

Unit 14 Who were the ancient Greeks?

ABOUT THE UNIT

In this unit children find out about the way people lived in the ancient Greek empire. They use a range of archaeological and written sources, select and record information and interpret the past in different ways.

WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit builds on work that the children have done on the way of life of societies in the past, eg Unit 8 'What were the differences between the lives of rich and poor people in Tudor times?' It offers a contrast to Unit 10 'What can we find out about ancient Egypt from what has survived?' by focusing on an ancient European civilisation. This unit could be combined with Unit 15 'How do we use ancient Greek ideas today?'

ADAPTING THE UNIT FOR A DIFFERENT AGE GROUP

Year 3 and 4 children could:

- spend more time considering and gaining practice in discriminating between time AD and time BC
- focus on finding out about the daily life of people living in Athens and Sparta and less on the concept of democracy
- be given more structured guidance on completing the written tasks, eg by completing structured enquiry sheets about the Greek gods
- compare a narrower range of reasons for the Greeks acting as they did

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if the children have:

- learnt about the way of life of people from different cultures who lived in the distant past
- considered some of the attitudes and values of people living in the distant past, their motives and the results of their actions
- used artefacts and pictures as sources of information

VOCABULARY

In this unit, children will have opportunities to use:

- words associated with ancient Greece, eg *city state, empire, democracy, government, slaves, citizen*
- words associated with the ancient Greek acropolis, eg *temple, theatre, Parthenon, stadium, gymnasium*
- words associated with warfare, eg *enemies, hoplite, armour, weapons, tactics, Persian, Marathon*

RESOURCES

- postcards and holiday brochures for Greece
- a large map of the ancient Greek empire and surrounding territories
- postcards or pictures of ancient Greek pottery
- plans of the Acropolis, Marathon and Greek temples
- stories of Greek myths and legends
- materials to make masks and costumes
- a range of reference books about ancient Greece
- information sources on the Olympic games, including pictures of Olympia and buildings, a timetable and description of events, reference books

EXPECTATIONS

at the end of this unit

most children will:

place the ancient Greek civilisation accurately on a time line and demonstrate their understanding of BC and AD; describe important features of life in ancient Greece, and compare life in different city states; explain some of the beliefs of the ancient Greeks and why they held them; understand the reasons for and results of key events; interpret an event from one perspective and in so doing show an appreciation of other possible interpretations; select and combine information from written and archaeological sources

some children will not have made so much progress and will:

know that the ancient Greek civilisation was a long time ago; describe some features of life in ancient Greece; know some of the ancient Greek gods, and what they represented; select information from one or two sources

some children will have progressed further and will:

compare aspects of ancient Greek civilisation and society today; compare different interpretations of events and give reasons for the differences; understand strengths of and similarities between different sources of information; select and combine information to produce extended descriptions of aspects of life in ancient Greece

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

- about the location, climate and terrain of Greece
- to place the ancient Greek civilisation in time
- that the ancient Greek civilisation occurred 'Before Christ'
- that ancient Greece consisted of city states

- what is meant by democracy
- some of the ideas of people living in Athens and Sparta

- to infer information about Greek wars and warfare from illustrations and maps

- the main characters and events of a key battle
- that the battle may be interpreted in different ways and why this is so
- that modern events may have connections with the past

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Where and when was ancient Greece?

Give children postcards, maps, and holiday brochures of modern Greece and ask them what the pictures tell us about the climate of Greece, the landscape and terrain, the buildings, etc. Record their responses on the board or flip chart.

Discuss with the children what ancient means and place the period of the ancient Greek Empire on the class time line. Discuss or recap on BC and AD and relate these to periods the children have already covered.

Locate mainland Greece and its islands on a map. Discuss the physical features and highlight the difficulty of travel, eg *Would it be easiest to travel by sea or land?* Relate this to the idea of city states, which were isolated from each other by the difficulties of communication.

What were the similarities and differences between Athens and Sparta?

Locate Athens and Sparta on a map and ask the children to describe their location. Comment on the fact that these two states had their own laws, money, rulers, etc and were rivals.

Prepare a number of conflicting statements, eg *We welcome writers, no writers here; we welcome visitors, we throw out visitors; we like books and free speech, no reading here; our boys go to school, our boys train to be soldiers; we trade with everyone, we do not allow trade; the sea is important to us, we control the states around us to protect us; our women must not be seen outside the house on their own, our women train to be soldiers and are fit; we allow every citizen to discuss new laws and vote on them and we call it democracy, we have strict rules and expect them to be followed and our kings make our decisions.*

Ask the children to sort the statements under the headings: 'Athens near the sea, outward-looking and adventurous', 'Sparta land-locked, inward-looking and nervous'. Ask them to decide whether they would prefer to live in Athens or Sparta. Why?.

What made ancient Greek fighters so powerful?

Referring to maps, discuss with the children why the Greeks needed an army and a navy.

Give the children postcards or pictures of ancient Greek pottery, including some illustrating Greek soldiers fighting and ships. Discuss what information about Greek soldiers, weapons and ships can be gained from looking closely at the illustrations.

Ask the children to look closely at the decoration on the pots and to select ones that show soldiers and ships. Ask them to draw a detailed, labelled diagram of a Greek soldier showing his equipment, armour and weapons, and of a trireme (an ancient Greek warship). Discuss the armour the soldiers are wearing and the weapons they are carrying, and how the boats were powered, the number of rows of oars, and how the boats might have attacked enemies' boats. Discuss what made the men and weapons so powerful and if enemies are shown, how the Greek armour and weapons are different from those of the opposition. *Which side had the better weapons and armour. Why?*

Was the battle of Marathon a great victory for the ancient Greeks?

Tell the story of the Greek success against the Persian army at the Battle of Marathon, noting key characters and making a time line of events. Discuss with the children what happened. *What might the Athenians' view of the Spartan refusal to help have been? Why would the Athenians have been so proud of their success? What would the Spartan view of the battle have been? Why would the Greeks have built a temple at Marathon after the battle?*

Referring to a map, help the children to calculate or estimate how far it was from Marathon to Athens, and make the connection with the modern athletic event. Ask the children to recount the story of the battle from the point of view of either an Athenian or a Spartan and to illustrate their account.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

CHILDREN

- locate Greece on a map and ancient Greece on a time line
- discuss the climate and physical features of the Greek mainland and islands
- recognise that ancient Greece is located BC and that more recent periods in history are AD

- know that Athens and Sparta were city states and governed themselves
- distinguish between the beliefs of the Athenians and Spartans and know some reasons why they held those beliefs

- give reasons why the Greeks needed a navy, eg *separate city states that argued with each other, many very long coasts and borders that required protection, wish to expand their empire*
- produce labelled drawings of Greek soldiers and ships on the basis of their observations
- infer information about the Greek army and navy from their observations

- complete a written account of the Battle of Marathon showing understanding of the perspective of either an Athenian or a Spartan on the battle
- explain why a marathon race is just over 26 miles long

POINTS TO NOTE

Children could be asked to bring in any postcards they have from resorts in Greece. Explaining the use of 'BC' provides an opportunity to reinforce understanding of negative numbers.

Explain that information about Sparta comes largely from Athenian writers because Spartans did not write histories or other books. Discuss the implications of this for the reliability of the information.

The class discussion provides opportunities to discuss the way important decisions are made in the UK today and the extent to which they are democratic. Links can be made to citizenship and values through work about the Greek system of government, the role of women, differences in Greek society, and the widespread use of slaves.

The significance of archaeological evidence such as pottery as a source of information on ancient Greece should be emphasised. Some time could be spent studying Greek vases, eg *What are the objects in the pictures? What might they be used for? What are they made from? How do you know? What colours are used? How are they decorated?*

This discussion could help the children understand more about ancient Greek culture and the craft skills practised.

Explain that the Greeks were the first to write histories and this is why we have documentary accounts of battles.

Background information about the rivalry between Greeks and Persian kings could be a useful starting point. Comparison could be made with Vikings ships and fighting methods (Unit 6C).

Children could use a graphics IT package to produce illustrations in the style of a painting on Greek pottery.

This activity can be linked to work focused on 'point of view' in narrative reading and writing, eg *developing understanding of how an agreed set of events can be described and interpreted differently.*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

- to deduce information about Greek beliefs and religious practices from pictures of buildings
- about the beliefs of the ancient Greeks
- to compare the beliefs of the ancient Greeks with those of other cultures

- to deduce information about an aspect of the Greek way of life from pictures of buildings and texts
- to combine information from several sources
- about the role of the theatre in the way of life of the Greeks
- to structure work in the form of a play

- to summarise what they have learnt about the ancient Greeks
- to appreciate the range of different sources of information that can be used to find out about the ancient Greeks
- that different sources can provide different kinds of information

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Who did the ancient Greeks worship and why?

Discuss with the children plans of the Acropolis and pictures of temples, *eg their size, the decoration, the materials they are made from.*

Ask the children to locate Mount Olympus on a map. Introduce it as the home of the gods and recap or introduce myths and legends. Ask each child to read a story about a different Greek god and complete a three-column grid with the column headings: 'Name of the god', 'Symbol of the god', and 'The aspect of the world the god is responsible for'. Ask each child to feed back the main points of their story to the rest of the class who listen and complete their grid for each of the gods.

Tell the children that stories about the gods were often included in plays performed in Greek theatres. Ask them to produce a storyboard for the story they read, which they could use as the basis of a play script.

What happened at the theatre?

Ask the children to look at the plans of the Acropolis and locate the theatres. Ask them to use the plans and a range of texts to find out as much as possible about Greek theatres, *eg the shape, how many people could attend a performance, the position of the stage.* Draw their attention to the altar and emphasise that the theatre was part of religious festivals. Ask them to find out about the sort of plays the ancient Greeks went to see and whether slaves and citizens went to the theatre.

Tell the children they are going to work in groups to present a short play in the ancient Greek style. Discuss the information they need, *eg Who were the actors? How many would have had speaking parts? What costumes did they wear? What props did they have? What tasks have to be done?* Help the children shape these ideas into a 'work schedule' for the production of the plays.

Divide the children into groups and ask each group to select one of the storyboards they produced, in the previous activity, to perform as a play. Ask them to produce a script for the chorus, make the masks, select the costumes, etc. Ask each group to perform their play to the rest of the class and hold a vote on which is the best play.

What do the sources tell us about the importance of the Olympic games to the ancient Greeks?

Ask the children to recall the different sources they have used to find out about the ancient Greeks. List the sources on the board.

Tell the children they are going to show how much they can find out about the Olympic games using a range of different sources.

Give groups of children 'information packs' on the Olympic games and a set of statements about the games. Ask them to look for information on the buildings, the events and the purpose of the games, and use this information to select statements that describe the games, *eg It was a time for all the city states to come together. It was a competition when the city states could show how strong they were. The Olympic games were a religious festival to worship Zeus. Women and slaves could not enter the games.* Ask the children to list the sources they used.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

CHILDREN

- make observations and inferences from pictures and plans of buildings
- answer questions showing understanding of myths and legends
- show that they can connect one or more Greek gods with their symbols and areas of responsibility by completing the grid
- show that they know the main points in the story of one Greek god
- answer questions and show that they understand that Greek gods had some human characteristics and that they helped the Greeks to explain the world around them

- recognise the main features of a Greek theatre
- understand the religious connections between theatre and religious festivals
- find out the sorts of plays the Greeks liked and who wrote them
- contribute to the preparation and performance of a play that demonstrates the key features of Greek drama

- identify appropriate sources for finding out about the ancient Greeks
- make inferences about the Olympic games from a variety of sources
- select sources to show why the Olympic games was important to the ancient Greeks

POINTS TO NOTE

This activity could provide the basis of a comparison with beliefs and practices in other societies, *eg Egypt, the Vikings, Anglo-Saxons*, and could link with religious education.

Explain that sacrifices to the deity took place outside the temple, and then worshippers entered to ask the statue for favours or give thanks. Explain that gods had nothing to do with the afterlife and were worshipped for favours on earth.

The children could be given photocopied sheets depicting the symbols of the gods to help them when completing the grid.

This activity could be extended by asking children to research ancient Greek authors and playwrights and their writings.

This task could be adapted by giving children a structured set of tasks to work through.

The final task provides opportunities for links with art and music and would take considerable time. It can be linked to work on play scripts, and reading and presenting plays, *eg considering the sorts of stage directions actors in an ancient Greek play might require.* Children could consider the use of a 'chorus' in these plays and develop understanding of how a chorus is different from an individual character.

Plays could be performed to year 3 and 4 children or in an assembly, or to parents as part of their work in speaking and listening.

The information pack should include pictures of Olympia and Greek vases illustrating the different events, and a timetable of the games and a range of texts.

These tasks could be adapted by giving children specific questions about the Olympic games.

This activity can help to reinforce children's information retrieval skills, *eg scanning different texts to identify specific or relevant information, close reading to develop understanding of the topic.*



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