

Ancient greece and its influence



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Ancient Greece: The Most Influential Civilization Throughout history, civilizations have had many forms of government and many styles of art and architecture. But despite some fantastic architecture and some legitimate forms of government, no civilizations have influenced today's government, art and architecture quite like the ancient Greeks. The Greeks invented democracy, which is the common government of the twenty-first century. Also, the Greeks were the first to create detailed sculptings and utilize the column, the same columns, in fact, that line the White House today.

While some civilizations have also created awe-inspiring architecture, they have not been as influential as the ancient Greeks. Although other civilizations have made contributions to twenty-first century life, none have done more than the Greeks. Their detailed art, stunning architecture and revolutionary idea of democracy have become staples in modern society. While other works of architecture have been prominent, no contributions have topped that of ancient Greece. Previous to the Greeks, art was primitive. It consisted of just simple pastel drawings or basic sculptures. The Greeks, without a doubt, revolutionized art.

For the first time in history, great diligence has been offered in the area of fine details and perfection. John Boardman, a renowned professor of ancient Greek art said " Greek artists of the fifth and fourth centuries B. C attained a manner of representation that conveys a vitality of life as well as a sense of permanence, clarity, and harmony" (Boardman 3). Greek art helped initiate the Greco-Buddhist art movement. Also, Greek art has directly influenced and inspired Michelangelo. Not only was the level of detail unprecedented for the time, but also the architecture of the sculptures was truly remarkable.

The balance of weight needed to achieve every piece is beyond unthinkable. This is also the first time people have ever been sculpted in motion. For example, the Egyptians would always paint or sculpt people in stationary poses, while the Greeks sculpted people, in particular men, playing popular sports at the time, such as javelin tossing. In the area of architecture, Greeks again have set groundbreaking precedents. Most notably in the area of column design. The Greeks had three main types of columns. In order of simplicity, were the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian columns respectively.

Since their creation, they have been a defining mark on just about any Greek building. Today, all over the world, these columns are still utilized functionally and as design features. As well, the Greeks built stunning temples devoted to their many Gods and Goddesses. The designers of these temples took many things into account that had never been thought of before. Dr. Robert Guiseppi of Cambridge University is a leader in the field of Greek history. In his words, the designers of temples took into account “ Column spacing and height and the curvature of floor and rooflines” (Guiseppi 47).

He proceeds to say, “ They were calculated and executed with remarkable precision to achieve a perfect balance, both structurally and visually” (Guiseppi). The evidence presented has clearly proven that Greek art and architecture are far from archaic, rather, vital, ubiquitous and, above all, influential in everyday life. Every civilization, both before and after the ancient Greeks have had a form of government. Most civilizations adopted an autocratic system by which one man held the balance of power. Prior to the Greeks, there was little variation in this system.

Around 550BC, that all changed. Athens developed the first democratic system of government. In this system, an ecclesia, made up of all male citizens over 18 years of age, would debate bills and advise the higher ups, also, in the later years of democracy, they elected the generals themselves. The council of 500 was comprised of 50 people, (30 years of age or older, male, and citizens of Athens) in ten specific governing committee's. People could only hold this position once in their lives and only for a tenth of a year. Finally the ten Generals would act as the " Presidents" of Athens.

They upheld democratic policy and decided upon military actions. Despite its initial simplicity, this system actually had a fairly modern form of what is now referred to as the system of checks and balances. Athenians figured that if any of the Generals held power for too long, an autocratic system would be the by-product. To keep the generals in line, they were re-elected by the ecclesia on a yearly basis. Dr. Josiah Ober of the Stanford university political science factually has said " Athens beats all other poleis on all measures of practical success" (Ober 6).

It has now been proven that the Athenian government was the most successful government of its time. This is reaffirming and solidifying the thesis statement proclaiming that the ancient Greeks have been the most influential civilization to the modern world. Not only was their government wildly successful, but also its general form is still followed today. Many say that, in fact, the Egyptians have added the most to today's knowledge of architecture. The main argument presented here is that the pyramids, in particular, the Great Pyramid of Giza, have influenced modern architects more than any ancient Greek creation.

The pyramids led to an advanced knowledge in triangle and subsequently many mathematical formulas. Also, they were not only accurately symmetrical for the time, but even by today's rigorous architectural and building standards they are almost perfectly symmetrical. An amazing feat considering the lack of technology at the time. However, Greek architecture has been far more influential to modern buildings. Firstly, although the pyramids are jaw dropping, they are not longer built today; therefore they have very little influence.

The Greek columns however, are used quite frequently today on a number of prominent buildings worldwide, most notably, the Whitehouse, the Abraham Lincoln memorial, and the Blue Mosque. The fact that they are used today clearly shows their influence worldwide. Mark Damen, faculty of Utah State University has said " In Athens, stands Holy structures...which mark an important turning point in the history of Western architecture not only for inaugurating a new type of building design, but also because it suggests that the ancient Greeks had begun to embrace a novel way of looking at the world" (Damen 3).

This statement reaffirms the fact that Greek temples were far ahead of their time and set the precedent for thousands of years to come. Also, in terms of worldwide influence, the Greeks have contributed more than just columns and temples. The Greeks transformed the common perception of acoustics by creating the amphitheatre. The amphitheatre was built into a rock face and could seat thousands. But even those hundreds of feet away from the performers could still hear their voices. This is due to the funnel-like acoustics in an amphitheatre.

Even with the invention of microphones, amphitheatres are still being built worldwide today. The Hollywood Bowl and most professional sports stadiums utilize amphitheatre technology. Although it goes without saying that the creation of the pyramids is magnificent, the ancient Greeks have, on a whole, contributed more to modern architecture than any other civilization. Despite the fact that many other civilizations have influenced the modern world greatly, no civilization has outdone the influence of ancient Greece.

The Greeks, have reformed the areas of art and architecture by adding a great deal of detail to artwork and sculptures while also creating buildings still marveled today. Furthermore, the Greeks were the first to use a democratic system of government; the basic principles of this system are utilized in almost every country. From the dawn of man, people have tried to create groundbreaking ideas in all aspects of life. It is clear, with the evidence presented, that no civilization has done more to influence the modern world than the ancient Greeks.