

Lesson 1 The Geography of Greece

MAIN IDEAS

Geography Rugged mountains divided Greece into many regions.

Geography The sea linked the regions of Greece to each other and to foreign regions. Sea trade became common.

Culture Trade helped the early Greeks develop a sophisticated culture.

Geography Shapes Ancient Greek Life

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What were the main features of the geography of Greece?

Landscape and Climate

- Greek mainland is a **peninsula**—body of land with water on three sides
 - this peninsula sticks out into Mediterranean Sea
 - southern tip is a second peninsula called the **Peloponnesus**
 - **isthmus**—narrow strip of land—links Peloponnesus to rest of Greece
- Greece also includes thousands of islands
- Mountains cover 70 to 80 percent of Greece, divide land into regions
- Rugged landscape, lack of large rivers made transportation hard
 - made it difficult to unite Greece under single government
- Mild, rainy winters and hot, dry summers
 - about 50 degrees Fahrenheit in winter, about 80 degrees in summer
- Climate encouraged outdoor activities, like athletic competitions

Agriculture

- Rocky land; only 20 to 30 percent good for farming; mostly in valleys
 - but over half of Greeks were farmers, herders
- Landowners could buy equipment, serve in army; viewed as upper class
- To get more farmland, Greeks founded colonies in places like Anatolia

Resources

- Greece lacked natural resources, metals—had to be found elsewhere
- Had stone for building and plenty of good harbor sites

REVIEW QUESTION

How did the mountains affect life in Greece?

Trade Helps Greece Prosper

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did the sea affect Greek life?

Highways of Water

- Mediterranean Sea branched into Ionian Sea to west, Aegean Sea to east
 - seas linked most parts of Greece, became transportation routes

A Seafaring People

- Greeks were skilled sailors
 - built rowing warships, sailing trade ships
- Small ships could sail around edges of Ionian, Aegean seas
- Fish were a big part of the diet, were traded fresh or dried

Trade and Commerce

- Not much grain produced, but surplus olive oil, wine, wool, pottery
- Greek city-states traded goods with each other
 - also traded around Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, to Egypt, Italy
- Bought grain, timber, animal hides, and slaves from other regions
 - also nuts, figs, cheese, flax for linen

REVIEW QUESTION

How did the sea help the Greek economy?

The Earliest Greeks

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did trade influence Greek culture?

Mycenaean Civilization

- Earliest Greeks arrived on peninsula about 2000 B.C.
- First civilization began on Peloponnesus; named for city of Mycenae
 - Mycenaeans were traders; each city was ruled by a king
 - civilization fell around 1200 B.C., possibly due to invasion
- Greek culture then declined, kept no written records
 - we know little about 1200 to 750 B.C.

New Advances in Greek Culture

- In time, Greek culture advanced again; Greeks learned from others
- **Phoenicians**—important trading people on eastern Mediterranean
 - spread their **alphabet**—writing system of 22 symbols, stood for sounds
- Greeks picked up Phoenician alphabet between 900 and 800 B.C.
 - Greeks adapted the alphabet; it became the one we use today
- Coins invented in Anatolia c. 650 B.C.; Greeks made coins by 500 B.C.

REVIEW QUESTION

What did the Greeks learn from trading with other peoples?

Lesson Summary

- The mountainous geography of Greece limited agriculture and political unity.
- The Greeks depended on the sea to connect with each other and with the wider world.
- Trade brought an alphabet and coins to Greece.

Why It Matters Now . . .

The Greek alphabet influenced the development of all Western alphabets, including the English alphabet.