

Ancient Greece: Philosophers, City-States and Democracy

Learning objective: To understand the structure of Ancient Greek society, the origins of democracy in Athens, and the significance of the city-state system.

Read each question carefully and use your historical knowledge of Ancient Greece to provide detailed, analytical responses. Ellie the Elephant is helping you today—remember to use your memory to recall key facts about how the Greeks lived and governed.

Ancient Greece was not a single country as we know them today. Instead, it was composed of independent city-states, known as poleis. Each polis had its own laws, customs, and government. Athens, famous for its development of democracy, allowed eligible citizens to vote on laws in the Assembly. In contrast, other states like Sparta were governed differently, focusing heavily on military discipline. The Agora served as the heart of public life, where trade occurred and ideas were debated by great thinkers.

Word bank: Democracy · City-state · Oligarchy · Assembly · Citizen · Agora · Philosophy · Acropolis

1. Explain the difference between a 'city-state' and a modern country. Why did this structure make Greece unique? (3 marks)

2. In Athens, the 'Assembly' was a central part of democracy. Who was allowed to participate in these meetings, and who was excluded from voting? (2 marks)

3. Compare and contrast the priorities of Athens and Sparta. Justify why these two city-states often had conflicting perspectives. (4 marks)

4. If you were a merchant in the Agora, what goods might you be trading, and what coins would you be using to ensure fair exchange? (2 marks)

5. What might happen if a city-state decided to abandon their traditional government to adopt the Athenian democratic model? Explain your reasoning. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a map showing the layout of a typical Ancient Greek city-state. Include the Acropolis on a high hill, the Agora in the centre, and the surrounding defensive walls.



Extension challenge: Imagine you are a philosopher in the Agora. Write a short speech (150 words) convincing the citizens that justice is more important than wealth. Use rich vocabulary and persuasive language to address the crowd.