

# Groundbreaking Greeks



Ancient Greek lands were made up of the Greek mainland, surrounding islands and Greek colonies across the Mediterranean Sea. Ancient Greece was almost entirely surrounded by sea, and the mountains on the mainland made travelling by land difficult.

## Dark Age and Archaic period

In c1100 BC, the Minoan and Mycenaean civilisations collapsed and society began to decline. Greece entered its Dark Age. Many people left Greece and skills, including writing, were lost. The few remaining people lived in small family groups and reared livestock for food. They also began to mine iron to make spears and tools. Then, around 800 BC, Greece entered the Archaic period. This was characterised by the re-emergence of society, government, art and architecture. A new alphabet was devised, the population grew, city states developed and the first Olympic Games were held.

## Significant periods of Greek history

Ancient Greek history can be divided into seven main periods or civilisations: Neolithic, Minoan civilisation, Mycenaean civilisation, Dark Age, Archaic period, Classical period and Hellenistic period. Greece is often referred to as the birthplace of Western civilisation because of the advances that its people made in politics, science, mathematics, philosophy, literature and art.

### Minoan civilisation

The Minoan civilisation existed between c3000 BC and c1100 BC on the Greek island of Crete. At the civilisation's peak, around 10,000 people lived in 90 cities. As Europe's first developed civilisation, the Minoans lived in towns with roads, wells and a basic sewerage system. They were capable farmers and skilled craftspeople. Their architects oversaw the building of palaces. They were also skilled in making pottery. They traded goods, such as olive oil, pottery and cloth. The Minoans also used an early writing system known as Linear A.

### Mycenaean civilisation

The Mycenaean civilisation existed between c1600 BC and c1100 BC on the Greek mainland. They took control of Crete in c1450 BC. The Mycenaean warriors were excellent. They invaded and settled in areas around the Mediterranean Sea and developed trade links with Egypt, Cyprus and many Greek islands. The Mycenaean chiefs lived in palaces within fortified hilltop citadels. The Mycenaean people were influenced by the Minoans. They developed the Minoan Linear A script into Linear B and were the first people to speak the Greek language.

## Timeline

- c6000–c3000 BC** People start to farm and make produce in Neolithic Greece.

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- c3000–c1100 BC** The Minoan civilisation exists on the island of Crete.

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- c1600–c1100 BC** The Mycenaean civilisation exists on the Greek mainland.

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- c1450 BC** The Mycenaean take control of Crete.

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- c1100–c800 BC** Greek cities are destroyed or abandoned during the Greek Dark Age.

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- c800–c500 BC** Greece develops quickly and city states are founded in the Archaic period.

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- 776 BC** The first Olympic Games are held in Olympia.

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- c507 BC** Cleisthenes introduces the world's first known democratic system to Athens.

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- c500** The Classical period begins.

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- 356 BC** Alexander the Great is born.

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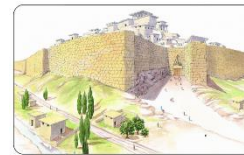
- 323 BC** Alexander the Great dies and the Classical period ends.

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- 323–30 BC** Greece becomes divided during the Hellenistic period.

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- 30 BC** Ancient Greece is conquered by the Romans.



Artist's impression of the citadel at Mycenae

## The Classical period

The Classical period started in c500 BC and ended in 323 BC. It is known as the golden age of ancient Greece because many discoveries and advancements were made. People in the Classical period believed in gods and mythology from earlier periods, although philosophers and scientists at the time began to challenge those beliefs. Their architecture featured symmetrical designs and columns. Like the Minoans and Mycenaean before them, people in Classical Greece established trade links both within Greece and with surrounding countries.



Reconstruction of the palace of Knossos



Aerial view of the Acropolis

## Glossary

acropolis	The upper fortified area of a Greek city that is usually built on a hill.
architect	Someone who designs buildings and makes sure that they are built correctly.
Athenian	A person from Athens.
citadel	A central fortified area of a city or town.
city state	A city and the area surrounding it with an independent government.
civilisation	A highly developed culture, including its social organisation, government, laws and arts.
democracy	A political system, which allows people to have a say in the way their country is governed.
empire	A group of countries or states ruled by a single authority, such as an emperor or monarch.
mathematician	Someone who studies, teaches or is an expert in mathematics.
mythology	A collection of religious and cultural stories.
Parthenon	A temple on the Acropolis in Athens.
philosopher	Someone who studies basic ideas about knowledge and reasoning.
warrior	A soldier with skill and experience in fighting.