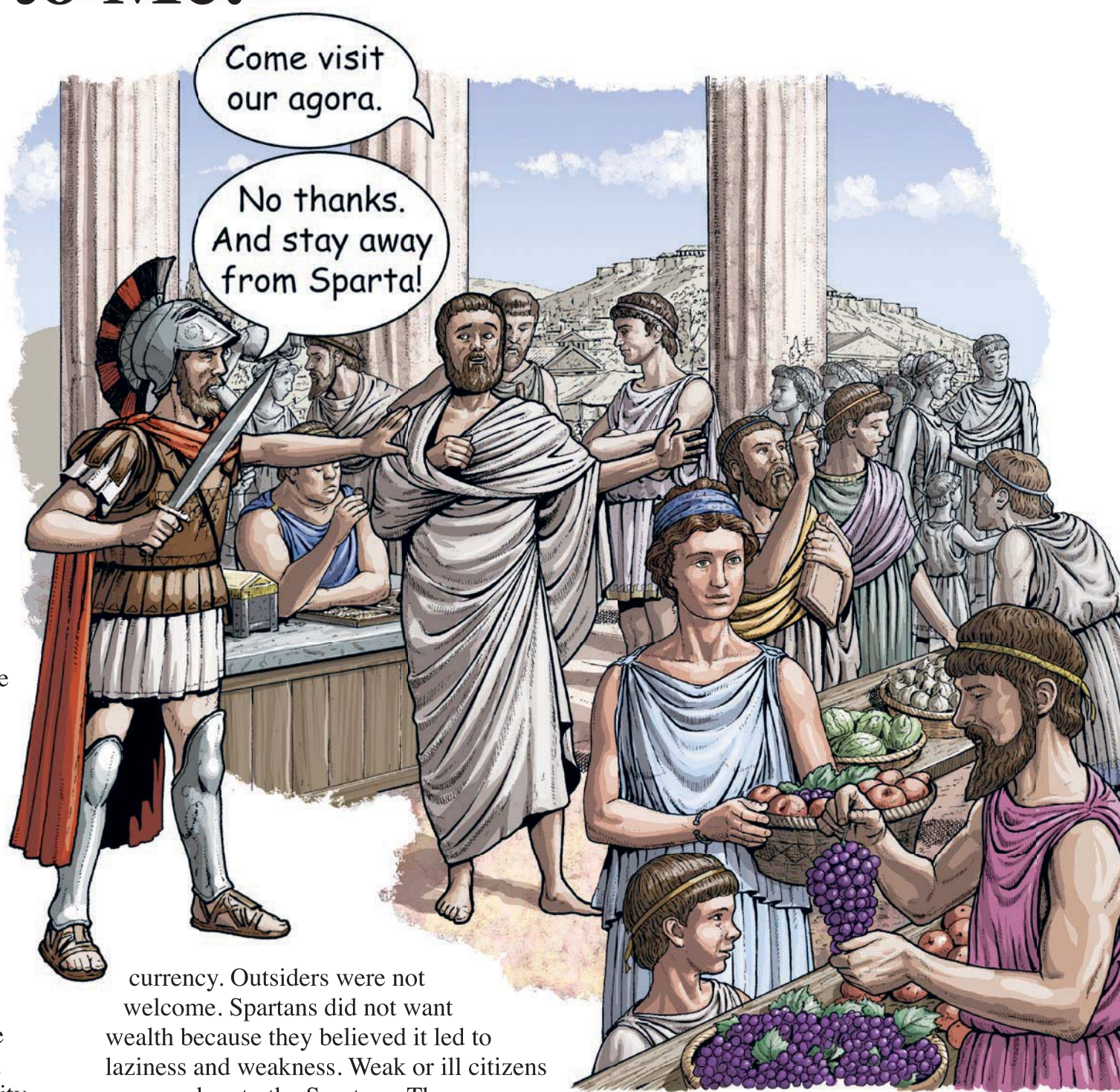
People often call Greece the birthplace of Western civilization. Ideas like democracy, trial by jury and many English words came from the Greeks.

The Minoans were the earliest people to live in Greece, even though they weren't Greek. They lived on the island of Crete in about 3000 B.C. Thousands of years later, archaeologist Arthur Evans discovered a palace at Knossos that showed much about the Minoan culture. The palace had more than 1,500 rooms. It had plumbing for running water and bathrooms with flushing toilets. The Minoans were excellent sailors and traded with people like the Mycenaeans from southern Greece. Historians believe the Mycenaeans left central Asia and came to Greece around 1900 B.C. The Mycenaeans learned much from the Minoans and eventually conquered the island of Crete. The Minoans and their way of life disappeared around 1700 B.C. Historians believe earthquakes caused flooding that wiped out their island cities.

Because mountains separated groups of people in Greece, each group established cities within the country. People didn't consider themselves simply Greek. They were Macedonians, Spartans, Corinthians, Athenians—each named after their city. Every city-state had its own government and ways of doing things. Athens and Sparta were two such cities of ancient Greece and were long-standing rivals.

For more than 200 years, Sparta was the most powerful city in all of Greece. Spartans grouped people into citizens, slaves and outsiders. To be a citizen, both parents had to be from Sparta. Citizens made all the rules and held all the power. Their slaves (called helots) lived in fear. Every year, citizens killed their strongest and smartest slave. Can you think why?

The citizens of Sparta didn't want to trade or exchange ideas, so they used iron bars for money and didn't accept other



currency. Outsiders were not welcome. Spartans did not want wealth because they believed it led to laziness and weakness. Weak or ill citizens were useless to the Spartans. They were left on nearby mountains to die.

Spartan wives and mothers told their husbands and sons to be victorious in battle or die. Spartans thought learning about anything other than preparing for war was unimportant.

Athenians also grouped people into citizens, slaves and outsiders. But Athenians encouraged trade. They wanted to learn about the outside world from visitors to the city's agora (marketplace).

More than 2,000 years ago, a new idea was born in Athens—democracy, or rule by the people. Only a few male citizens were part of Athenian government. But each time the government made a decision, a majority

of the male citizens had to approve it. It was the first time that people had a say in lawmaking.

Athenians also started the idea of trial by jury. Instead of a king determining your fate, a group of fellow citizens would hear the case and vote on your guilt or innocence. Today we have 12 people on a jury, but in ancient Athens there were hundreds!

The people of Athens believed in a strong body and strong mind, so education was important to them. Aristotle, a famous teacher, once said, "Education should be the rattle for young people." What do you think he meant?



Ancient Greeks

Religion

The Greeks believed gods and goddesses were responsible for all of nature. They believed their gods looked like people but were taller, more beautiful and could live forever. They also believed the gods could display anger, jealousy, humor and other emotions.

The chief of all the Greek gods and goddesses was the mighty Zeus, the sky god who threw lightning bolts. The gods and goddesses lived in a wonderful palace atop Mount Olympus, high in the clouds away from view of humans. Other gods were Pluto, god of the dead; Poseidon, god of the ocean; Athena, goddess of wisdom; Aphrodite, goddess of love; Demeter, goddess of growing things; and Hermes, the messenger god.

The Greeks went to special places called oracles to ask the gods and goddesses for advice and to hear about their future. Greeks built the Oracle of Delphi for the sun god, Apollo. People paid a small fee to priests and priestesses to ask a question. The answer was usually a riddle, which the questioner had to interpret.

One legend says King Croesus of Lydia asked an oracle if he should go to war against the mighty Persians. The oracle said that if he did, a great kingdom would be destroyed. The king thought it meant he would defeat the Persians. He was wrong—His kingdom was the one destroyed.

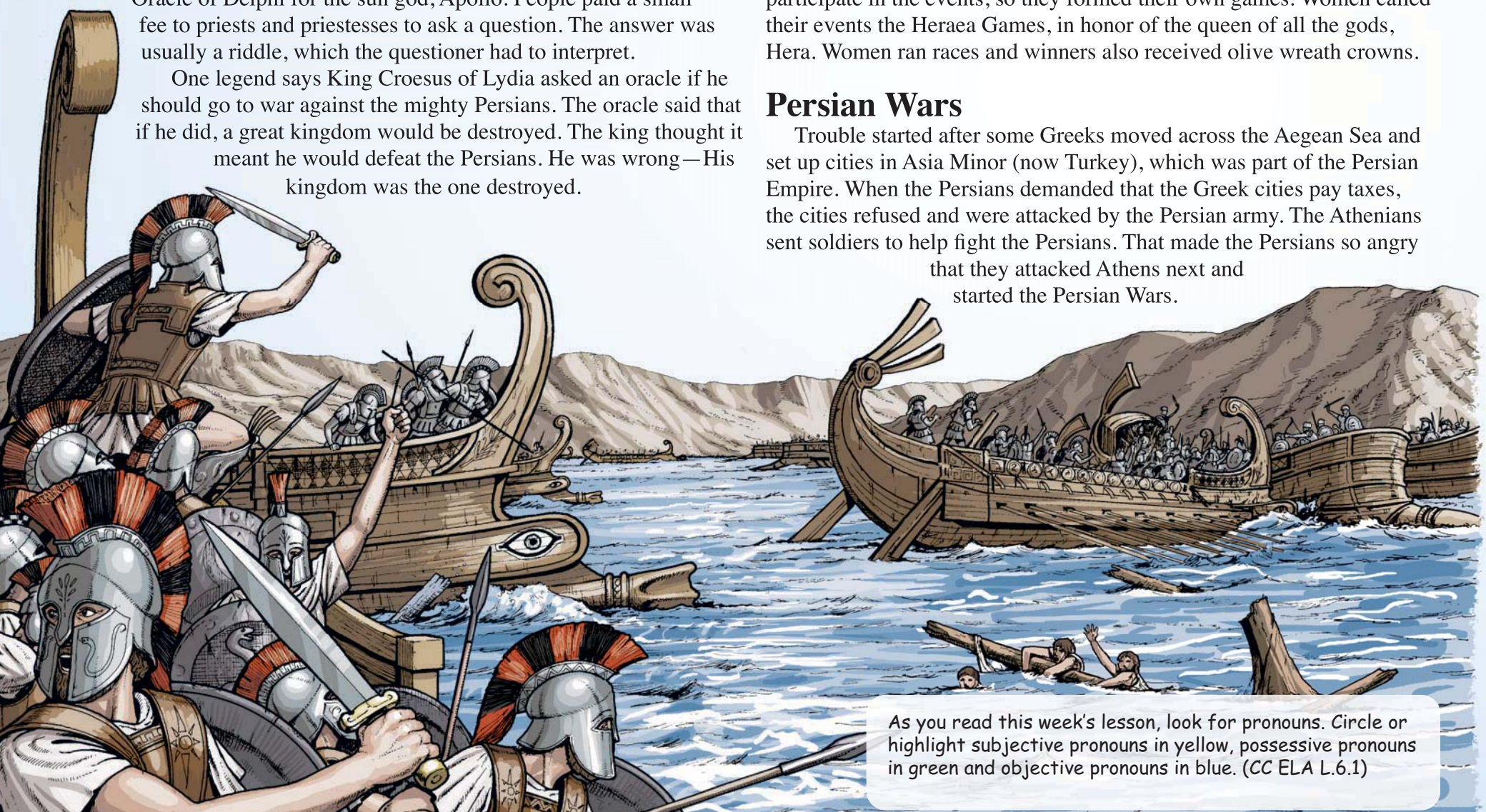
Olympic Games

The Olympic Games started in 776 B.C. as religious ceremonies to honor the chief god, Zeus. At the events, Greeks sacrificed 100 oxen—Zeus' favorite food—at the great altar for him. Greeks participated in events like running, discus, javelin, boxing and chariot racing. The Greeks stopped wars for the games, which were held every four years. The winners of the events won olive wreath crowns. But, like superstars of today, the winners also got money, food and fame from their proud hometowns.

Under penalty of death, women were forbidden to attend the events. Historians aren't sure why women couldn't attend the games, but maybe it was because the male athletes participated without wearing any clothing. Some Greek women didn't like that they could not watch or participate in the events, so they formed their own games. Women called their events the Heraea Games, in honor of the queen of all the gods, Hera. Women ran races and winners also received olive wreath crowns.

Persian Wars

Trouble started after some Greeks moved across the Aegean Sea and set up cities in Asia Minor (now Turkey), which was part of the Persian Empire. When the Persians demanded that the Greek cities pay taxes, the cities refused and were attacked by the Persian army. The Athenians sent soldiers to help fight the Persians. That made the Persians so angry that they attacked Athens next and started the Persian Wars.



As you read this week's lesson, look for pronouns. Circle or highlight subjective pronouns in yellow, possessive pronouns in green and objective pronouns in blue. (CC ELA L.6.1)

Greece

Greece is a peninsula on the continent of Europe. A peninsula is land surrounded on three sides by water. Look at a map and find the bodies of water that touch Greece—they are the Ionian Sea to the west, the Aegean Sea to the east and the Mediterranean Sea to the south. Of these bodies of water, the Aegean Sea was the most important to ancient Greeks. It is where the Greeks caught most of their fish. Also, Greeks traded with other nearby lands and the Aegean Sea was safer and less windy than the open Mediterranean Sea. Even with all the small islands in the Aegean Sea, the Greeks could navigate well through the sea, even in the time before the compass was invented.



The Acropolis in Athens with Pireaus Harbor on the Aegean Sea in the background.

World Regions

Greece's highest peak is Mount Olympus, which is about 9,570 feet tall. The lower section of Greece is almost an island. This section is called the Peloponnese. A very narrow strip of land called an isthmus connects the Peloponnese to the continent. About 3,000 islands are part of Greece. The largest is Crete.

The coastline of Greece is dotted with harbors because the country touches so many seas. Many Greeks earn a living from the seas. Also, because of the mild climate, there is a long crop-growing season. One very important crop of Greece is the olive—there are more than 120 million olive trees in Greece.



They continued for 20 years, from 499 B.C. to 479 B.C. The first battle took place near the city of Marathon. The Greeks' fierce determination to win, coupled with their heavier armor and spears and a better knowledge of the land, allowed them to defeat the mighty Persians. The Persians went home in disgrace.

You may have heard the story of a soldier who ran about 26 miles from Marathon to Athens, in full armor, to tell everyone about the victory. He died from exhaustion after spreading the news. This story inspired 26-mile races called marathons.

About 10 years after the battle at Marathon, another Persian king, Xerxes, decided to conquer Greece. This time, he brought many ships and soldiers. The many cities of Greece joined together to fight the Persians. The Greeks lost the first battle at a place called Thermopylae. The Persians marched to Athens and burned the city. Then the Greek navy attacked the Persians in the Bay of Salamis. The Greek ships were shorter than the Persian ships and could move more easily in the narrow bay. The Greeks defeated the Persian navy, capturing or destroying at least 200 ships. The following year, in 479 B.C., the Greek army defeated the Persians at the Battle of Plataea. The Greeks won the Persian Wars.

The Persian Wars are important to our history. Just think how our lives might be different if the Persians had won. Greek ideas like democracy and trial by jury would not have been passed down to us. And with victory over the Persians, the Greeks gained power and started building an empire of their own.

Culture

Persephone: a Greek Myth

Why do seasons change and leaves fall off the trees? Why does the sun rise every day and set at night? Why is there an echo in a canyon? These were a few of the many things the ancient Greeks did not understand. They created stories, or myths, about gods and goddesses to help explain things they didn't understand.



One day, a beautiful young woman named Persephone went for a walk. Persephone's mother was Demeter, the goddess of growing things. She stopped to view her mother's beautiful flowers growing in the field. The ground opened up, and a man wearing a black helmet emerged. He was aboard a black chariot pulled by black horses. This man, named Hades, fell in love with Persephone and took her down with him to the land of the dead (which was also called Hades). Persephone became his bride. Hades was the brother of Zeus and god of the underworld. When Demeter could not find her daughter, she was very sad. She learned from Hermes (the messenger god) that her daughter had become queen of the dead. Demeter would never see Persephone again.

In her misery, Demeter stopped growing things. Flowers wilted on their stems, crops stopped growing in fields—the Earth looked bleak. People went hungry because there wasn't any food. Zeus had to do something. He demanded that his brother return Persephone to Demeter. Zeus made a deal for Persephone to spend part of the year with Hades and part of the year with her mother. When Persephone was home with her mother, Demeter was happy, and crops, flowers and trees bloomed. When Persephone returned to Hades, Demeter was sad and stopped growing things. Which event in nature did this myth try to explain? If you said the change of seasons, you'd be correct. Look outside your classroom window. Where is Persephone today?

What is the Antikythera mechanism?



The Antikythera mechanism is an artifact kept in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, Greece. Sponge divers found it in 1900 near the island of Symi in the Aegean Sea. It is one of many artifacts divers found in the ancient Antikythera shipwreck, which dates back to 65 B.C. Divers also found beautiful artifacts like jewelry, glassware, furniture, a throne and bronze and marble statues, so this lump of corroded metal was ignored for a long time.

Recently, archaeologists decided to re-examine this strange-looking artifact and found a number of gears, circular scales and Greek writing inside it. It is the first artifact of its kind ever found. Archaeologists believe the mechanism is a hand-wound clockwork device, which could calculate the movements of the sun, moon and planets. Some scientists believe the instrument came from Syracuse, the home of famous scientist and mathematician Archimedes. It dates to the time he lived. Was the instrument one of Archimedes' inventions? The investigation continues.

Trades & Technology

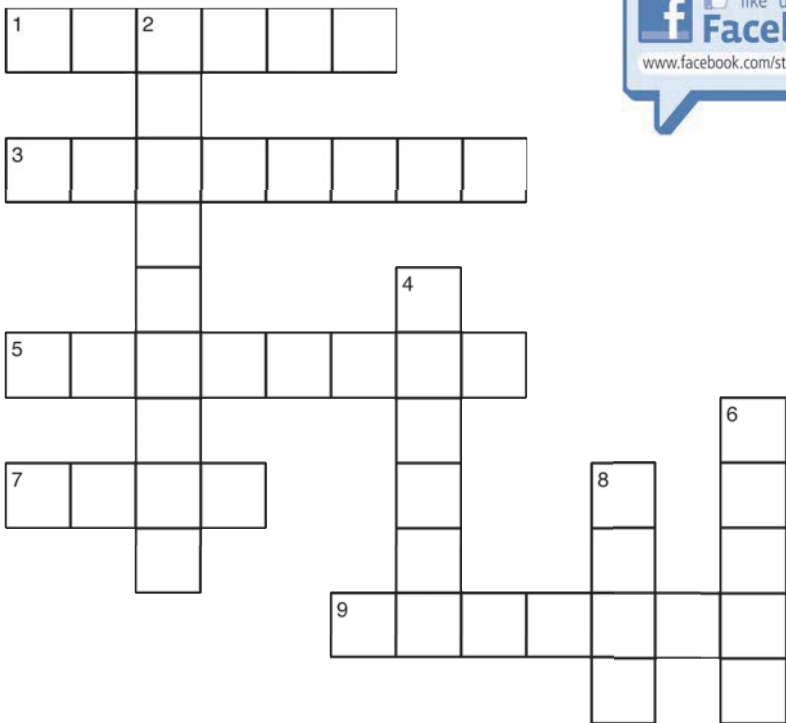
Greek Alphabet

We know so much about the ancient Greeks because they loved to write things down. Greeks wrote down speeches, books, poems and information about things like Olympic games and government. Around the ninth century B.C., the Greeks became the first Europeans to develop a writing system. They developed the system after contact with the Phoenicians, who developed the first alphabet. A famous Greek historian named Herodotus called the Greek writing system "phoinikeia grammata," or Phoenician letters.

In the beginning, the Greeks copied the Phoenician idea of writing from right to left. But they eventually changed to ox-turning. That means they wrote from right to left on one line and then reversed the writing in the next, switching direction when they started each new line. That was pretty confusing, so they dropped the idea eventually. The Greek alphabet changed again after the people came in contact with the Romans.

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/alphabet-historic-evolving-alphabet#node-20555>

Name _____



ACROSS

- 1. name for the city-state where democracy began
- 3. first battle in which the Greeks defeated the Persians
- 5. used by the people of Sparta as money
- 7. the main god of ancient Greece
- 9. Greek goddess of growing things

DOWN

- 2. a famous Greek historian
- 4. name for a place people went to talk to the gods
- 6. marketplace
- 8. a made-up story that explained something people didn't understand



As you read this week's lesson, circle or highlight all proper nouns with any color pen or highlighter. This will help you find some of the crossword answers and get ready for this week's test.

Activity

Skytales

In the fifth century B.C., the Spartans came up with a way to relay secret messages. Messages were carved onto strips of papyrus or leather and worn as belts. Both the sender and receiver of the message carried a rod or stick. Of course, the two rods had to be the same diameter for the code to work. To decode a message, you would wrap the strip of letters around a rod to see the hidden message. The Greeks called the tool a skytale (rhymes with Italy). They also gave us the word "cryptography," which comes from "kryptos," the Greek word for "hide."

Make a skytale using a pencil and strips of paper. Wrap the strip of paper tightly around the pencil. Write a message from one end of the pencil to the other. Remove the strip of paper and add other letters to hide your message. Give your message to a partner and have your friend wrap the strip around a pencil to read the message.



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Let's Write

The story of the hexameter dates back to a Greek woman named Pythia. She governed the Oracle of Delphi located on Mount Parnassus. It was here that Greeks believed Pythia received messages from the sun god, Apollo. Pythis sat for hours over a crack in the Earth. Sometimes the fumes made her dizzy, and her words sounded like garbled nonsense. Her messages were always translated into a poem called a hexameter. Pretend to be Pythia at the oracle. Write a question as a title and then write five lines (with six syllables per line) to answer the question. Such questions might be: Should I marry? Did my slave steal the olives? Should I go to war? Will my crops grow well?



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