GREECE
An interactive guide for families
ANCIENT GREECE

What we think of today as the Ancient Greek civilization lasted for about 850 years, from 900 B.C. to 31 B.C. Classical Greek culture had a profound influence on the art, architecture, literature, commerce, politics, and social structure of the civilizations that followed it. Today we are going to take a look at some of the pottery and sculpture created during this important period in history, and explore what we can learn from these pieces about what life was like for the people who made them. The Ancient Greek gallery is located on the lower level of the Museum. Turn to the right when you get to the bottom of the stairs, and you will see cases full of large vases. This is the Greek gallery.

GREEK GODS

Like most ancient peoples, the ancient Greeks worshipped many gods. Most of them represented forces of nature, like Poseidon, the god of the sea. The goddess Athena was different. She was a goddess of many things: war, wisdom, and the domestic arts (like spinning and weaving). She also was the patron goddess of Athens, one of the most famous and powerful Greek city-states. In the large case to your left, find the large vase, called an amphora, with a picture of Athena on it. It stands behind a smaller vase, called a hydria, which held water. Athena is walking between two columns, each with a rooster on top.

WHAT IS SHE WEARING? CAN YOU DESCRIBE HOW SHE IS DRESSED?

______________________________________________________________________________

You can recognize Athena on other works of art by her helmet and shield, reminding us that she is the goddess of war. This vase was important in the life of Athens, Athena’s city. Once every four years the city of Athens gave a big party in honor of Athena. A long procession wound through the streets and up the hill of the Acropolis to the temple of Athena, where they presented her statue with a new cloak called a peplos. As part of the celebration, the Athenians held a big barbecue. They also held contests: running races, wrestling, chariot racing, and even poetry and drama.

On the opposite side of the Athena amphora, which you can see by walking around to the other side of the case, you will see a picture of one of the contests. What kind of contest do you see?

________________________
________________________
________________________

See the answer below:

Yes, it’s chariot racing! Winners of these contests would have vases like this filled with olive oil, which athletes rubbed on their bodies. The Greeks also cooked with olive oil, so it was very precious to them.
HAVE YOU EVER PARTICIPATED IN A CONTEST? WHAT KIND?

DID THEY HAVE PRIZES? WHAT WERE THEY?

WOULD YOU WANT A LARGE VASE OF OLIVE OIL AS A PRIZE?

GREEK HEROES

Besides gods and goddesses, the Greeks also had great heroes who could do amazing things. One of the famous Greek heroes was Theseus. In the same case as the amphora we just looked at, but higher up, you will find another amphora with a picture of Theseus killing the Minotaur, a monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull. Theseus, the son of the king of Athens, was sent to Crete to kill the Minotaur and free the Athenian youths the Minotaur was holding captive. Theseus went home a hero and became the king of Athens.

Another important Greek hero was Herakles, the strongest person who ever lived. You may know him by his Roman name of Hercules. You can see Herakles with his nephew on the large amphora in the center of the gallery. Here they are fighting a monster with nine heads called the Hydra.

Herakles was told he must accomplish 12 almost impossible deeds. Of course, being a hero, he managed to do all 12. In the deed that is pictured here, he needed some help. When one of the monster's heads was cut off, two heads grew back in its place. To stop this from happening, the nephew of Herakles, Iolaus, used a burning torch to sear the monster's neck each time Herakles cut off a head. This prevented new heads from growing back.

CAN YOU SEE THE BURNING TORCH IOLAUS IS HOLDING? DOES THE HYDRA REMIND YOU OF ANOTHER ANIMAL?

Killing the Hydra was actually the second of Herakles's 12 deeds. His first deed was to kill the Nemean Lion. After he accomplished this task, he always wore the lion's skin. You can identify Herakles on other works of art by his club and by the lion skin.
VESSELS

Now let’s look at the psykter, a container used to hold wine. It’s standing alone in a case in the middle of the room and has an image of a group of men drinking wine on it. The psykter full of wine would have been placed in a larger container filled with cold water to keep the wine cool. Ancient Greek men liked to go out at night and meet other men to talk, drink, and enjoy music. Their gatherings were called symposia.

LOOK AT THE PICTURES ON THE SIDE OF THE PSYKTER. WHAT ACTIVITIES DID THE ANCIENT GREEK MEN ENJOY DOING AT THEIR PARTIES?

CAN YOU TELL WHAT MATERIAL THE ANCIENT GREEKS USED TO MAKE THESE VASES?

Yes, they were made of clay, which was baked in an oven called a kiln. There are many different types, or shapes, of Greek vases. We have looked at three in the gallery today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vase Shape</th>
<th>Vase Name and Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psykter</td>
<td>used for cooling wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphora</td>
<td>a two-handled vase used for storage and transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydria</td>
<td>a three-handled vase used for drawing water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Draw a line from the vase shape to its correct name and description.
JEWELRY
Some ancient Greek women liked to wear fancy jewelry. In the case on the right, across from the psykter, are two round brooches, or pins. They are made of gold with garnets (red jewels) and enamels on them. A goddess is pictured on each of the pins. Athena is on one, and the goddess Artemis is on the other. Both of these goddesses were unmarried and were very strong, powerful, and independent. They made great role models for Greek women! Because we find their portraits on a lot of ancient Greek jewelry, we think these goddesses were popular among Greek women. Artemis, pictured here with a quiver of arrows over her shoulder, was the goddess of the hunt.

CAN YOU FIND THE ARROWS?
ATHENA CAN BE IDENTIFIED BY HER HELMET. CAN YOU FIND IT?
WHERE DO YOU THINK ANCIENT GREEK WOMEN WORE THESE PINS?
A woman would have pinned them to her robe, which is called a himation. Some think women would have worn them on their shoulders; others think on the front and the back of the robe.
WHERE WOULD YOU WEAR THEM?

Greek, Hellenistic, Thessaly. Roundels with busts of Artemis and Athena, 2d century B.C. Gold, garnet, and enamel; diam. 7.9 cm. each. Museum purchase (y1938.49-50) (photo: Bruce M. White)
Before we end our tour today, we are going to take a look at some sculptures of the heads of famous Greek men. Go through the doorway into the Roman gallery. The ancient Romans loved ancient Greek art so much that ancient Roman artists often copied ancient Greek sculptures.

On the wall to the far left are three heads of famous Greek men that were made by ancient Roman artists. Farthest back is the head of the famous Greek epic poet, Homer. He wrote *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, tales about the heroes of the Trojan War—Achilles, Agamemnon, Hector, and Odysseus.

The man in the middle is Demosthenes, the most famous Greek orator, or speaker. Athens was a democracy. People voted for laws and elected officials. To persuade or convince others to vote for their ideas or candidates, they had to learn to speak persuasively. Demosthenes was the most persuasive speaker the Greeks had ever heard.

A third famous Greek is Socrates, a teacher and philosopher who loved to question his fellow Athenians about goodness, beauty, and government. One of his students, Plato, wrote down the things that Socrates taught, and they are still studied today.
Here are some suggestions for ways that you can continue your Greek Adventure at home if you like.

Today you learned about many myths from Ancient Greece. A big part of Greek culture was the theater, and the myths often performed by the actors and actresses. Below are instructions for making your own puppets so you can act out the myths you learned about today!

**You will need:**
Cardstock or sturdy construction paper
Popsicle sticks
Scissors
Glue
Crayons/colored pencils/markers

This project really allows you to use your imagination! Create the body of the character out of the cardstock, using markers/crayons/colored pencils to decorate. You can base your drawing and decorating on the drawings of the characters that you saw today, or come up with something completely different! Once you finish decorating your character, cut him or her out. Next, glue a popsicle stick to the back. This is the handle for your puppet. Make as many different puppets as you need to act out the myth. Now you're all set to put on a show, just like the ancient Greeks!
SUGGESTED READING

Picture books

*The Goatherd and the Shepherdess: A tale from Ancient Greece,* retold by Lenny Hort; pictures by Lloyd Bloom

Non-fiction for young children

*Step Into: Ancient Greece,* by Richard Tames

*National Geographic Investigates Ancient Greece: Archaeology Unlocks the Secrets of Ancient Greece,* by Marni McGee

Non-fiction for older children

*The Twelve Labors of Hercules,* by James Riordan, illustrated by Christina Balit

*The First Olympic Games: A Gruesome Greek Myth with a Happy Ending,* retold by Jean Richards, illustrated by Kat Thacker

All of these books can be found in the children's section of the Princeton Public Library.