

City-States of Ancient Greece

Ancient Greece was a collection of **city-states**, each with its own government and ways of life. Two of the most well-known city-states were Athens and Sparta. While there were many differences between the city-states, there were also a number of similarities.



Athens and Sparta were two of the most powerful and influence city-states of Ancient Greece.

Who ran the city-states?

Ancient Greece is known to be the birthplace of **democracy**, but in reality, not all city-states were democracies. While Athens was a democracy, it only allowed men to vote. Women in Athens were not seen as citizens. Athenian citizens, any man over the age of 18 and born in Athens, were encouraged to take part in the government and attend the assemblies. Sparta was an **oligarchy**, which means only a few individuals held the power. Once elected, the officials held their position for life. Only male members of the

nobility were able to be elected officials. Both the governments of Athens and Sparta were responsible for the day-to-day laws and governing of the citizens.

What was the economy in each society?



Athens used coins like these to make trade easier. It was easier to carry coins than large heavy bars, so they became necessary to societies that traded.

Sparta's economy was based on farming and conquering other lands. Sparta took the land they needed from their neighbors and encouraged military power. Sparta discouraged trade because it was afraid contact with other city-states would lead to new ideas and weaken the government. In addition, Sparta used heavy iron bars rather than coins, which made trade difficult.

Athens encouraged trade with its neighbors because it was unable to produce the food needed for all the people. Athenians traded in a large marketplace called an **agora**, using coins to make trade easier.

How were the citizens educated?

Both city-states educated their citizens in order to become productive members of society. The focus of the education was very different in each city-state. Sparta believed that a good citizen was someone who could protect the city-state, so education focused on military training. From the age of 7, Spartan children were trained to fight. Girls also attended school and learned to defend the city-state. There was little time spent on reading and writing because Spartans did not think those skills were important.



All children in Sparta began their military training at age 7.



*In addition to learning to read and write,
Athenian boys learned to play the lyre.*

Athenians believed in the importance of a strong mind. Beginning at the age of 6, Athenian boys attended school where they learned to read, write, and do math. They also learned how to sing and play a **lyre**, an ancient Greece musical instrument. At 18 the men began their military training. Once their military training was complete, men from wealthy families would continue their education. Since women were not citizens, girls did not attend school. Instead they helped around the house, where they learned to cook, clean, spin thread, and weave cloth.

Ancient Greece was an important part of history, and its city-states gave many advancements to history. Both Athens and Sparta, the two most well-known city-states, were important to history. Even though there were some similarities, there were many differences between them.