The History and Influence of Ancient Greece

Video Transcript


Many of the fundamental elements of Western culture trace their origins to ancient Greece, a civilization that developed in the 11th century BCE. Along with the Roman world and Christianity, ancient Greece is one of the three foundational pillars of Western civilization.

The story of ancient Greece begins with the Dark Ages, between the 11th and 8th centuries BCE. During this period, we see the beginnings of the Greek city-states or poleis. By the end of this period, the Greek literary tradition has begun with the Homeric epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey. The first Olympic Games take place in 776 BCE.

The 8th-6th centuries BCE mark the Archaic period in ancient Greece. The city-states expand in size, complexity, and power in this period, and we also have key military developments, such as the phalanx formation.

The 5th and 4th centuries BCE mark the Classical period, and the political and cultural achievements of Athens. These include developments in government, architecture, literature, and philosophy. This is also a period of constant warfare, first between the Greek city-states and the Persians, and in the Peloponnesian War between Greek factions led by Athens and Sparta.

By the middle of the 4th century BCE, the balance of power shifts to Macedonia, and Alexander the Great extends Greek civilization into the East with his many conquests. Following Alexander’s death in 323 BCE, Greece enters the Hellenistic period, a time of economic and trade expansion, as well as increased political fragmentation.

The Hellenistic period, along with ancient Greece as an empire, come to an end in 31 BCE, with Rome's conquest of the last Hellenistic kingdom, the Lagid kingdom of Egypt. However,
this did not end the spread or impact of Greek culture and ideas. The Romans embraced Greek philosophy, literary forms, and art, and Koine Greek continued as the lingua franca for trade and commerce in the Mediterranean and East.

Today, we see the impact of ancient Greek ideas, art forms, and philosophy in our culture. It continues to influence our government, scientific thinking, religious and spiritual beliefs, and literature.

And, of course, we still celebrate the Olympic Games.

About this transcript:

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