

Ellie's Exploration: Life in Ancient Greece

Learning objective: To understand the structure of Ancient Greek city-states and the daily life of citizens.

Read the passage carefully. Use your historical knowledge to answer the questions in full sentences, ensuring you justify your reasoning where required.

Ellie the elephant, our expert in history, has travelled back in time to explore the fascinating world of Ancient Greece. Unlike modern countries governed by a single leader, Ancient Greece was divided into independent city-states, known as poleis. Each city-state, such as Athens or Sparta, functioned like a small country with its own laws and government. In Athens, citizens gathered in the agora—a bustling marketplace—to discuss politics and philosophy. It was here that the concept of democracy was born, allowing male citizens to vote on new laws. High above the city sat the Acropolis, a fortified hill featuring magnificent temples dedicated to their gods, such as the Parthenon. While men spent their days debating in the assembly or training for battle, many women managed the household. Life was shaped by the rugged landscape, which made travel difficult and encouraged the growth of these isolated, fiercely independent communities. Ellie notes that despite their differences, the Greeks shared a common language, culture, and a deep reverence for their mythology, which unified them during the pan-Hellenic Olympic Games.

Word bank: Acropolis · City-state · Democracy · Agora · Philosopher · Polis

1. Identify two features of an Ancient Greek city-state mentioned in the text. (2 marks)

2. What was the primary function of the agora in Athenian life? (2 marks)

3. Explain why the landscape of Greece might have contributed to the creation of independent city-states rather than one unified empire. (3 marks)

4. Based on the text, what can you infer about the social roles of men and women in Ancient Athens? (3 marks)

5. Do you think the invention of democracy was the most significant achievement of Ancient Greece? Justify your answer. (4 marks)

Draw: Draw a map of a fictional Ancient Greek city-state, including a high Acropolis with a temple on a hill, a bustling agora marketplace, and surrounding rugged mountains.



Extension challenge: Imagine you are a citizen of an Ancient Greek city-state. Write a short diary entry describing a day spent in the agora. Then, compare and contrast your life with that of someone living in a different city-state, like Sparta. What might happen if a merchant from Athens travelled to Sparta to trade goods?