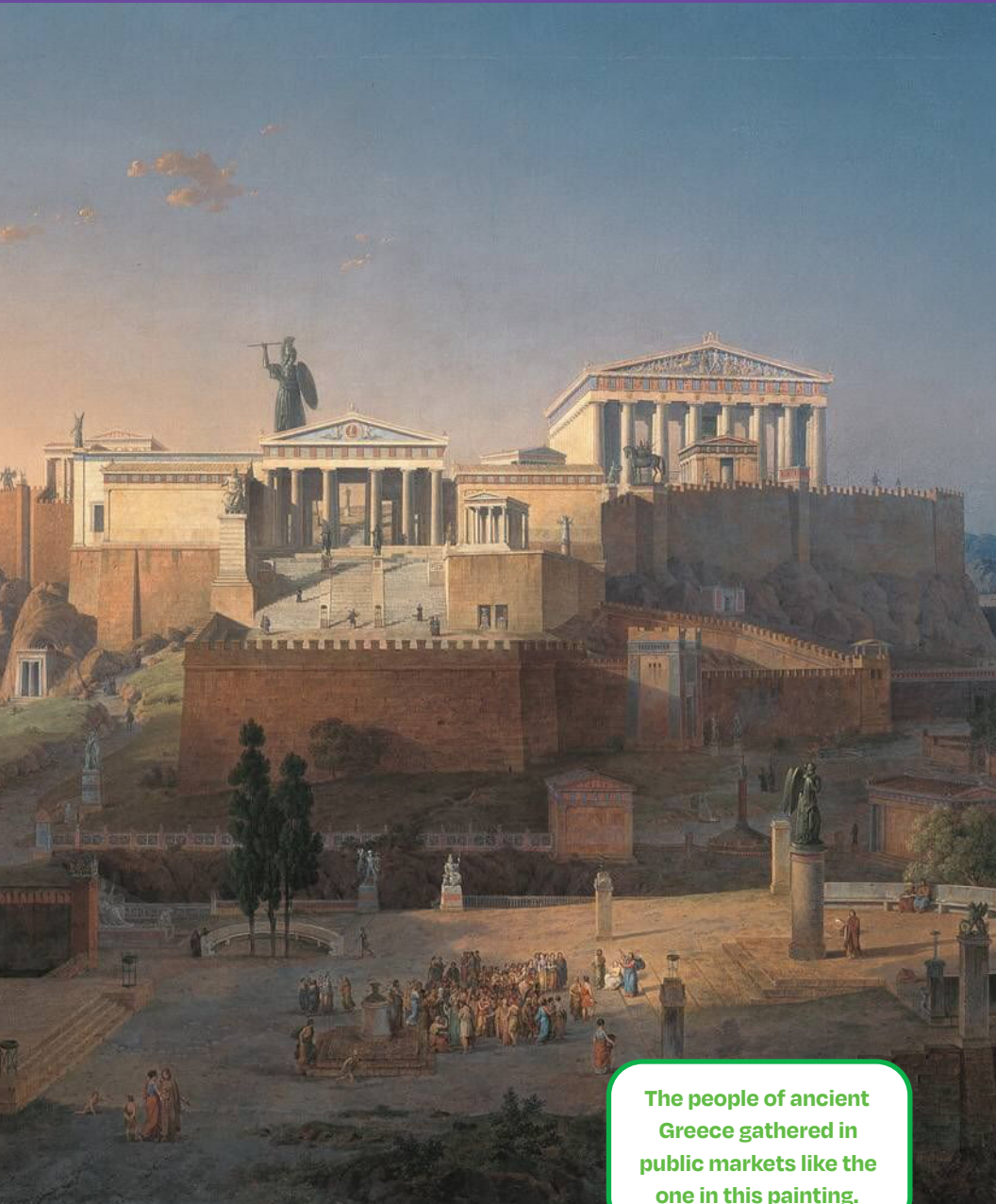


Ancient Greece





The people of ancient Greece gathered in public markets like the one in this painting.

The Ideas of Ancient Greece

Greece is a country in southern Europe. It is where the Olympics began, more than 2,500 years ago. Ancient Greece is often called “the birthplace of the Western world.” That is because the ideas of the ancient Greeks influenced the people of Europe and North America.

In Ancient Greece, city states were the centers of civilization. City states had their own governments and ruled the land around them. The ancient Greek city states also had the first democratic governments. Until that time, no government had been chosen by its people. In fact, the word democracy comes from the Greek words for people and rule.

Today, many nations have democratic governments, and people from around the world enter the Olympics. The ideas of ancient Greece are still very much alive.

Key Notes:

Describe the city-state government of ancient Greece.



This statue shows the Greek god Atlas carrying the world on his back.

Greek Myths

The ancient Greeks believed that gods and goddesses made and ruled the world. Greek writers and poets wrote about these gods and goddesses. Today, their writings are known by the Greek word myth, which means “story.” One character in Greek myths was Atlas. Atlas was a god who took part in a battle against the gods. Because his group lost the battle, Atlas was punished by having to carry the world on his back. Today, some people are described as being “as strong as Atlas” or “having the burdens of Atlas.” Atlas is also the name for a book of maps. Many other words in English, such as giant and fate, come from characters in Greek myths.

Key Notes:

What is a myth?



The art on this ancient cup shows Odysseus listening to riddles he must solve to continue his journey.

Greek Classics

The literature of the ancient Greeks and Romans is often called the classics. Classics are stories that are read long after they are written and are used as models for writing that comes later. Homer was the most famous ancient Greek writer. One of his long poems is a classic called the Iliad.

Before Homer's time, the Greeks fought a ten year war with the people of the city of Troy. The Greeks finally captured Troy by using a clever trick. The Iliad tells about the war with Troy and the disasters that happened to a warrior during the last of the war.

Homer's poems are so famous that their titles are often used to describe certain events. A series of disasters, for example, is sometimes called an iliad.

Key Notes:

Who was Homer?



Francena McCorory celebrates after winning the gold for the USA as the final runner in a relay during the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Olympic Athletes

The ancient Greeks greatly valued athletics, or skill and strength in sports. Training to be an athlete began when children were as young as seven years old.

Every four years, people from all over ancient Greece gathered to watch athletes compete. The games were held in Olympia, a place named after Mount Olympus. The ancient Greeks believed Mount Olympus was the home of their gods. The Olympics were so important to the ancient Greeks that wars were stopped the month before the games were held. This allowed athletes and visitors to travel safely to take part in the games.

The Greeks treated their Olympic athletes with great respect. Athletes who won their games were believed to be favored by the gods.

Key Notes:

How do we know the ancient Greeks valued athletics?

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