

The immediate and long term legacy of greek and roman civilizations

[History](#), [Ancient History](#)



Western Civ. 101 The immediate and long-term legacy of Greek and Roman civilizations Until the start of the Renaissance, in the mid 1300's, many of the brilliant ideas and advancements created and used by Greek and Roman civilizations remained dormant. Both, Greek and Roman, cultures were astounding at finding a better way or solution to handling problems and bettering their community. Most important aspects of a small city were thought out and discussed, rather than being decided by one dictator. Anything from government to language, art and architecture, and everything in between was considered and thought out to create a better understanding of life for a prospering civilization. The Greek civilization brought many new ideas, contributions, and trials to the table of development. Greek philosophers and Greek writers created the basis for practical thinking and idea development. The intellectual side of Greece was something that had never been seen before this time. Philosophers created a new way of observing people, their attitudes, and their everyday life. Morality and having an idea of what is just or right in a society was shown among the people and the way they chose to live their lives. Greek gods shared the characteristics and common problems of all Grecians. The Greek gods were meant to represent the people and remind them everyday how very much god-like they really were. Art, architecture, and building saw a large improvement as Greeks began creating structures that would last for hundreds of years, possibly forever if had not been ruined by vandals, intruders or war. The institution of a democratic government was the most important and notable development of Greece civilization on their time, as well as ours. Greece knew what to do with its power, how to handle it, and how to spread this

power among its citizens. The advancements of the Greeks as individuals and as a whole contributed to the prosperity and accomplishments of the Romans. This gave the Romans a strong foundation for building prosperous individuals, ideas, laws, and a government form. With a society to show them how problems were handled and life was lived, the Romans had a head start on becoming a well-developed empire. While Grecian art and architecture was considered spectacular, the Romans surpassed them in every way. The advancements made in Roman times to transportation, public building, streets, and villages all contributed to the rapid growing of Rome, as well as set standards for civilizations to come. As the Roman Empire got larger in size as well as population, the need for roads became an issue; these new allies of Rome would need a way to transport back and forth. When Rome extended their alliance and citizenship to surrounding city-states or civilizations, they spread their culture and identity further and further. Rome made a strong effort to connect with all of its allies as part of functioning as one whole, loyal, Empire. Although, the way Rome colonized was much different than the method the Greeks used, which consisted of entering a town, conquering it, taking what they wanted, and then having little contact, but for the most part remaining disconnected, while remaining allies with this town or civilization. Another large comparison between Greek and Roman civilizations is in their writers and thinkers. Plato, Aristotle, Socrates and Homer were all famous for their ideas and opinions on life and its struggles. Romans wrote about their ideas and problems with government. Cicero, Ovid, and Pliny were notable names in Roman literature, as well as Virgil, who wrote *The Aeneid*. Greek gods and goddesses had

exact similarities to Roman gods and goddesses, only with different names. The comparisons between the two civilizations are very evident, although we have yet to notice many of them. Greek civilizations showed their strength in the formation of a representative, or democratic, government, being the first one of its time. This was a large step forward in the development of rights for individuals. With a government that had to represent its people and their opinion on the matter, the aristocrats began to lose a hold in power. Prior to being a democratic society, all city-states in Greece, mainly Athens, abided by the rules of aristocratic landowners controlling the land. Cleisthenes held the first successful attempt of reinstating the four traditional classes, based on wealth and family relations, which led to the tyranny in the first place, with a division of demes based on area of residence. In this system, every Athenian had input and an opinion that was valued, the option of not participating did not exist. Greece's experience and prosperity in government showed over the years as they developed more and saw a large increase in population. Obviously, they had strength in building a strong government and maintaining it. The conquests taken on by the Greeks revealed their weaknesses. As Greeks began their expansion to areas beyond Peloponnesos, Crete, and Cyprus, they found that colonizing became very difficult. Establishing your own government in a society that has been governed a certain way for ages does not make for easy reform. Greeks began to see this as they ventured outside their territory. Rome held strength in the form of government they had adopted, much like Greece. The difference appeared in their military strength, power, and tactics, the Romans figured out how to back every idea with a plan, usually a well

though out plan. The other area Romans succeeded in where Grecians failed was the control and connections made with outside civilizations while still enforcing democracy and ensuring loyalty to the republic. Also, the first time such things as plumbing, sewage, and bathing tubs were seen was in the Roman times, something that had not come about for another thousand years after Roman cities were crushed leaving no remains. The overall immediate and long-term effect, which Greek and Roman civilizations had on history, is phenomenal. The language, forms of government, art, architecture, philosophers, and methods of record keeping are all things we inherited from these early civilizations. War-tactics that came from Rome, allowing them to conquer the known world in only fifty years, being something that was completely unheard of at that time, were studied by military generals such as George Patton and, without a doubt, many others. The Renaissance was considered a rebirth of the Greek and Roman arts, a time of reflection and imitation of the early Greek and Roman civilizations. It is hard to believe that civilizations, up until the Renaissance, relied very little on the establishments and ideas of these early developers.