



**Ancient Civilisation – Greece
History – Junior Cert**

Quick Notes

Ancient Civilisation – Greece

Much of what we know about the Greeks comes from three sources: written records and literature from the Greeks themselves, ruins in Athens and archaeological work carried out at Hisarlik, Mycenae, and Knossos. Greece was not a united empire, but was divided into city-states. Greece was the first area of the world where democracy was practiced. In Athens, every male citizen over the age of 18 had an input in government. The council did the job of drafting the laws. Everyday a new president was elected and each man could only serve as president once in his life. Athens was also famous for its teachers and philosophers such as Aristotle and Socrates. Private homes were very simple in Greece, there was no running water and men and women often lived separately. Most Greeks made their living from farming, wheat and barley being the main crops grown. Only Greek boys went to school, girls were educated at home. The father was the head of the family. The mother had full charge of household affairs. Slaves often looked after the children of rich families. The main staples of the Greek diet were bread, olives, beans, fruit and wine. Both rich and poor wore the same styles of dress, but the rich used better quality cloth. The most popular sport was running but wrestling and boxing were widely practiced. Each state had its own army in Greece and in Athens every citizen had to spend two years in the army. A fully armed soldier was called a hoplite. Greek worship was based around the Acropolis (hill) and its temple, the Parthenon. Some of the main Greek gods were Zeus (lord of heaven and earth), Demeter (goddess of agriculture) and Ares (god of war). The Greeks held festivals in honour of their gods, the most famous of which were the Olympic Games – held every four years in honour of Zeus. Priests and priestesses were appointed to make sure that the gods were properly worshipped and that their temples and sacred places were looked after. The Greeks believed strongly in the existence of the soul and they performed many rituals to prepare their dead relatives for their journey to the underworld, their underground kingdom that they believed to be the final resting place of all mortals. In the fourth century BC, the southern part of Greece, including Athens and Sparta, was taken over by the northern territory of Macedonia. Alexander of Macedonia became king at the age of 20 in 336 BC, he then began a series of military campaigns in an attempt to conquer most of the known world. He then died in 323 BC, from malaria aged 33 and buried in a tomb in Egypt.

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