

The Golden Age of Athens

What were the major cultural achievements of Athens?

PREVIEW

In Athens, public funerals were held for soldiers who had died in battle. In 430 B.C.E., after a difficult year of war, an Athenian leader named Pericles spoke at such a funeral. In his speech, he described the greatness of Athens and why it was important to keep on fighting. Below is an excerpt from that speech.

Carefully read the excerpt and then answer the questions that follow.

. . . we have not forgotten to provide for our weary [tired] spirits many relaxations from toil [hard work]; we have regular games and sacrifices throughout the year; our homes are beautiful and elegant; and the delight which we daily feel in all these things helps to banish [send away] sorrow. Because of the greatness of our city, the fruits of the whole earth flow in upon us; so that we enjoy the goods of other countries as freely as our own. . . . To sum up: I say that Athens is the school of Hellas [Greece]. . . . Such is the city for whose sake these men nobly fought and died. . . .

— Pericles, *Funeral Oration*, in *History of the Peloponnesian Wars* by Thucydides.

1. According to Pericles, what made Athens great?
2. What else have you learned about Athens that might make people think of it as a great city?
3. Why do you think Pericles would call Athens the “school of Greece”?

READING NOTES

Key Content Terms

As you complete the Reading Notes, use these terms in your answers.

- | | | |
|-----------|-------|-------------------|
| Pericles | myth | Socrates |
| Parthenon | drama | Panathenaic Games |
| acropolis | | |

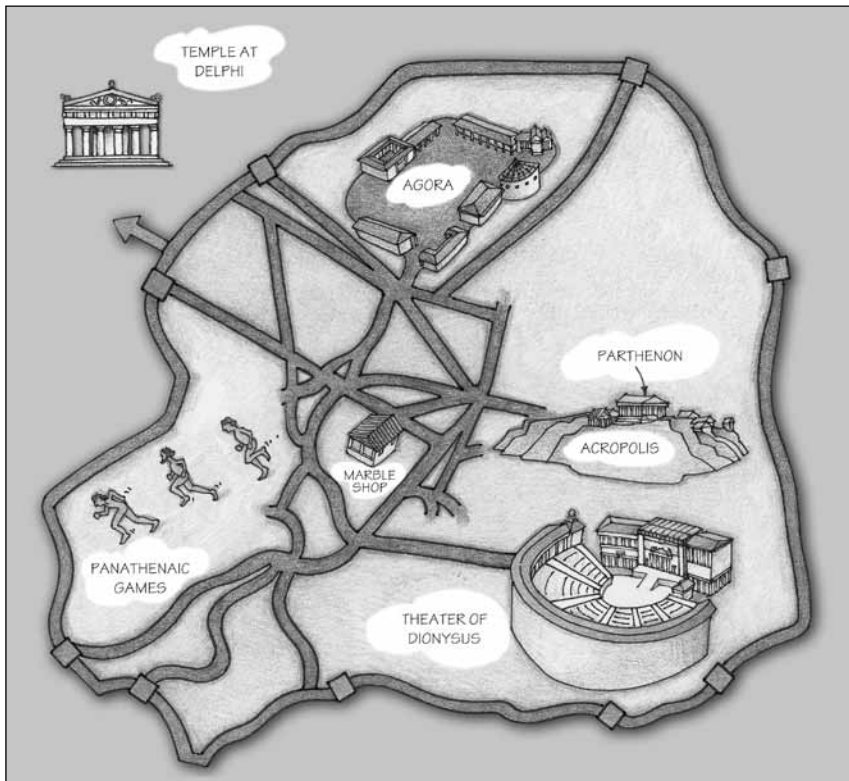
Section 2

1. What contributions did Pericles make to Athens after the Persian wars?
2. Why can Athens be called a city of contrasts?

Sections 3 to 8

As you begin each section of the Reading Notes, locate the related site on the map of Athens below. Then answer the questions for that section.

Athens, 479–431 B.C.E.



Section 3

The Site: You are visiting the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, a town outside Athens, to learn about religion.

1. Why would a person go to see an oracle?

2. What did the ancient Greeks believe about where gods and goddesses lived and what they were like?

3. In what ways was religion a part of the everyday lives of the ancient Greeks?

Section 4

The Site: You are standing among the grand temples on the acropolis in Athens to learn about architecture.

1. Why did the ancient Greeks build temples like the Parthenon?

2. Identify the three types of Greek columns and describe one characteristic of each.

3. What features made the Parthenon one of the most beautiful temples in ancient Greece?

Section 5

The Site: You are visiting a marble workshop to learn about sculpture.

1. How did the styles of ancient Egyptian statues influence those of the ancient Greeks?

2. How did styles of Greek sculpture change over time?

3. Who was Phidias, and what did he do?

Section 6

The Site: You are visiting the Theater of Dionysus to learn about drama.

1. How many people could a theater hold, and how might its shape help a large audience?

2. Identify two ways in which ancient Greek drama differed from modern plays and movies.

PROCESSING

In the space below, write a paragraph that answers the Essential Question:

What were the major cultural achievements of Athens?

In your paragraph, identify and describe at least three specific examples from your Reading Notes.