

# Ancient Greece



"World Visits." *Acropolis Of Athens Is An Ancient Citadel In Greece*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 June 2014.

## Geography

**Greece** is located on the **Balkan Peninsula** in southern Europe. A peninsula is a piece of land surrounded by water on three sides. The bodies of water that surround Greece are: the Mediterranean Sea to the south, the Ionian Sea to the west, and the Aegean Sea to the east. Greece is made up of many smaller peninsulas and hundreds of islands; some small others large. Most of the landscape was very mountainous and it required a great deal of effort to travel. Because the Greeks were surrounded by so much sea, they had an **abundance** (large amount) of seafood. Early Greeks learned to sail and settled on areas close to the sea. However, the mountainous **terrain** and the poor soil quality of Greece made it difficult for farming. There simply was not enough flat and fertile land. Some of the crops they grew were grapes, olives, and barley. The seas, islands, and mountains isolated people from each other.

**Question: Can you name a peninsula in the United States? Is it good or bad thing to live on a peninsula? Why?**

**Question: What geographical advantages does the United States have to protect it against invaders?**

**Question: What problems can arise from a shortage of fertile farmland? Explain?**



"File:Greecemap.png." - KNILT. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014.

## City-States

The geography of Greece caused people and settlements to become **isolated** (or cut-off from) from one and other. It was difficult for people to cross the mountains and the seas. Greek settlements continued to grow over time and became **city-states**. The Greeks called their city-states a **polis** (pole-iss). We still use polis as a word stem in ELA class. For example: the city where superman is from was called Metropolis (Me tro-polis).

Each polis developed an independent identity of its own. Each city-state had its own form of government. Each city-state also had its own army and its own way of doing things. When someone asked an ancient Greek where he or she was from, they would not tell them that they were from Greece. Instead, they would say the name of the city-state that they lived in. For example, someone from Sparta would say he/she was a Spartan. You were Spartan before being Greek. Greek city-states only interacted with each other when necessary.

**Question: When someone asks you, "Where are you from?" do you tell them the country, state, or city in which you come from? Why do you think you do this?**

**Did you know:** Before the American Civil War, most Americans were more loyal to their state than the concept of the United States. "Where are you from?" another would ask. They would answer with the name of their state. This was true both the northern states, southern states, and western territories. It wasn't until after the war that our country truly became united and people changed their answer to the United States.

However, Greek city-states also had some things in common. They were all Greek. They all worshipped the same gods and spoke the same language. They all ate similar foods. This made it easier for Greek city-states to come together when it benefitted all of them. In fact, there were times when several city-states had to form an **alliance** (an agreement between two or more parties to help each other in time of need) to work together to protect themselves and their independence.



An example of an alliance was the **Delian League**, several city-states working together under the leadership of Athens.

[http://business.wikinut.com/Prediction-and-Control-of-Human-Behavior-in-Organizations/.pxn31\\_e/](http://business.wikinut.com/Prediction-and-Control-of-Human-Behavior-in-Organizations/.pxn31_e/)

Most city-states also shared a similar design. The **urban** (city) area was typically at the center and was surrounded by a massive wall. The **rural** (countryside/farmland) area was beyond the wall, and was where the farms could be found. The amount of farmland beyond the city usually depended on a city-state's army and their ability to protect it from other city-states. The image below shows the typical set up of a city-state.



<http://www.hudsonfla.com/10hst.htm>

**Question: When you meet someone from a different town or state, what sort of things do you normally have in common with them?**

## **Athens and Democracy**

The most famous of all Greek city-states was **Athens**. The people of Athens placed a high importance on education and philosophy. They expanded their minds and exercised their bodies. Their culture was rich and they took great pride in being Athenians. Their ideas will greatly influence **western civilization**.

As we have learned, each Greek polis was responsible for creating its own government. There was no single government responsible for controlling all of the city-states or all of Greece; they were all independent states. Just like Goldie Locks and the Three Bears; Athens tried out several types of government till they found one that was juuuust right. In fact, they created a brand new type of government called **democracy**. Democracy means "rule by the people. The Athenians took a **direct democracy** approach. This type of government meant that every **citizen** was expected to vote directly on what laws they lived by and how they were ruled. These ideas of freedom and rights were unique to the Athens and is why is known as the "Birthplace of Democracy."

To be considered a citizen of Athens, there were certain qualifications you had to meet: you had to be an adult male, own land, be free (not a slave), and be able to trace your roots back to Athens. This means NO women...NO Slaves...NO Foreigners could be citizens. Some people were qualified to be a citizen, but you did not take part in politics. Athenian citizens looked down on them and referred to them as idiots.

A direct democracy, like that of Athens, is different from the form of democracy we have in the United States. We do not vote directly on laws. Instead we elect representatives to vote on laws for us. The United States is a **representative democracy (republic)**.

Most of the other Greek city-states were **monarchies**. In a monarchy, a king or queen has all of the power to decide how everyone else would live and by what laws. Some city-states had a **tyranny** or dictators that ruled with complete power. Some were tyrants were good, while others were cruel. Some city-states had an **oligarchy**. This form of government is ruled by a small select group of people (normally wealthy and upper class) who get to decide the rules.

**Question: Which of the four types of government above (Monarchy, Tyranny, Oligarchy, or Democracy) would you chose and why?**

**Question: Would you rather get to vote on the rules you live by, or would you like it better if someone else made them for you. Why?**

The **agora** (marketplace) was the center of **commerce** (trading) and government for ancient Athens. It was a place for people to meet and discuss ideas on philosophy and government. They would hold **debates** (discussions where people with opposing views argue their points) on issues that affected the people and government of Athens. Voting also took place at the agora. The picture below shows how the agora looked in ancient Athens.



"A.S.F.M.S. World History Curriculum." A.S.F.M.S. World History Curriculum. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 June 2014.



## Religion

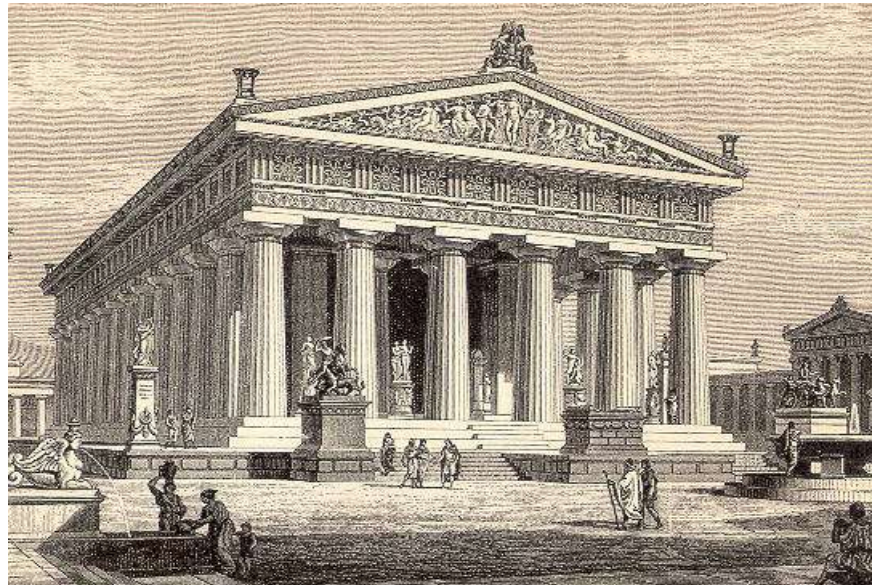
The ancient Greeks were **polytheistic**, meaning they believed in many gods and goddesses. Many **myths** (tales or legends) and stories surrounded the gods and goddesses. Greek mythology's main purpose was to try to explain two things: 1) how the world works, and 2) natural disasters and historic events. For example, if the seas were calm or the people were catching a lot of fish, they might believe Poseidon (the god of the sea) was pleased with them.

The Greeks built temples to honor their gods. Temples were dedicated to specific deities such as Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite, and Hera. People would go here to pray and make offerings, trying to earn favor with the gods. The image below is of a Greek temple in Athens called the **Parthenon**, it was dedicated to Athena. The ruins of this temple still stand today.



Poseidon: God of the Sea

Learn about Greek Mythology, Greek Gods, legends and More!" : Poseidon.  
N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014



"Parthenon: Gallery of Images." Parthenon: Gallery of Images. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014.

## Philosophers and Great Thinkers

A **philosopher** is someone who studies ideas about knowledge, truth, and the meaning of life. They are deep thinkers who seek wisdom and enlightenment. Greek philosophers studied and analyzed the world around them using **logic** and **reason**. These philosophers were also scientists, mathematicians, and studied physics as well. They were often hired by wealthy people to tutor their children. Some of the really famous philosophers even opened their own schools. They taught others how to think deeper and for themselves.

## Socrates (Sock-ruh-tees)



"Strong Minds Discuss Ideas..." - Socrates - Imgur." *Imgur*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014.

**Socrates** was the first major Greek philosopher. He came up the **Socratic Method**. He would **answer a question with another question**. This way of studying problems, discovers the truth through discussion. Socrates introduced political philosophy, getting the Greeks to think hard about **morals** (the difference between good and evil) and how society as a whole should work. Socrates taught his students to question the government and the gods.

The government of Athens thought that Socrates was **corrupting** (being dishonest or evil) by teaching his students this way of thinking. He was arrested and put on trial. He was given a choice to either leave Athens (which would seem like an admission of guilt or wrongdoing), or to drink hemlock (a type of poison). Socrates believed so much in what he was teaching his students, that he decided to drink the poison. He decided to die for his beliefs.

**Question: What is one thing (or idea) that you believe very strongly in?**

## Plato (Play-toe)



"Quotes Plato Wallpaper." *Quotes Plato #7713 Wallpaper*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014.

**Plato** was a student of Socrates. He spent a lot of time thinking and writing about how governments should rule their people. In his most famous work, "**The Republic**," Plato wrote using dialogue (people having a conversation with each other). His book discussed what power the government should have and what type of people should be rulers. He said the best rulers would be a **philosopher-king**. He argued a philosopher-king would be just and fair to all. His book also discussed how justice should be served and several other important

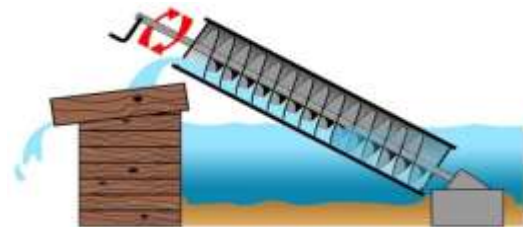
topics. Eventually, Plato started <http://www.towerbabel.com/author/201/plato/> his own school called **The Academy** where he taught students including the next great Greek philosopher, **Aristotle**.

## Aristotle (Air-uh-stot-I)



Although **Aristotle** was a student of Plato, he disagreed with him on many things. For example, Aristotle did not share Plato's views on who should rule a civilization. Aristotle liked to focus on more practical areas of philosophy, like science. He spent a lot of time thinking about how peoples' actions/decisions affect others. He taught his students to use **reason**. He strongly

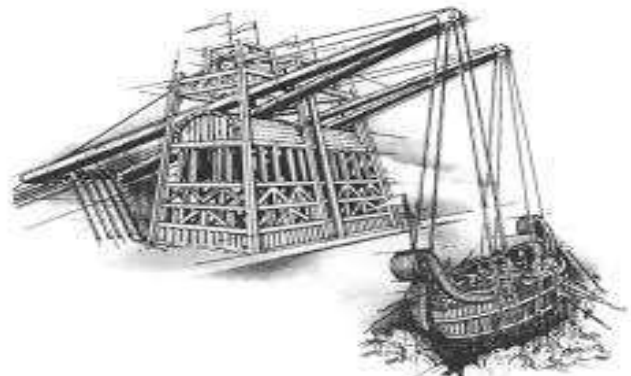
**Question: Which Greek philosopher (teacher) do you feel was the most important? Why?**



## Archimedes (Ark-uh-me-dees)

**Archimedes** is famous for a number of things. He spent a lot of his time teaching math, geometry and science. He also invented the **water screw**. The water screw is a device that is used to pull water from low elevation to a high elevation. This was very useful for transferring water from low land into an irrigation ditch. Archimedes is also known for inventing "**the claw**".

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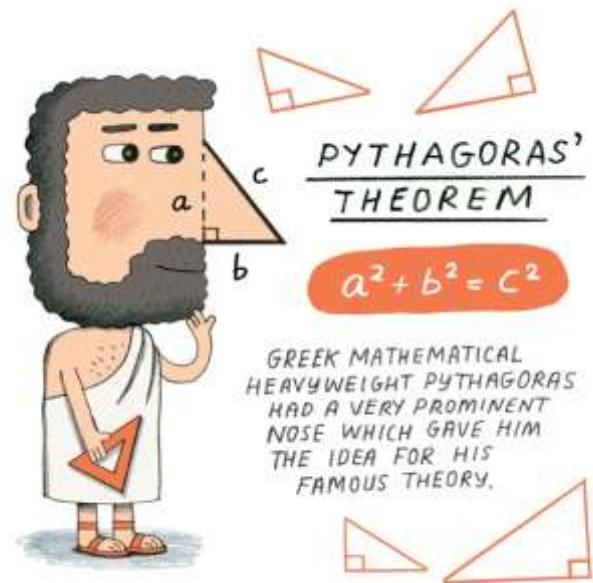
"Archimedes' Claw: Illustrations." *Archimedes' Claw: Illustrations*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014.

*The 'claw' was used to protect against seaward attacks by lifting ships out of the water and shaking them until they capsized!*



## Pythagoras (Pie-thag-er-uhs)

Pythagoras was a teacher of math. He believed that the world was based on math and that most things could be predicted and measured through math. He is known for discovering and teaching ways to calculate the length and sides of right triangle (the **Pythagorean Theorem**).



Extra Portions - Allan Sanders : Illustrator." Extra Portions  
- Allan Sanders : Illustrator N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014.

**Question: Which Greek innovator (inventor) do you feel was most important? Why?**

## Cultural Achievements

After Greece defeated the Persians (a rival empire of the Greeks), there was a boom of cultural activity. There were all kinds of new ideas, writings, sculptures, and information available in Greece. They continued to make advancements in areas such as science, politics, history, art, architecture, and biology. This period is known as the **Hellenic Period**.

### Writing/Theater

Greek writings usually centered on history, mythology, or philosophy. Genres (types) such as **tragedy** and **comedy** found great expression through Greek writing and theater. A tragedy is a story or play in which something tragic or bad happens, usually ending in death. A Greek comedy was typically a story or play in which the author poked fun at a famous politician, philosopher, or someone else that was well known. Males played all of the roles in Greek theater.



"The-Comedy-and-Tragedy-Masks-acting-204463\_489\_381." DigBoston. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014.



**Question: What might be an example of a modern day tragedy and comedy?**

Art

Greek sculptures focused on **idealism**. Idealism is showing a subject as perfect (young, muscular, and beautiful).



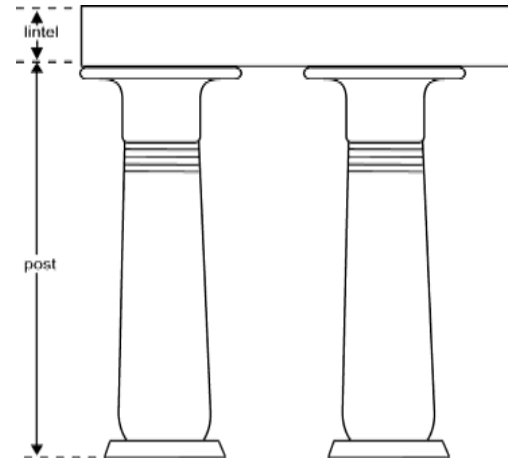
"The Greek Art of Natural Beauty » Portland State Vanguard." *Portland State Vanguard*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014.

Architecture

Greek architecture is most famous for the development of the **post** (or column) and **lintel** (like a horizontal support beam). These were used when building their temples. The post would support the lintel. This form of architecture has stood the test of time and is still widely used today.



The Parthenon , shows the use of the post and lintel.

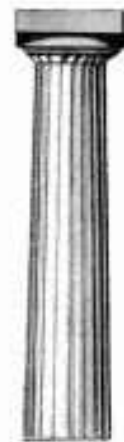


"Home." ArturoPortfolio -. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014.

The Greeks designed three styles of posts. The simplest was called **Doric column** (pillar). It was the most basic and generally dull in design. It was the mostly widely used by the Greeks in their buildings. The next style was called an **ionic column** (pillar). It was fancier and the top looked like the hypno- eyes of the snake in the Jungle Book. The last style was called the **Corinthian column** (pillar). It was the fanciest of the three and had little curly Q shapes all over. Greek culture still has a significant influence over western art and architecture.

You can find Greek architectural elements, like the three types of Greek columns shown to the right, on buildings all over the world.

**Question: Where have you seen Greek influenced architecture?**



Doric



Ionic



Corinthian

"Architecture for the Public -1." All Articles RSS. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014.

**Question: why Athens was the most important of all the Greek city-states of the Hellenic period.**

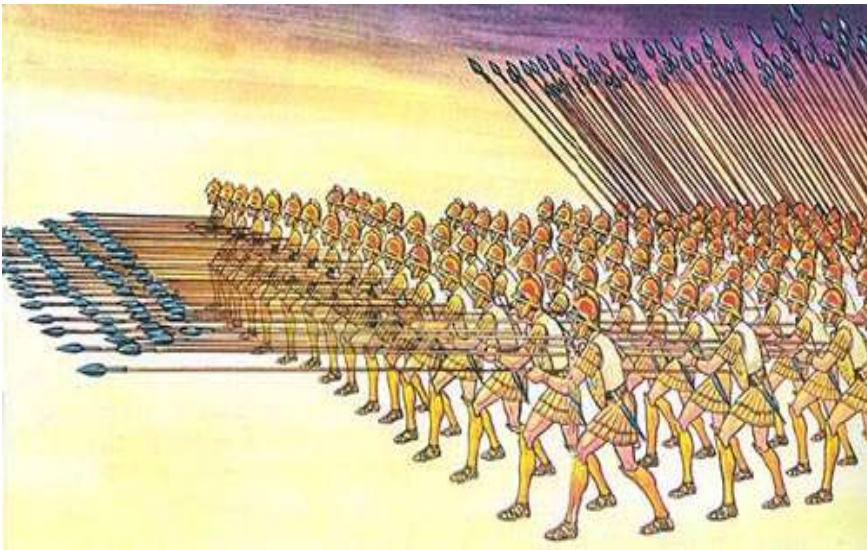
**Macedonia**



"Philip of Macedon Philip II of Macedonia Biography." *Philip of Macedonia Philip II of Macedonia Biography*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 June 2014

To the north of Greece, was the land of **Macedonia**. The Greeks had never considered the Macedonians to be real Greeks. They looked down upon them and considered them to be **barbarians** (uncivilized). This was a great insult to the Macedonians.

**King Philip II** will rise to power in Macedonia. He resented the attitude of the Greeks and wanted to teach them a lesson. He used his wealth and power to improve his kingdom and brought the best teachers, artists, and musicians from Greece to Macedonia. His biggest improvement however, came within the Macedonian army. He restructured the army and made it into a professional fighting force. He improved the **phalanx**, a traditional Greek fighting formation. He lengthened the spears the soldiers carried to 16 feet, creating an unstoppable weapon. His goal was to conquer all of the Greeks city-states.



<http://www.alexander-the-great.co.uk/>

King Philip II will launch an invasion, conquering the entire Balkan Peninsula and **unifying** all the Greek city-states into one kingdom under his control. He did not get to enjoy his reign very long; he was assassinated a few days later at a celebration.

King Philip II's son **Alexander** will take power and become the next king. From the time he was a young boy Alexander had been groomed for this day. His father got him the best of everything, including hiring him the best personal tutor in all of Greece, Aristotle. From the time he was a baby, Alexander's mother told him that he was destined for greatness and that Zeus himself was his real father. Confidence was never an issue for him.

Like his father King Philip II, Alexander was a skilled warrior. In his father's army he served as general of the cavalry (soldiers on horseback). He led by example and fought right beside his soldiers in battle. He shared the glory of victory and the spoils of war with them. He also shared their blood, sweat, and tears. This earned him the respect and love of his army. There was nothing they wouldn't do for the mighty Alexander.

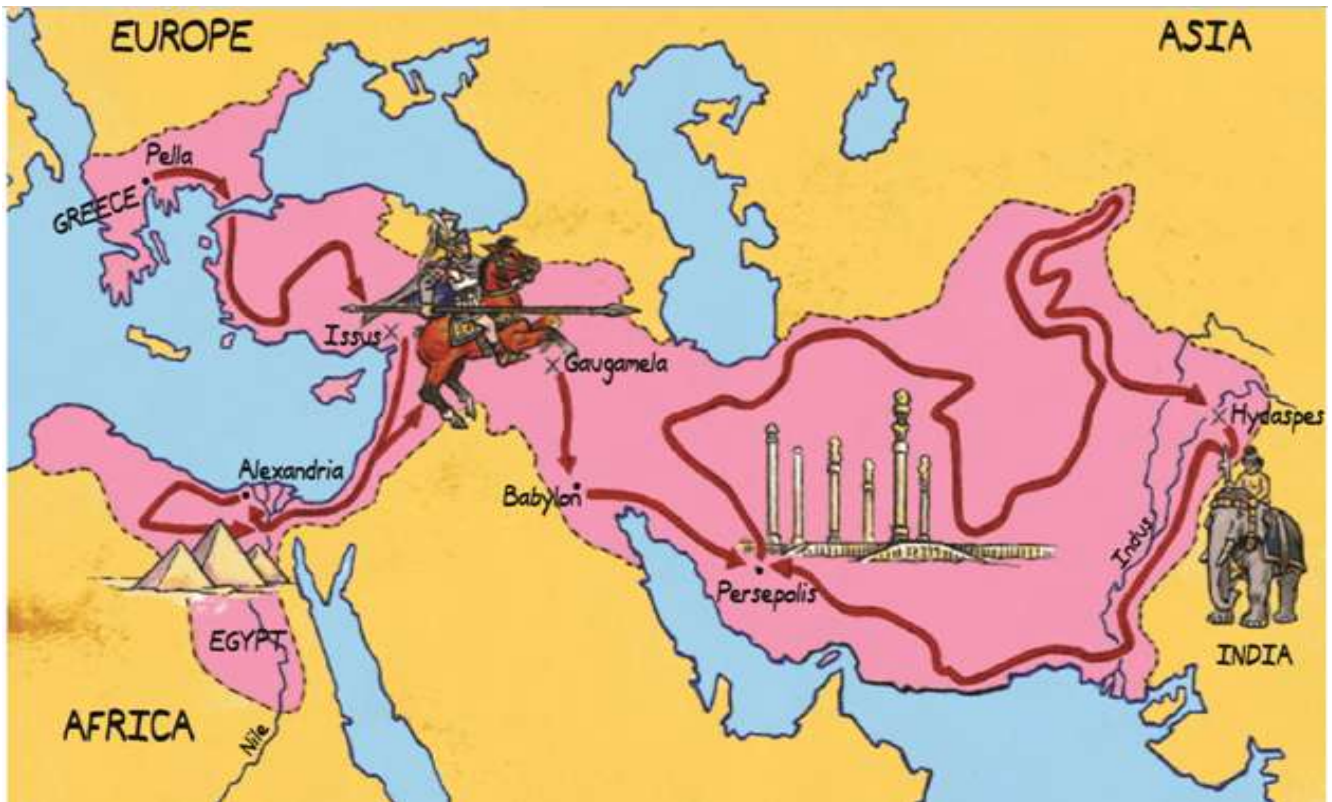
After squashing a rebellion of allied Greek city-states; Alexander reestablished himself as ruler of the Balkan Peninsula. He **solidified** the Greek city-states, but he wanted more. His goal was to create a **Hellenic** (Greek) empire that stretched to the ends of the Earth. Alexander set his sights on the mighty Persian Empire to the east. The Persians and Greeks



Now king, Alexander then turned east with his army with ambitions of conquering more of the civilized world. He moved swiftly using his military genius winning battle after battle, conquering new lands.

This task of defeating the Persians would not be an easy one to accomplish. Persia had created the largest empire the world had ever seen to that point. An **empire** is a group of nations or people ruled over by one powerful ruler. Their empire was so huge, it stretched for thousands of miles into lands no Greek had ever set foot. Persia also had the largest army ever assembled, made up of fierce warriors from many lands. It was said to be made up of over a million men.

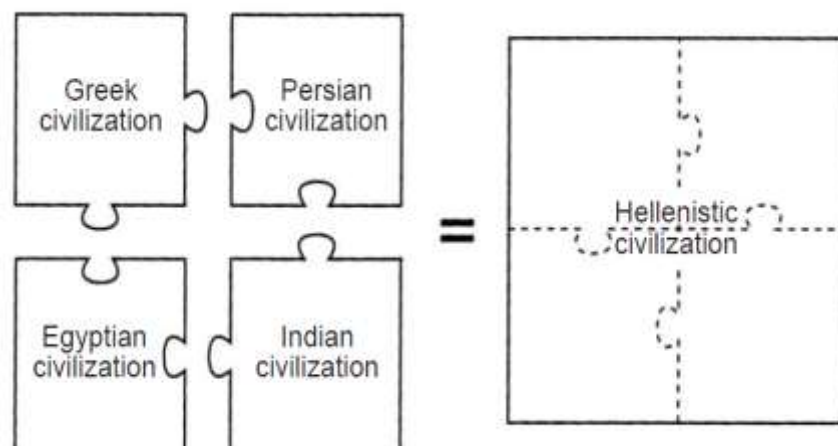
Alexander first moved his army through Asia Minor, then through Phoenicia and Canaan defeating the Persian army. He was named pharaoh of Egypt without a fight. He then took over Mesopotamia and eventually became king of Persia. Still not content with his major victory, Alexander will take his army farther east and conquer India. He accumulated one of the largest empires in the history of the world, spanning three continents (Europe to Africa to Asia). Alexander had achieved his goal and secured his place in history.



"Alexander the Great: Hero or Villan?" *Alexander the Great: Hero or Villan?* N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014.

Alexander the Great loved the **Hellenic** (Greek) culture. He was even known to carry a copy of the Iliad (myth of the Trojan War) with him at all times. Alexander made it a point to introduce Greek culture and ideas into all of the civilizations and territories that he conquered. An example of this cultural diffusion would be that he built many new cities called Alexandria. The Alexandria he built in Egypt would be one of his greatest achievements.

Because Alexander allowed the conquered people to keep their own culture and customs, Greek culture and ideas began to blend with the local culture and customs. This created something new that we call **Hellenistic** (Greek-like culture). An example of this blending would be a temple in Alexandria, Egypt having marble Ionic pillars, hieroglyphics on the walls, sphinx statues guarding the entrance, and a statue of Zeus.



## **Death of Alexander**

When Alexander and his army reached India, his soldiers were tired of fighting and were ready to revolt. Thousands had died on his conquests and the campaign in India had been especially brutal. The jungles, disease, and warfare had taken their toll. His soldiers wanted to return to Greece to see their families; it had been seven long years. Many soldiers were also displeased with the blending of cultures and felt the Greeks were losing their identity. Many soldiers including Alexander had adopted foreign customs (cloths, religion, food, etc.) and even married women from other cultures. Greek culture was the best after all.

Reluctantly, Alexander agreed to take his tired army home and postpone his ambitions to invade China. His soldiers took the fastest way home, a long march through the desert back to Babylon for rest and relaxation. Upon his return, Alexander developed a high fever and fell ill. His condition quickly got worse and even the best doctors could not help. Before he could name an heir to his throne, the mighty Alexander would pass away at the age of 32. No one is sure what ultimately killed him; some theories are poison, malaria, or maybe his body just gave out. His death ended the one of the greatest empires of ancient times.

It was decided that Alexander's empire would be split up into four kingdoms ruled by some of his generals. His generals were no Alexander and the empire/kingdoms quickly crumbled or experienced major problems. A new power was rising to the west of Greece, the Romans and they will quickly fill the power void.

**Question: Why is Alexander the great still held in high regard by people in the lands he had conquered?**