

## Chapter 6 Section 2 --- Religion, Philosophy, and the Arts

### Key Terms:

**Tribute** – a regular payment made to a powerful state or nation by a weaker one

**Oracle** – in ancient Greece, a sacred site where a god or goddess was consulted; any priest or priestess who spoke for the gods

**Philosopher** – someone who uses reason to understand the world; in Greece, the earliest **philosophers** used reason to explain natural events

**Tragedy** – a type of serious drama that usually ends in disaster for the main character



### The Golden Age of Athens:

The Golden Age of Athens lasted from 479 to 431 B.C. During this period, philosophy and the arts flourished in Athens, and democracy reached its highest point. The democratic government of Athens would serve as a model for future civilizations.

**The Wealth of Athens:** During the Golden Age, Athens grew rich from trade and from silver mined by slaves in regions around the city. Athens also collected **tribute**, or a regular payment made to a powerful state or nation by a weaker one. Both Athens' allies and the states it had conquered paid tribute, fearing Athens' great strength. The tribute paid to Athens added to its wealth.

**Pericles and Democracy:** For about 30 years during Athens' Golden Age, Pericles (495 – 429 B.C.) was the most powerful man in Athenian politics. Well-educated and intelligent, he always tried to act in the best interests of his city. When he made speeches to the Athenians, he could move and persuade them.

Pericles was a member of an aristocratic family, but he supported democracy. Around 460 B.C., he became the leader of a democratic group. He introduced reforms that strengthened democracy. One of Pericles' reforms required the city to pay a salary to its officials. This meant that poor citizens could afford to hold public office.

## Religious Beliefs in Ancient Greece:

Greeks worshiped a family of gods and goddesses called the Twelve Olympians. Each ruled different areas of human life and the natural world. The chart below titled a Family of Gods describes some of the Twelve Olympians and the areas over which they ruled.

The Greeks took great care in honoring their gods. They expressed their gratitude to them and asked them for blessings. They also tried to avoid angering the gods.

**Gods and Goddesses:** Wherever the Greeks lived, they built temples to the gods. Since the gods had human forms, they also had many human characteristics. The gods were different from humans, however, in that they were perfect in their human forms, they had great power, and they were immortal.

Mythology tells us that the Greeks worshiped twelve great gods led by Zeus, the king of the gods. Zeus ruled both the gods and men from atop Mt. Olympus, Greece's highest mountain. In addition to the twelve great gods, the Greeks worshiped many lesser ones. They also honored mythical heroes like Achilles, who fought bravely during the Trojan War. The story of Achilles is told in the Iliad.

A Family of Gods	
God or Goddess	Description
Zeus	King of the gods and goddesses. Ruler of the sky and storms. Protector of the law.
Hera	Wife and queen to Zeus. Goddess of marriage and women.
Apollo	Son of Zeus. Handsome young god of poetry and music. The most widely worshiped of the Greek gods.
Athena	Zeus' wise daughter. Goddess of crafts. War goddess who defended her cities.
Poseidon	Zeus' brother. God of the sea, of water, and of earthquakes. Lord of horses.

Although the Greeks worshiped all their gods, each city-state honored just one of the twelve gods, in part by building a temple to that god. To honor Zeus, the city-states came together every four years for an Olympian festival and games. The modern Olympic Games are based on this tradition.

**The Oracles:** In ancient cultures, people often looked to their gods for signs, or advice. They wanted the gods to show them how to live or how to behave. The Greeks visited **oracles**, sacred sites where a god or goddess was consulted. At these shrines, Greeks would ask the gods for advice or for predictions about the future. Sometimes the advice came through dreams. Often the answers came in the form of a riddle, delivered by a priest or a priestess believed to be able to hear the voices of the gods. Oracles of various gods were located throughout Greece. Heads of state often sought advice on governing from the oracle of the god Apollo at Delphi, an ancient town in central Greece. Because such advice was taken very seriously, the oracles had a great effect on Greek history.

## **Greek Science and Philosophy:**

Most Greeks believed that their gods were the source of all-natural events. But about 150 years before the Golden Age of Athens, some people thought about other ways besides myths to understand the world.

**The Search for Knowledge:** You learned earlier about philosophy, which is a system of beliefs or values. **Philosophers** believed that people could use the powers of the mind and reason to understand natural events. One of the first philosophers, Thales, believed that water was the basic material of the world. He thought that everything was made from it. Democritus, who lived in the 400s B.C., thought that everything was made of tiny particles he called atoms. More than 2,000 years later, scientists still use his ideas about atoms.

Beginning in the 600s B.C., writers and traveling teachers called Sophists gained popularity in Greece. Sophists were skilled speakers who cleverly debated topics in public. Although they were popular in Athens, some philosophers thought Sophists were more interested in winning debates than in seeking the truth.

**Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle:** During the Golden Age and later, several important philosophers taught in Athens. The ideas of three men, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, had a lasting effect on modern learning and thinking.

Using the marketplace as his classroom, Socrates eagerly discussed wisdom and goodness with the people of Athens. He asked questions that challenged people's beliefs. His questions often frightened and angered many Athenians.

In 399 B.C., Socrates was brought to trial. The authorities accused him of dishonoring the gods and misleading young people. He was sentenced to death by forced suicide, a common sentence in Athens at the time. Socrates drank a cup of hemlock, a poison, and died.

Much of what is known about Socrates comes from the writings of Plato, one of his students. Socrates' death caused Plato to mistrust democracy. In the Republic, Plato wrote that society should be made up of three groups: Workers, Soldiers, and philosopher-rulers. Plato founded a school in Athens called the Academy, where he taught a student named Aristotle. Aristotle believed that reason should guide the pursuit of knowledge. He later founded his own school, the Lyceum.

## Visual and Dramatic Arts:

The Greeks used visual arts, such as architecture and sculpture, to glorify and honor their gods. The Greeks are also known as the first playwrights, because they wrote the first plays.

**The Parthenon:** The Acropolis, the religious center of Athens, had been destroyed in 480 B.C., during one of the city's many wars. Pericles decided to rebuild the Acropolis and create new buildings to glorify the city.

The builders of the new Acropolis brought Greek architecture to its highest point. Their most magnificent work was the Parthenon, a temple to the goddess Athena. The temple was made of fine marble. Rows of columns surrounded it on all four sides. Within the columns was a room that held a 40-foot statue of Athena, made of ivory and gold.

The great statue of Athena disappeared long ago. However, many of the sculpted scenes that decorate the inside and outside of the temple still exist. These scenes have three important characteristics. First, they are full of action. Second, the figures are carefully arranged to show balance and order. Third, the sculptures are lifelike and accurate. However, they are ideal, or perfect, views of humans and animals. The goal of Greek art was to present images of perfection in a balance and orderly way.

**Dramas:** Athenians were the first people to write dramas, or stories written to be performed by actors. Among the city's greatest achievements were the plays written and produced in the 400s B.C., during the Golden Age. These plays soon became popular all over the Greek world.

Some of the most famous Greek dramas were tragedies. A **tragedy** is a type of serious drama that usually ends in disaster for the main character. Between scenes in the play, a chorus chanted or sang poems. In most plays, the writer used the chorus to give background information, to comment on the events, or to praise the gods.

Performances of tragedies were part of contests held during religious festivals. The city chose wealthy citizens to fund these dramatic contests.



**Comedies:** Comic writers also competed at the dramatic festivals. During the 400s B.C. in Athens, these writers wrote comedies that made fun of well-known citizens and politicians and also made jokes about the customs of the day. Because of the freedom in Athens, people accepted the humor and jokes.

### Questions:

How did Pericles strengthen democracy?

How did the Greeks honor their gods?

Which three important philosophers taught in Athens?

What was the role of the chorus in Greek drama?

### Guided Reading Questions:

1. What are three things that flourished in Athens during the Golden Ages?
2. What are three ways Athens grew rich in the Golden Ages?
3. A regular payment made to a powerful state or nation by a weaker one is called?
4. Who was the most powerful man in Athenian politics during the Golden Ages?
5. Why was Pericles' reform that required the city to pay a salary to its officials so important?
6. Greeks worshiped a family of gods and goddesses called the what?
7. Zeus ruled both the gods and men from atop what mountain, which is the tallest in Greece?
8. Greeks honored mythical heroes who fought bravely during the Trojan War, who was the greatest Greek hero from the Trojan War?
9. To honor Zeus the city-states came together every four years for an festival and games, which would later turn into the modern what?
10. Sacred sites where a god or goddess was consulted is called?
11. People that believed that people could use the powers of the mind and reason to understand natural events were called?
12. Who believed that water was the basic material of the world?
13. Who thought that everything was made of tiny particles called atom?
14. What are the names of 3 important philosophers that had a lasting effect on modern learning and thinking?
15. Who were known as the 1st playwrights?
16. What is a famous building that sat at the top of the Acropolis and was a temple to the goddess Athena?
17. The goal of Greek art was to present images of perfection in a \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ way.
18. A type of serious drama that usually ends in disaster for the main character is called?
19. What were two types of Dramas/plays the Athenians developed?

**Notes for this section should be two Colum notes.**