

Notes to Ancient Civilizations Lesson One Powerpoint Presentation

1-2) What are some things that you might have in common with an ancient Greek? Our cultural heritage relies heavily on the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations that came before us.

3) Religion was a very important part of ancient Greek civilization. Today, we retell their myths as entertaining stories, but to the Greeks the gods were very real and very involved in the day-to-day happenings of their lives. There was a wide range of beliefs about the gods and religious rituals.

4) The ancient Greeks were also, like our culture today, very concerned about how to live a happy, moral life. Different schools of philosophy offered their own theories as to how and why the universe existed and worked, what the meaning of life was, and how to live a good life (and what a “good” life meant). Ancient Greek philosophy influenced western philosophy for hundreds of years and is still relevant to many philosophers today.

Image: Mosaic depicting Plato’s academy, 1st century BCE, Villa of T. Siminius Stephanus, Pompeii, now located in Museo Nazionale Archologico, Naples

5) The ancient Greek civilization existed for thousands of years. Over time, their religion changed. Mythical stories were revised; new gods were introduced while some old gods fell by the wayside. Gods were sometimes merged or one god might be split into multiple deities. Depending on the area of Greece, some gods were more important than others, while others might be worshipped more during certain times of the year. Worship also sometimes depended on the individual’s needs and personal preferences. Individuals could have particular gods or goddesses that they felt especially devoted to. Sailors might prefer to worship Poseidon, god of the sea for example. Athena is a good example of all of these complexities of ancient Greek religion.

Image: Panathenaic prize amphora, National Archeological Museum, Athens

6) **(Hand out Iliad excerpt for class to read.)** Homer, who lived in the 8th or 7th century BCE, was considered the most important poet by the ancient Greeks and had a huge influence on their culture. **(Discuss Homer, The Iliad plotline, characters, etc.)** By reading from his epic poems, we can gain a better understanding of what the ancient Greeks believed about their deities and how they worshipped them. After reading the excerpt, what are some examples of the kinds of rituals the Greeks would perform? How did they conceptualize their deities? Were they remote and unapproachable? Or could they interact with the gods and goddesses in the same way they would with fellow humans?

Images (from left to right):

1) hydria with scene of Metaneira making an offering of wheat to Demeter, 4th century BCE, Apulia, Italy, now located in Altes Museum, Berlin

2) ???

3) amphora with scene of cult of Oedipus, 4th century BCE, Apulia, Italy, now located in Louvre, Paris

7) Because the gods were believed to be always near and involved in their lives by the Greeks, they became ever-present in artistic depictions.

Images:

1) Bust of Homer, 2nd century BCE, Roman copy of lost Hellenistic original, Baiae, Italy, now located in British Museum, London

2) Theater at Delphi, Greece, 4th century BCE

3) Pitsa panel (Tablet painting of religious sacrifice), 6th century BCE, Pitsa, Greece, now located in National Archeological Museum, Athens

4) “Mattei Athena”, 1st century BCE, Roman copy of 4th century BCE Greek original, Louvre Museum, Paris

5) Amphora with scene of Apollo and bull, Dionysus, Ariadne, Hermes and Iris, 6th century BCE, Hearst Castle

8) But how did the ancient Greeks know who was who? It might help if we thought of a modern example. How would you identify Batman or Iron Man? Batman’s logo, costume, batmobile, batarangs, and sidekick Robin are all attributes. These are ways to tell that it’s the Caped Crusader and not some other masked vigilante. An attribute is “an object closely associated with or belonging to a specific person, thing, or office, *especially* : such an object used for identification in painting or sculpture” (Merriam-Webster Online). The Greek gods and goddesses had attributes based on their myths and were often depicted with them in art. **(Students should begin filling out graphic organizer.)** We are going to look at several of the ancient Greek vases in the Hearst Castle collection and learn what the attributes are for the different gods depicted on them.

Image: neck amphora, Apollo with lyre, Artemis with fawn and Leto, 6th century BCE

9) Image: pseudopanathenaic amphora, Athena Parthenos, 6-5th century BCE

10) Image: mastoid cup, Herakles wrestling Nemean Lion, 5th century BCE

11) Image: neck amphora, procession of deities: Apollo, Dionysus, and Ariadne, 6th century BCE

12) Image: kalpis hydria, Hermes and Eros consoling Aphrodite over Adonis, 5th century BCE

13) Now that you understand how attributes work, let’s see if you can figure out what a Greek god’s attributes might be! There are several images of Poseidon, god of the sea, earthquakes, and storms, and creator of the horse, in the Hearst Castle art collection. We’ll take a look at them and you tell me what you think his main attributes might be (**trident, horse**). Looking at the last image of a statue of Poseidon, what is he missing? (**trident**) A trident, made of wood and metal, was originally in his hand but went missing sometime in the past. The statue is over 400 years old after all!

Images (from left to right):

- 1) *Neptune and Amphitrite*, 17th century CE, Simon Vouet, Hearst Castle
- 2) Tapestry, *Neptune Creating the Horse*, 17th century CE, Hearst Castle
- 3) Statue of Neptune on his chariot, 20th century CE, Charles Cassou, intended for installation at Neptune Pool, Hearst Castle, but destroyed in warehouse fire
- 4) Statue of Neptune, 17th century CE, Hearst Castle

14) Now that we've learned a little bit about the Greek gods and their attributes, we'll have a quick quiz. You can use the notes on your graphic organizer to help. We'll look at some more pieces of art in the Hearst Castle collection and you'll identify the god or goddess and their attribute/s that helped you identify them.

- 1) **Hermes** ("Hermes Resting", 20th century CE copy)
- 2) **Herakles (with Hebe)**, Strength tondo, 19th century, Bertel Thorvaldsen)
- 3) **Dionysus** (Greco-Roman era bust, exact age unknown)
- 4) **Artemis** ("Diana the Huntress", 20th century CE copy)
- 5) **Apollo** (Detail of tapestry, Apollo with lyre, **Echo and Narcissus**, 17th century)
- 6) **Athena** (Detail of sculpture, Minerva in Chariot, 19th century, Emmanuel Fremiet)
- 7) **Dionysus** (kylix eye cup, Dionysus mask with grape clusters, 6th century BCE)
- 8) **Apollo** ("Young Apollo", 20th century CE copy)
- 9) **Herakles (with Zeus)**, detail of jewel cabinet, 16th century, Jean de Court)
- 10) **Athena (with Prometheus)**, Wisdom tondo, 19th century, Bertel Thorvaldsen)

15) So is the mythology of the ancient Greeks still important to us today? Can anyone think of an example of Greek mythology being used in our culture today? What about other aspects of Greek culture?