Chapter 4: The Ancient Greeks, c. 1600 B.C. – c. 133 B.C.

Lesson 2: The Greek City-States
1. Why did so many different communities with independent ways of life develop in ancient Greece?

A. The mountains in the territory isolated people from one another and prevented different communities from coming together.

B. People came to Greece from many different lands and brought with them their own local customs.

C. The Greeks were naturally very independent minded and tended to settle in communities with others who shared their beliefs.

D. Greek communities were strongly influenced by the ideas of local philosophers, who each promoted different points of view.
2. Scholars continue to debate whether Homer’s account of ___________ is based on historical fact.
   A. A devastating earthquake that destroyed the Mycenaean civilization.
   B. The sacking of Troy by Mycenaean under the leadership of King Agamemnon.
   C. The death of the Athenian runner/messenger Pheidippides.
   D. King Croesus’s encounter with the oracle at Delphi.
It Matters Because

• In the course of the Dark Age, Greek villages gradually expanded and became independent city-states.

• The 2 most famous city-states were Sparta and Athens, whose rivalry would eventually lead to war.
Polis: The Center of Greek Life

Guiding Question: How were the city-states of ancient Greece organized?

The city-state – or what the Greeks called a polis – became central to the development of classical civilization in Greece.

By 750 B.C. the polis became the focus of Greek life.

Our word politics is derived from the Greek word polis.

In a physical sense, the polis was a town, a city, or even a village, along with its surrounding countryside.

The town, city, or village served as the center of the polis where people could meet for political, social, and religious activities.
Polis: The Center of Greek Life

• The central meeting place in the **polis** was usually a hill.
• At the top of the hill was a fortified area called an **acropolis** that served as both a fortress and religious center.
• Below the **acropolis** was an **agora**- an open area that served both as a place where people could **assemble** and as a **market**.
• **City-states** varied greatly in size, and population.
• **Athens** had a population of more than 300,000 by the 5th century B.C., but most **city-states** were much smaller, consisting of only a few hundred to several thousand people.
The acropolis, or fortified area, provided a place of refuge for people in times of war. The acropolis had its own water supply.

The agora, an open area in the polis, was used as a gathering place for people and as a marketplace. The Athenian Agora is located north of the Acropolis and is largely in ruins.

Temples and public buildings were located within the acropolis. The Parthenon, a temple dedicated to the patron goddess Athena, is part of the Athenian Acropolis.

This temple, known as the Erechtheum, was built to honor a legendary king.

Athens was built near a rocky hill that could be easily fortified and defended.
**Polis: The Center of Greek Life**

- The **polis** was, above all, a community of people who shared a common identity and common goals.

- As a community, the **polis** consisted of citizens with political rights (adult males), citizens with **no** political rights (women and children), and noncitizens (including agricultural laborers, slaves, and resident aliens).

- All **male citizens** had rights, such as the **right to vote** and **participate in government**, but these rights were coupled with responsibilities, like **military service**.

- The Greek philosopher **Aristotle** argued that a citizen did **not** belong just to himself or herself: “We must rather regard every citizen as belonging to the state.”

- However, the loyalty that citizens had to their **city-states** had a negative side.

- **City-states** distrusted one another, and the division of **Greece** into fiercely patriotic, independent units helped bring about its ruin.
Polis: The Center of Greek Life

• As the polis developed, so too did a new military system.
• By 700 B.C., the Greek military system had shifted from nobles on horseback to a system based on hoplites.
• Hoplites were heavily armed foot soldiers equipped with a round shield, a short sword, and a thrusting spear about 9 feet long.
• Hoplites went into battle as a unit, marching shoulder to shoulder in a rectangular formation known as a phalanx- this close formation created a wall of shield to protect the hoplites.
• As long as they kept their order, it was difficult for enemies to harm them.
**Hoplite**
Organized hoplite combat began in the 7th century BC with the rise of the Greek city-states. Hoplites, the frontline infantrymen, were trained to fight in concert, advancing on the enemy in lock step, shield-to-shield.

**Helmet**
The bronze Macedonian helmet weighed 5 to 10 pounds.

**Sarissa**
The Macedonians perfected use of this 13- to 21-foot pike in the classic phalanx formation.

**Aspis**
The face of a hoplite’s wooden shield bore the symbol of his city-state.

**Macedonian Speira**
The speira, or basic unit of Alexander the Great’s 4th century BC phalanx, comprised 256 men ranked in close order. As they advanced, the leading five ranks lowered their sarissas for combat, while the rear ranks held their spears aloft to deflect incoming projectiles.
Greek Expansion

• Guiding Question: How did the Greeks spread their culture and political ideas throughout the Mediterranean?

• Between 750 B.C. and 550 B.C., large numbers of Greeks left their homeland to settle in distant lands.

• Overpopulation at home, a desire for good farmland, and the growth of trade were important factors in deciding to settle new places.

• Each Greek colony became a new polis, independent of the polis that had founded it.
Greek Colonies

- Across the **Mediterranean**, new **Greek colonies** were established along the coastlines of southern **Italy**, southern **France**, eastern **Spain**, and northern **Africa** west of **Egypt**.

- At the same time, to the north, the **Greeks** set up **colonies** in **Thrace**, where they sought good farmland to grow grains.

- The **Greeks** also settled along the shores of the **Black Sea**, setting up cities on **Hellespont** and the **Bosporus straits**.

- The most notable of these cities was **Byzantium**, the site of what later became **Constantinople** and is now **Istanbul**.

- In establishing these **colonies**, the **Greeks** spread their **culture** and political ideas throughout the **Mediterranean**.
Greek Colonies

• **Colonization** in these prime port locations also led to increased **trade** and **industry**.

• The **Greeks** on the mainland sent their pottery, wine, and olive oil to these areas.

• In return, they received grains and metals from the west, and fish, timber, wheat, metals, and slaves from the **Black Sea** region.

• The expansion of **trade** and **industry** created a new group of **wealthy individuals** in many of the **Greek city-states**.

• These **men** wanted political power, but found it difficult to gain because of the power of the ruling **aristocrats (upper class)**.
Tyranny in the City-States

• The creation of this new group of **rich men** fostered the rise of **tyrants** in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C.

• **Tyrants** were not necessarily oppressive (cruel) or wicked, as our word **tyrant** implies.

• Greek **tyrants** were rulers who seized power by force from the aristocrats.

• Support for the **tyrants** came from the **newly rich** who were hungry for the social prestige and political influence that **aristocrats** had denied them.

• **Poor peasants** who were in debt to **landholding aristocrats** also supported the **tyrants**.

• Both the **newly rich** and the **peasants** were tired of **aristocratic domination** of their **city-states**.
The Rise and Fall of Tyrants in Greek City-States

As the Greeks colonized parts of the Mediterranean, their trade expanded and, with that, a wealthy class arose. This wealthy class soon wanted political power that previously had been wielded only by the aristocrats. In Greece the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. saw the rise of rich tyrants who seized power from the aristocrats. This age of tyrants would eventually run its course. The following graphic charts the rise and fall of the Greek tyrants.

- Tyrants gained popularity through lavish public works.
- Tyrants came to be seen as oppressive.
- Tyranny ends in Greek city-states.
- Tyrants seized power using hired soldiers.
- Tyrants were backed by newly rich and by poor peasants in debt to aristocrats.
Tyranny in the City-States

• The **tyrants** gained power and kept it by using hired soldiers.

• After they were in power, the **tyrants** tried to help the **poor** and launched public works projects.

• These efforts glorified the city but, more importantly, increased the **tyrants’ popularity**.

• Despite their achievements, however, **tyrants** had fallen out of favor by the end of the 6th century B.C.

• **Greeks** believed in the rule of law, and **tyranny** was an insult to that ideal.
Tyranny in the City-States

- **Tyranny** played an important role in **Greek history** and in the development of **classical Greek civilization**.

- The rule of the **tyrants** ended the rule of the **aristocrats** in many city-states.

- The end of **tyranny** then allowed many new people to participate in government.

- In some **Greek city-states**, this led to the development of **democracy**, which is government by the people or rule of the many.

- Other **city-states** remained committed to **government** by an **oligarchy**, rule by the few.

- **Democracy**, a fundamental idea of Western civilization, remains one of the most lasting political influences of ancient Greece.
Two Rival City-States

• Guiding Question: What different systems of government did Sparta and Athens have?

• The differences in the Greek city-states can be understood by examining the 2 most famous and powerful city-states, Sparta and Athens.
• Like other Greek city-states, **Sparta** needed more **land**.
• Instead of starting new **colonies**, as some states did, the **Spartans** conquered the neighboring **Laconians**.
• Later, beginning around 730 B.C., the **Spartans** undertook the conquest of neighboring **Messenia** despite its larger size and population.
• After their conquest, the **Messenians** and **Laconians** became **serfs** and were made to work for the **Spartans**.
• These captured people were known as **helots**, a name derived from a Greek word for “capture.”
• To ensure control over the conquered **helots**, the **Spartans** made a conscious decision to create a **military state**.
Sparta

- Between 800 B.C. and 600 B.C., the lives of Spartans were rigidly organized and tightly controlled—thus, our word *spartan*, meaning “highly self-disciplined.”
- Males spent their childhood learning military discipline.
- Then they enrolled in the army for regular military service at age 20.
- Although allowed to marry, Spartan males continued to live in the military barracks until age 30.
- All meals were eaten in public dining halls with fellow soldiers.
- Meals were simple: the famous Spartan black broth consisted of a piece of pork boiled in animal blood, salt, and vinegar.
- A visitor who ate some of the black broth once remarked that he now understood why Spartans were not afraid to die.
- At 30, Spartan males were allowed to vote in the assembly (discussed later).
- They could live at home, but they stayed in the army until the age of 60.
After Spartans conquered the neighboring Laconians and Messenians, they decided to create a military state to maintain control. Spartan men devoted their lives to the Spartan army, serving from the age of 20 to the age of 60. This image shows a Spartan helmet.
Sparta

• While their **husbands** lived in the barracks, **Spartan women** lived at home.

• Because of this separation, **Spartan women** had greater freedom of movement and greater power in the household than was common elsewhere in **Greece**.

• **Spartan women** were expected to remain fit to bear and raise healthy children.

• Many **Spartan women** upheld the strict **Spartan values**, expecting their **husbands** and **sons** to be brave in war.

• The story is told of a **Spartan mother** who, as she handed her **son** his shield, told him to come back carrying his shield or being carried on it.

• In other words, he was **not** to drop his shield in retreat, but to be victorious or to die bravely.
The Spartan government was an oligarchy headed by 2 kings, who led the Spartan army on its campaigns. A group of 5 men, known as the ephors, were elected each year and were responsible for the education of youth and the conduct of all citizens. A council of elders, composed of the 2 kings and 28 citizens over the age of 60, decided on the issues that would be presented to an assembly made of male citizens. This assembly did not debate; it only voted on the issues.
Sparta

• To make their new military state secure, the Spartans turned their backs on the outside world.

• **Foreigners**, who might have brought in new ideas, were **discouraged** from visiting.

• Except for military reasons, **Spartans were not** allowed to travel abroad, where they might encounter ideas dangerous to the stability of the state.

• Likewise, **Spartan citizens were discouraged** from studying philosophy, literature, or the arts.

• The art of **war** was the **Spartan ideal**.

• All other arts were frowned upon. 😞
Athens

• By 700 B.C., Athens had become a unified polis on the peninsula of Attica.

• Early Athens was ruled by a king.

• By the 7th century B.C., however, Athens had become an oligarchy under the control of its aristocrats.

• These aristocrats owned the best land and controlled political life.

• There was an assembly of all the citizens, but it had few powers.
By the end of the 600s B.C., Athens faced political turmoil because of serious economic problems.

Draco, a politician, codified the laws, adding harsh penalties, including slavery for debtors.

Many Athenian farmers were sold into slavery when they were unable to pay their debts.

There was an outcry to cancel the debts and to give land to the poor.

Athens seemed on the verge of a civil war.
The ruling Athenian aristocrats reacted to this crisis in 594 B.C. by giving full power to Solon - a reform-minded aristocrat.

Solon canceled all land debts and freed people who had fallen into slavery for debts.

Solon refused, however, to take land from the rich and to give it to the poor.

Despite Solon’s reforms, aristocrats were still powerful and poor peasants could not obtain land.

Internal strife finally led to the very thing Solon had hoped to avoid – tyranny.
Solon was one of the greatest leaders and wise men of Athens. He was also a poet who often delivered his speeches via poetry. He became the ruler of Athens in about 594 B.C. during a period of fierce discontent among the citizens. Laws were seen as too harsh, the economy was struggling, and many peasants were in debt to the aristocrats. Solon’s style of moderation helped the city-state avoid revolution, and he brought needed reforms. He freed slaves, improved laws, and returned foreclosed land to peasants. He also instituted policies that aided the economy and replaced the rule of aristocrats with that of wealthy citizens. By opening the general assembly to all citizens and the new ruling council to more people, Solon built the foundation of Greek democracy.

MORE ABOUT THE IMAGE: This marble bust of Solon was made after the original created in the fourth century B.C.
Athens

• **Peisistratus**, an aristocrat, seized power in 560 B.C.
• Peisistratus then aided Athenian trade as a way of pleasing the merchants.
• Peisistratus also gave aristocrats’ land to the peasants in order to gain the favor of the poor.
• The Athenians rebelled against Peisistratus’s son, who had succeeded him, and ended the tyranny in 510 B.C.
• 2 years later, with the backing of the Athenian people, Cleisthenes, another reformer, gained the upper hand.
Athens

• Cleisthenes created a new council of 500 that supervised foreign affairs, oversaw the treasury, and proposed the laws that would be voted on by the assembly.

• The Athenian assembly, composed of male citizens, was given final authority to pass laws after free and open debate.

• Because the assembly of citizens now had the central role in the Athenian political system, the reforms of Cleisthenes created the foundations for Athenian democracy.
The Greek statesman Cleisthenes is often considered to be the founder of Athenian democracy. He grew up during a period of great turmoil among the ruling families of Athens. The reforms of Solon (about 574 B.C.) had been controversial—the aristocrats felt the reforms went too far; the commoners wanted more reforms. Cleisthenes' family members, who had sided with Solon, had been in and out of favor with the government for decades. After numerous power struggles, Cleisthenes emerged as the most powerful voice in the government. He threw his full support to the common people. By 507 B.C., an overhaul of the government was underway. The biggest change was that a voting citizen would be considered a representative of a locale and not a clan member. The ruling council was increased to 500 members, and the principle of equal rights was firmly embedded in the system.

MORE ABOUT THE IMAGE: This image shows a kleroterion, a device the Athenian Senate used to randomly choose public officials.
Assignment

• Complete Chapter 4, Lesson 2 Quiz.
• You are allowed to use your notes to assist you on completing your quiz, but **NOT** your Chromebook or phone!
• Turn your quiz into the organizer after you have finished completing it.
• Make sure your name is on your quiz before you turn it in!