

# Greeks: the cornerstone of intellectualism



Why are the Greeks considered the cornerstone of the Western intellectual tradition?

Ancient Greek society is considered the cornerstone of the Western intellectual tradition. It infiltrates aspects of culture, political thought and scientific reasoning in ways that if removed our society would be vastly different. Herodotus and Thucydides formed the practice of history, a research or investigation of events that are put in a systematic order in order to preserve the past. Like Herodotus said, “ Here are presented the researches... to prevent the traces of human events from being erased by time...” (Spielvogel, 72). Many of the literary or scientific practices of the time have become a foundation for the way that science is practiced today. The thorough recording of data, and the strength of the literature that is used to document historical events can easily be traced back to this period in history.

Additionally, the Greeks are responsible for initiating the way that thoughts are formed and logical arguments are developed. The great thinkers of Athens, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, are responsible for laying out the groundwork of Western thought that involves the way that we critically examine ourselves and the world around us. They have also given us the scientific method as a means of observing and making deductions about our environment. Furthermore, they are indirectly responsible for developing the origins of a good and democratic government system that we continue to use today. The Greeks abided largely by the ideals of democracy in their government systems and societies, which then gave shape to the Western thought of valuing the voice of the people.

Socrates is credited as the influence that led Athens to be the philosophical capital of the ancient world, which has greatly influenced Western intellect. Socrates instilled in his pupils his firm belief that questioning everything was extremely important, even if it included his own death (VIDEO). MORE FROM THE VIDEO

Chapter Four - Answer the Critical Thinking Question on the first page of Chapter 4

How was the Hellenistic period different from the Greek Classical Age

The Hellenistic period differs from the Greek Classical Age in both cultural aspects and their political structure. Monarch governments replaced city-states, as Alexander's conquered lands were divided into four kingdoms (Speilvogel, 89). The emerging culture of the Hellenistic period brought greater freedoms to upper class women. Queens had influence in political policies; aristocratic women could be in positions such as the magistrate of cities or institutions, though usually because of private funds donated towards the benefit of the city (Speilvogel, 93-94). As higher-class women assumed more privileges and powers, education was also going through a revolutionary process.

Unlike the classical age of Greece, which relied heavily on private education, the Hellenistic period allowed for civic schools, which were established to educate the youth in the ways of both art and literature. Historical and biographical literature also exploded in this time period as more people joined the profession. More changes occurred in the cultural arts as new forms of theatre and art replaced that of the Greek Classical Age. Tragedy

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plays were replaced by a form of comedy as art refocused from idealistic portrayals to the expression of emotion and realism in the artwork (Speilvogel, 96-97).

## VIDEO

Chapter Five - Answer the Critical Thinking Question on the first page of Chapter 5

What did the Roman poet Horace mean when he wrote, "Captive Greece took captive her rude conqueror"?

In the time of Horace, Rome had conquered the southern portions of Italy, which included the areas that were then being settled by several Greek commercial colonies. The Greek colonies were conquered by the Roman Empire and in many situations this would mean a complete destruction of their cultural values. The Roman Empire and the Greek colonists fought viciously prior to the takeover, giving many of the Greek colonists a negative impression of their new leaders. When the mercenaries that the merchants had hired lost so many men to the first two attacks led by the Roman armies they suffered a great loss. It was then naturally feared that when the Romans won the third conquest they would experience a similar hostile takeover of their culture and societal values and traditions.

However, the Greek ambassadors, merchants, and artists began to migrate to Rome once they found that it was a great place for opportunities. They realized that there was a wealth of opportunities for their business in a new city and so they made a massive migration to Rome. Many Greek slaves also

migrated to the area with their new masters, further increasing the influence of the Greeks on the Roman way of life. The migration brought a rush of Greek culture that fascinated the natives and many things were soon assimilated by Roman citizens. From literature and philosophy, to religion and education, all was grafted into the Roman culture. When the poet Horace witnessed this, he said, "Captive Greece took captive her rude conqueror" (Spielvogel, 118). Although the Romans had conquered the Greeks, the Greeks were able to "take captive" their conqueror by infiltrating their conqueror's homeland with their own culture and values.

## VIDEO

Chapter Six - Answer the Critical Thinking Question on the first page of Chapter 6

What did one historian mean when he said that the Romans became Christians and the Christians became Romans?

In the early history of Christianity, the followers were not well accepted or assimilated into the Roman society. With the advent of the Church, the Roman politics viewed Christianity as a small and harmless branch of Judaism, which was not entirely inaccurate (Spielvogel, 161). Throughout history the Romans were known for their relative religious tolerance, as long as the Church did not offer any danger or disruption to the general way of life and political rule of the time (Spielvogel, 161). As the followers of Christianity grew in numbers they were seen to be more of a threat to the Roman government since they defied many rules of Roman society. This included praying to different Gods, avoiding certain festivals and

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ceremonies, holding meetings in secret, and displaying an eerie sense of connectivity among the different congregations led the government to accuse them of treason against the state (Speilvogel, 162).

Eventually, after centuries of sporadic persecution, the Christians gained more acceptance within society. Although they attracted many followers that immigrated to the area they were able to assimilate themselves into the Roman culture over time. Additionally, the Roman government and the Roman public began to become more accepting of the Christian church. The Roman public started to become more Christian as they found the many things that the Church could offer them in their way of life. For instance, the Christian church offered a message of salvation and acceptance to all. This meant that all of the social classes of the Roman society were free to worship in equality within the Christian church, and they were able to find a welcoming and kind society (Spielvogel, 162). Within the large and impersonal Roman Empire many citizens could feel invaluable or worthless, but the Christian church taught acceptance, kindness, charity, and love for your neighbors that gave the new followers a sense of belonging that they had never had before. This new religion offered the Romans a personal connection to their deity through prayer and a human connection to the Savior, which helped to eliminate the difficulties of certain mythological practices. As many more Romans became Christians after realizing what the religion offered to them, the Roman public and government became more tolerant of the Christian population once more. As the Christian population grew within the Roman Empire the Christians became a larger part of the

Roman society and melded into the Roman culture more and more over time.

VIDEO

## **PART TWO:**

Historical ID's - 40 pts (two points each) (Please number them 1- 20)

Choose Twenty people OR events that you most believe were of major historical significance in these chapters. Identify who or what they were and explain why they had historical significance. Be very specific with examples or outcomes of these people or events. Be sure to number them 1-20 so that I can readily read/grade them more efficiently. These ought to be NO MORE than one fully developed and paragraph each.

Choose twenty people OR events that you most believe were of major historical significance in these chapters

First Agricultural Revolution

Development of Civilization

Cyrus - Known in history as a wise man, Cyrus established the Persian Empire, building it upon principles of tolerance and integration. His methods are revered in history as revolutionary compared to the preceding empires. Those whom he conquered he allowed to continue on in their traditions and religious beliefs and serve in positions of power within their own lands and within the Empire alongside the native Persian officials. In summary, his

legacy of tolerance stems from the way that he allowed those brought into the empire to have a stake in the empire's success. (Spielvogel, 44).

Hammurabi - The king of old Babylonia, Hammurabi founded an empire that was eventually destroyed by raids from Kassites. His code of laws is one of the greatest of the ancient codes. The code, which addresses such issues as business and family relations, labor, private property, and personal injuries, is generally humanitarian (Spielvogel, 10).

King Solomon - Solomon, king of the Israelite nation, led his people to the height of their power and wealth. Through this golden age, Solomon built a Temple that housed the sacred artifacts of his people. This temple became the focal point of the Israelite faith and their identity (Spielvogel, 35).

Throughout history the Temple has been destroyed several times and each time the people rebuilt it, until they were finally conquered and it lay in ruins. To this day a remnant of the Israelites, the Jews, still claim that one day it will be rebuilt again.

Socrates - A simple stonemason, Socrates left his mark in how we perceive the world. Everything to him had to be viewed with critical examination, questioning everything, even the actions of authority. This revolutionary perspective inspired his pupils to lay a foundation for scientific theory and reasoning through survey and observation. This all led to Athens becoming the intellectual hub of its time and this influence is felt to this day.

Thucydides - Considered the greatest historian of ancient times, Thucydides wrote his observations and analysis of events with a rational view of human behavior, dedicating his time to recording accurate information in his

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historical works. Moreover, his rational study of human behavior led to his idea that patterns in past events could be used as an indicator of what might happen in present day society. This method of connecting the past to the present as a means of prediction is still used today. (Spielvogel, 72).

The Formation of Democracy - Formed in the times of political unrest in late sixth century Athens, democracy was presented as a new idea of government where the power is invested in the people. The people as a whole could determine laws, policies, trade and other aspects of government. Even quickly after the formation of this new government Athens began to experience an explosion of power and prosperity as the people became more united than ever before. This historical landmark influenced the formation of governments in the western world hundreds of years later (Spielvogel, 62).

Cleisthenes - After gaining control of fragile Athens with the removal of Isagoras, Cleisthenes created a system of government that dissolved the power of the aristocrats and diminished the idea of nobility. The government gave substantial power to the people as a whole, allowing them to vote on who would be members of the Athenian Assembly (Spielvogel, 62). Any member of this assembly who seemed to be gaining too much power could be exiled by a vote of the people. This functioned as a protection from tyrants and the return of an oligarchy. Cleisthenes democratic form of government greatly strengthened Athens, swiftly moving the city to a period called the Greek Classical Age (The Greeks, Crucible of Civilization).

Alexander the Great - Following through with his father's plans of expanding Greek domination into Asia Minor, Alexander the Great fulfilled this dream ten years into his campaigns. Though known for his military achievements, Alexander's greatest influence was found in the way that he spread the Greek culture to the former Persian Empire. In this time period, known as the Hellenistic Age, Greek influence penetrated into all aspects of life in Asia Minor, melding the area into a unique blend of cultures of both Greek and eastern ways (Spielvogel, 87-88). Influences such as large volumes of Greek historical and biographical literature can be found from this age in time. In parts of western India the Greek influence poured into the Buddhist expression of their beliefs as they made a realistic sculpture of Buddha made in an artistic form that prior to this time was known only to the Greeks (Spielvogel, 98).

Julius Caesar- A well-known politician from Roman history, Julius Caesar started his famous political campaigns with an ambitious military career. After spending a long period of time in a position of military command, Caesar returned to Rome, and requested a position within the Senate, but he was denied. Refusing to accept denial, Caesar joined with two other powerful politicians to form the First Triumvirate (Spielvogel, 129), which combined the wealth and power of the three men into a dominating and powerful political force. After the death of Crassus, one of the triumvirs, a war erupted between Caesar and Pompey for the dominating power in the Roman government. Using his military prowess and experience, and some political scheming, Caesar eventually remained the last triumvir surviving. Caesar was named a dictator of the Roman Empire in 47 B. C. During his reign, he

was known as an ambitious politician, radically re-organizing the Senate and other political structures in order to favor his rule, including large additions to the population full of citizens that had supported his campaign (Spielvogel, 130). However, Caesar was also known as a forgiving dictator, giving pardon to those that had opposed him. Caesar is responsible for changing the Roman calendar to the Egyptian calendar, which used 365 days based on the solar cycle, which is now known as the Julian calendar. He also had plans for many other revolutionary projects, but they were not carried out due to his assassination in 44 B. C. (Spielvogel, 130).

Augustus (Octavian)- Beginning his rule of the Roman Republic in 27 B. C. Octavian, or Augustus, was proclaiming, " the restoration of the Republic" after the devastating civil wars (Spielvogel, 138). Augustus was immediately received well by the public due to his idealized goals of equality, peace, and restoration. Augustus instituted a new order of government that named him the princeps, and the constitutional order became known as the principate (Spielvogel, 138). Augustus claimed that as princeps, he would be " the chief citizen among equals", showing the public that he would not be ruling as a dictator or a tyrant (Spielvogel, 138). In reality, the government was designed to have a constitutional monarch that ruled with a Senate that was elected by the people, but many of the decisions, orders, and positions of power were heavily weighted in favor of the princeps (Spielvogel, 138). Additionally, Augustus created a series of new reforms that were meant to restore the social health of the Roman public. These reforms included: a new religious cult meant to deify Julius Caesar, and to instill a unifying structure for the Roman public; a series of laws and decrees that were

designed to improve the moral values of the Roman society targeting divorce rates, adultery, and excessive spending for lavish feasts and parties; and, a decree that was meant to stimulate the growth of a new generation that taxed “ bachelors, widowers, and married persons who had fewer than three children” (Spielvogel, 141).