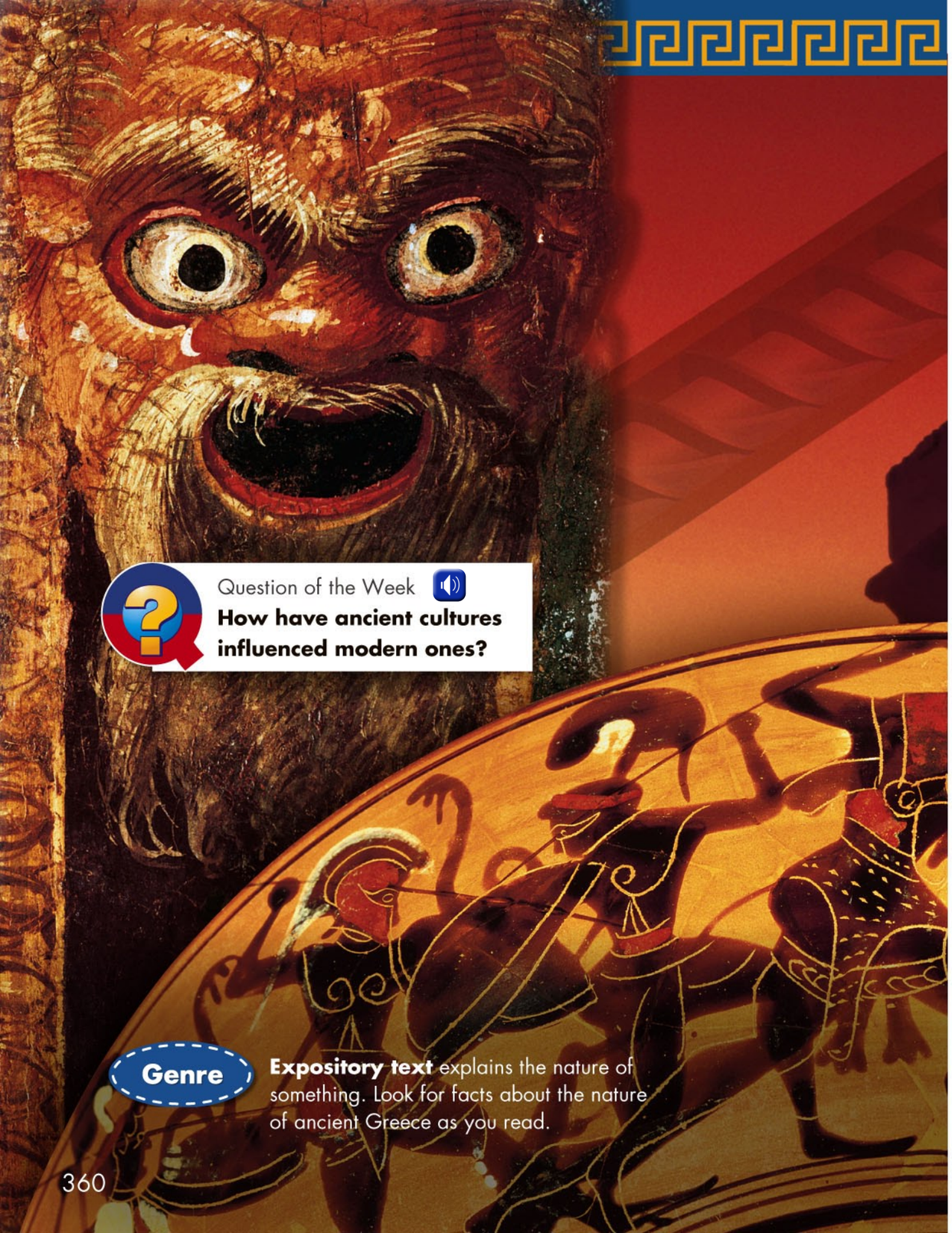


Question of the Week

How have ancient cultures influenced modern ones?

Genre

Expository text explains the nature of something. Look for facts about the nature of ancient Greece as you read.

Ancient Greece

by Kim Covert

CHAPTER 1

The Ancient Olympics

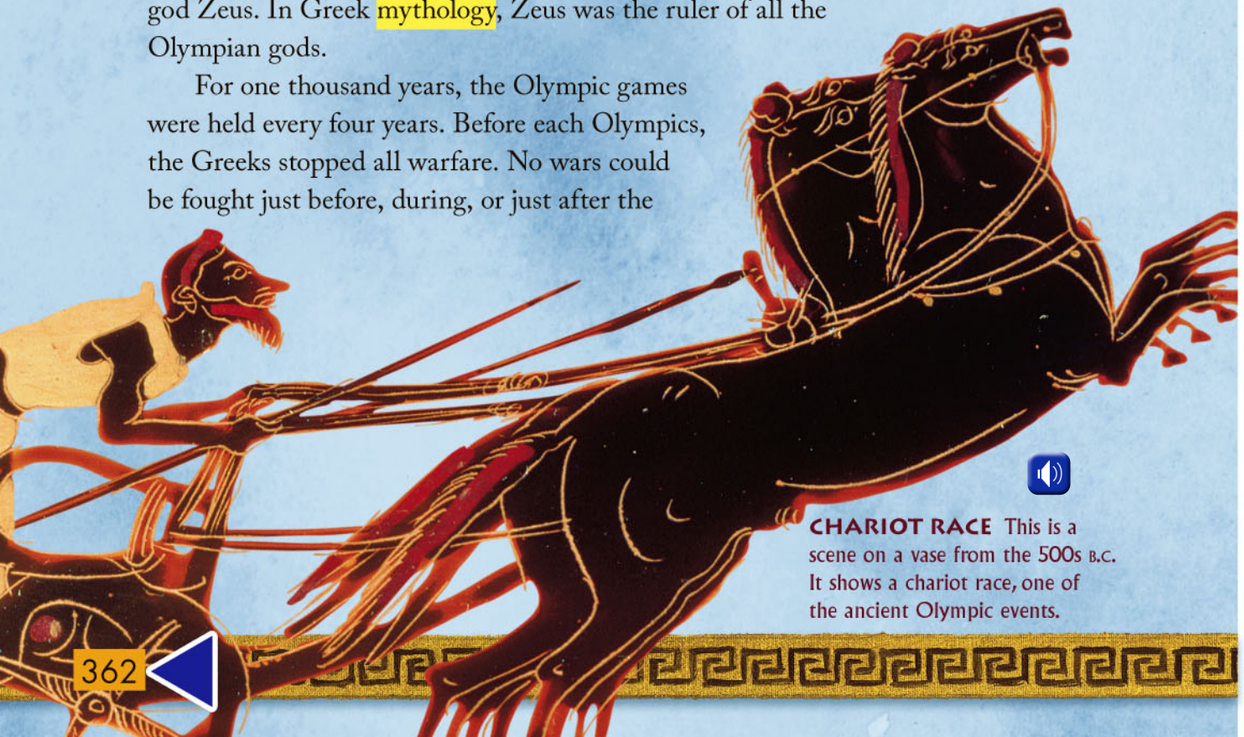
Twenty runners get into position on the starting line. A trumpeter sounds the start of the race. Sand flies up as the runners race down the 210-yard (192-meter) track. The crowd cheers as the runners cross the finish line. The judges place a wreath of olive leaves on the winner's head.

Later, horse-drawn chariots line up on an oval track. At the sound of the trumpet, each driver urges his horses forward. In the first turn, a driver cuts in front of another chariot. The two chariots run into each other and tip over. The horses and drivers crash to the ground. Several more chariots fall in the pileup. Many horses and drivers are hurt. The drivers who missed the wreck bolt to the finish line. The owner of the winning chariot receives a wreath of olive leaves.

Footraces and chariot races were part of the Olympic games of ancient Greece. Wrestling, boxing, and the pentathlon were other events. The pentathlon included javelin, discus, long jump, running, and wrestling.

The first recorded Olympics were held in 776 B.C. The games took place in Olympia, a town in western Greece. They honored the Greek god Zeus. In Greek mythology, Zeus was the ruler of all the Olympian gods.

For one thousand years, the Olympic games were held every four years. Before each Olympics, the Greeks stopped all warfare. No wars could be fought just before, during, or just after the games. Wars were stopped so athletes and people coming to watch could travel to and from the games safely.



CHARIOT RACE This is a scene on a vase from the 500s B.C. It shows a chariot race, one of the ancient Olympic events.

The modern Olympics are one of many traditions developed in Greece. Ancient Greece is often called the cradle of Western civilization. It was the birthplace of many modern ideas. Greek ideas are found in today's governments, art, architecture, and literature. They are also seen in science, drama, and athletics.

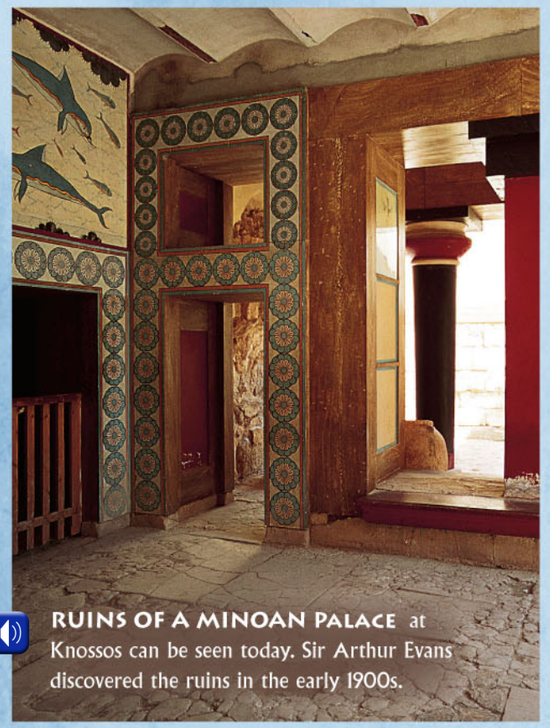
CHAPTER 2

Early Greeks

The Minoans

The first civilization in Greece formed on the island of Crete. The Minoans lived from 2200 to 1450 B.C. They built a huge port on Crete and a large fleet of ships. Their ships allowed them to trade with people in other areas.

The Minoans also built palaces. They covered the palace walls with paintings. The paintings show peaceful, happy people. The Minoans built their largest palace at Knossos. The palace honored King Minos. In Greek mythology, Minos was a son of Zeus.



RUINS OF A MINOAN PALACE at Knossos can be seen today. Sir Arthur Evans discovered the ruins in the early 1900s.

The Mycenaeans

By about 1600 B.C., the Mycenaeans had settled in cities on the Greek mainland. A king ruled each city. Mycenaeans built huge walls around their palaces. Paintings, gold, and jewels decorated their palaces.

The Mycenaeans were great warriors. Around 1450 B.C., the Mycenaeans invaded Crete. They conquered the Minoans, who disappeared from history at this time.

According to legend, around 1220 B.C. the Mycenaeans conquered Troy. This city was on the northwestern coast of Asia Minor. Today this area includes the country of Turkey. Stories about the Trojan War have lasted to the present day.

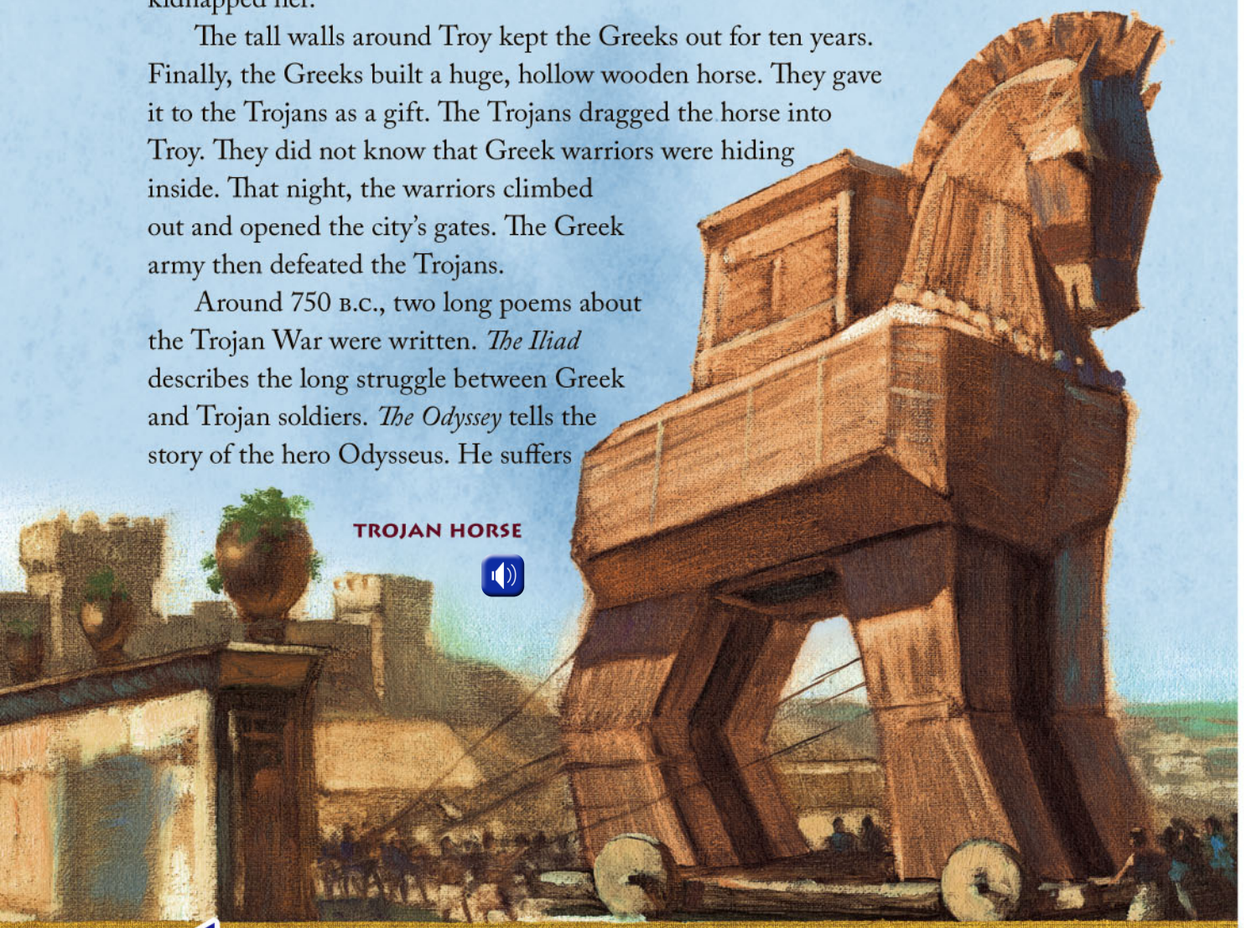
Few Mycenaeans remained in Crete or Greece by 1200 B.C. Their palaces on the mainland were destroyed. Historians believe they were invaded by another civilization. Soon after, the Dorians took over Crete. They came from northern Greece.

The Trojan War

According to legend, the Mycenaeans attacked the city of Troy to rescue Helen. She was the wife of King Menelaus of Sparta. A Trojan prince had kidnapped her.

The tall walls around Troy kept the Greeks out for ten years. Finally, the Greeks built a huge, hollow wooden horse. They gave it to the Trojans as a gift. The Trojans dragged the horse into Troy. They did not know that Greek warriors were hiding inside. That night, the warriors climbed out and opened the city's gates. The Greek army then defeated the Trojans.

Around 750 B.C., two long poems about the Trojan War were written. *The Iliad* describes the long struggle between Greek and Trojan soldiers. *The Odyssey* tells the story of the hero Odysseus. He suffers many difficulties while trying to get home after the Trojan War. Historians disagree about who wrote the poems. Many people believe the Greek poet Homer wrote them.



TROJAN HORSE

The Dark Age

Historians know little about Greece from 1100 to 800 B.C. During this time, Greece was a land of small farming villages. These villages had little contact with one another. Historians call this period the Dark Age.

Around 800 B.C., the Greeks appeared in history again. They built new colonies in parts of Europe and Africa. They traded with western Asia and learned to make iron objects. With iron, the Greeks could more easily make tools for farming and other tasks.

The Phoenicians lived across the Mediterranean Sea. The Greeks traded with the Phoenicians and learned their alphabet and system of writing. They also learned about Phoenician art and shipbuilding. This progress helped end the Dark Age.

CHAPTER 3

The Rise of Greece

By the end of the Dark Age, the Greeks had built many villages. Many villages centered around a high hilltop, called an acropolis. The farms and villages surrounding each acropolis joined to form a city-state. Each city-state ruled itself and had its own customs. By 700 B.C., hundreds of independent city-states had formed. The two most powerful city-states were Athens and Sparta.

ANCIENT GREECE
500 B.C.–336 B.C.

Athens and Sparta

Athens was a city-state located slightly inland from the Aegean Sea. Athens built a port city called Piraeus. This port allowed Athens to launch its powerful navy and trade ships. Long walls joined Athens and Piraeus.

Athenians welcomed new ideas and customs. Athenians believed that a city-state should serve all of its citizens. They created a new type of government called a democracy. Each free male citizen in Athens could vote on laws and choose leaders. Women and slaves could not vote. An assembly made governmental decisions.

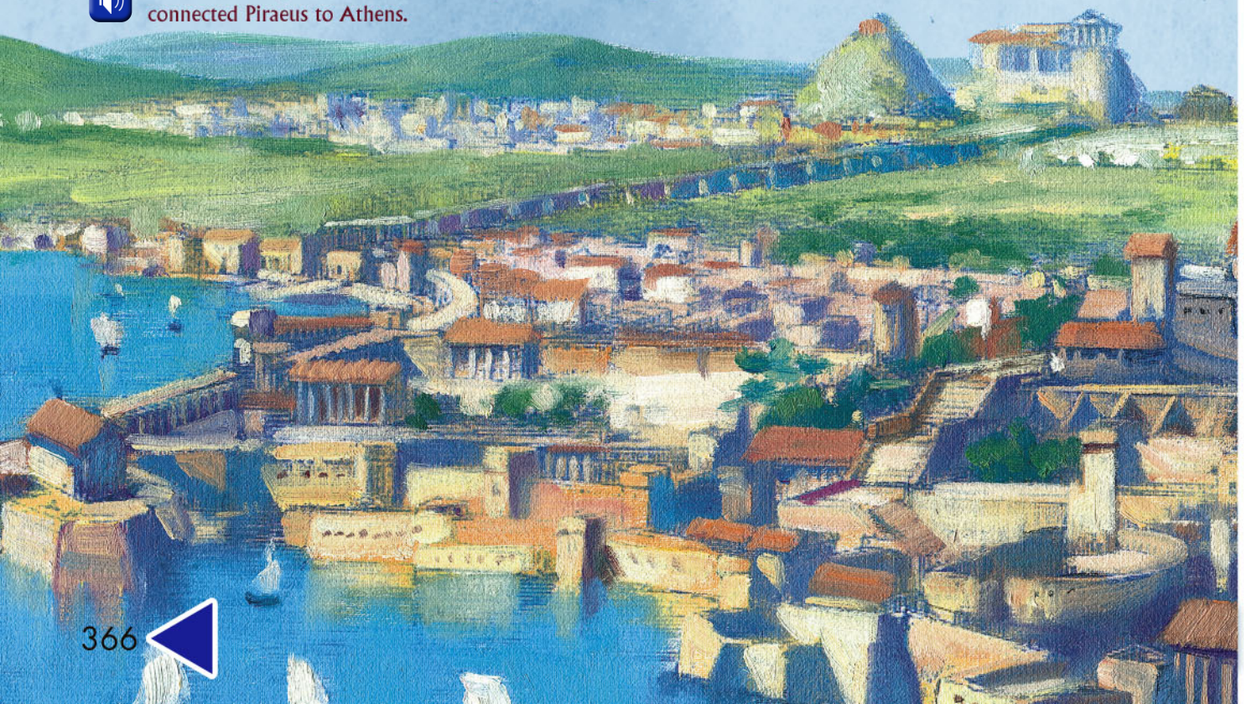
Sparta was located 150 miles (241 kilometers) from Athens. Mountains around Sparta protected the city-state. Spartans were different from Athenians. Spartans wanted no contact with outsiders. They were against change.

Sparta's government was also different from Athens's government. Two kings and a council of elders ruled Sparta. Only rich people served on the council.

Each Greek city-state formed an army. In Athens, men between ages seventeen and fifty-nine were required to serve in the military.

Sparta's society was based on the military. Every adult male was a full-time soldier. Soldiers were not allowed to work at other jobs.

PIRAEUS Ships sailed from Athens's port, Piraeus. Long walls connected Piraeus to Athens.



PERSIAN GUARDS c. 5th century B.C.

The Persian Wars

Persia was a large empire east of Greece. The Persians' territory covered much of Asia and the Middle East. King Darius I of Persia wanted to rule Greece. In 490 B.C., Darius's army landed at the village of Marathon, northwest of Athens. An army of 10,000 Athenians marched to Marathon to face 60,000 Persians. Athens defeated them in a surprise victory.

Ten years later, Darius's son Xerxes returned to Greece. He brought an army of 200,000 men. Athens and Sparta led a united army of all Greek city-states. After fighting for a year, the Greeks defeated Persia. Their victory in 479 B.C. kept the Persians from taking over Europe.

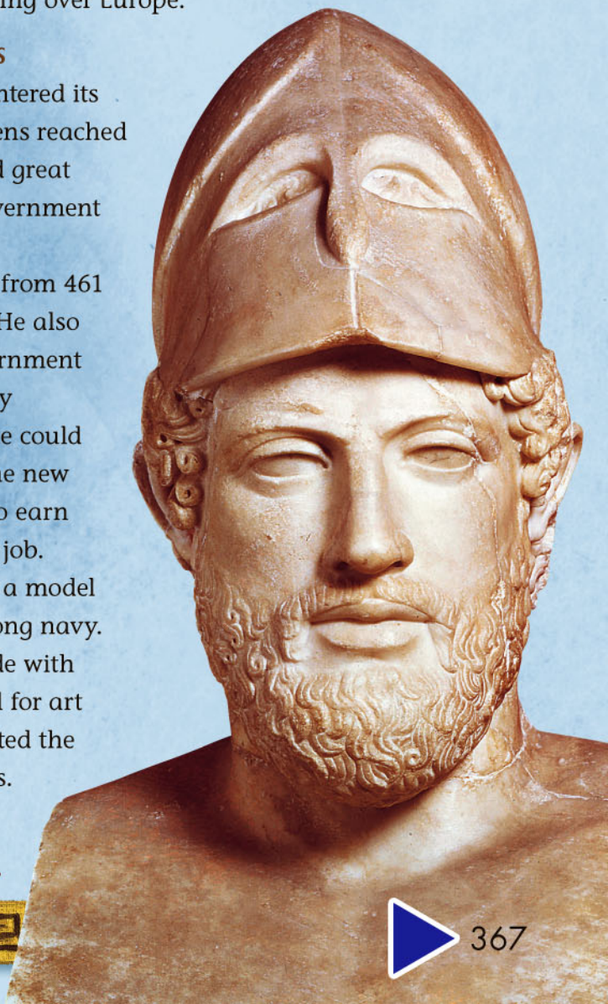
The Golden Age of Athens

After the Persian Wars, Athens entered its Golden Age. During this period, Athens reached its peak of power. The Greeks enjoyed great achievements in art, science, and government during this time.

Pericles was the leader of Athens from 461 to 429 B.C. He supported democracy. He also started a system of payment for government service. The earlier system did not pay government workers. Only rich people could afford to serve in the government. The new system of payment allowed anyone to earn a living by working at a government job.

Pericles planned to make Athens a model for other cities. He helped build a strong navy. Athens became wealthy through trade with other lands. Athens was also a model for art and culture. The government supported the work of architects, artists, and writers.

This sculpture of Pericles shows him wearing a helmet because he was a general.



CHAPTER 4

FALL FROM POWER

Coin featuring Alexander the Great

After the Greeks beat Persia, many Greek city-states joined together. They agreed to protect each other. This alliance was known as the Delian League. Delian League members contributed ships or money to the league. They kept the money in the Delian League treasury.

People in Athens began taking the league's money. Athens's government made decisions for the league. Athens used the money to build temples and new colonies. Athens built a large and powerful empire throughout the Mediterranean.

The Peloponnesian War

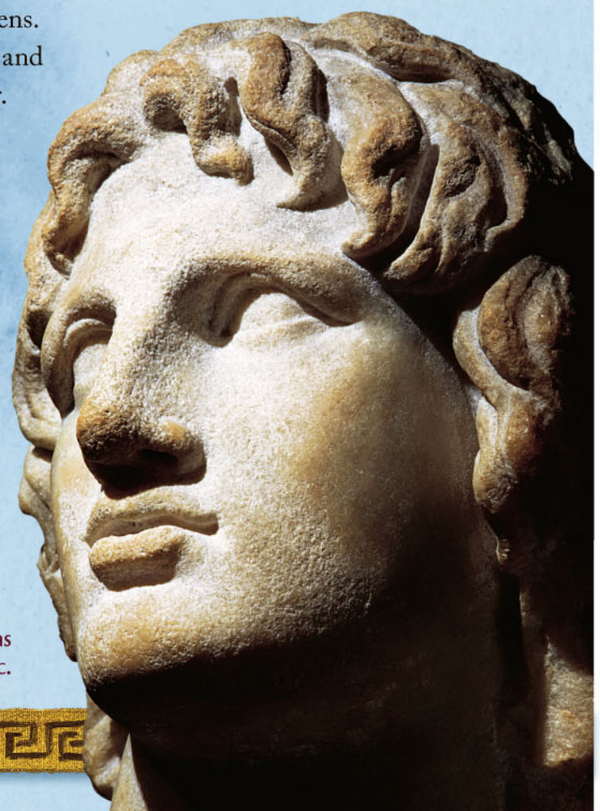
For many years, Sparta and Athens were rivals. The two city-states did not trust each other. Athens wanted to spread democracy, freedom, and self-rule.

Sparta was afraid that Athens's power would reach too far. Other Greek city-states also were unhappy with Athens. They were upset that Athens was taking money from the Delian League.

In 431 B.C., Sparta declared war on Athens. For twenty-seven years, Athens and Sparta and their allies fought in the Peloponnesian War. Athens finally surrendered in 404 B.C.

Alexander the Great

In 359 B.C., Philip II became the king of Macedonia. Philip wanted to rule the Persian Empire. He asked the Greeks to help him defeat Persia. In return, he would let them govern themselves. In 336 B.C., before Philip could organize an attack on Persia, he was killed. His son, Alexander, became king at age twenty. A strong military leader, he became known as Alexander the Great.



ALEXANDER THE GREAT This statue was created between the 1st and 2nd centuries B.C.

In 334 B.C., Alexander led an army of Macedonians and Greeks. They attacked Persia. In three years, he defeated the Persian king.

Alexander's army later conquered Egypt, western Persia, and western India. He also conquered the countries now known as Afghanistan and Pakistan. Alexander founded many military colonies in the lands he conquered. These settlements helped provide supplies to his armies.

After his death in 323 B.C., Alexander's generals fought to control his empire. They divided Greece into three kingdoms.

The Hellenistic Age

The Greek language was spoken in Alexander's colonies. The colonists copied Greek architecture, law, and art. They studied Greek science and philosophy. The most famous city Alexander founded was Alexandria, Egypt. It became the world's most important center of trade and learning.

After Alexander's death, the power of the Greek city-states faded. But the rulers of Greek kingdoms promoted Greek culture. Elements of Greek culture spread from southern present-day France to what is now northern Afghanistan. This period is known as the Hellenistic Age.

The Roman Empire

Around 275 B.C., the Romans defeated the Hellenistic King Pyrrhus in Italy. Rome gradually took over other kingdoms. It conquered Sicily in 241 B.C. and Spain in 201 B.C. Rome began conquering other areas. By 31 B.C., Rome defeated the last Greek kingdom. It was the end of the Hellenistic Age.

THIS STATUE OF THE GODDESS ATHENA is an example of art from the Hellenistic Age.

GREEK INFLUENCE Part of Roman Emperor Hadrian's villa uses Greek columns.

After conquering the Greeks, the Roman Empire grew. The Romans adopted the best ideas of the people they conquered. The Romans used Greek styles in literature and architecture. They modeled many public buildings after Greek temples. The Romans based their government on some of Greece's democratic ideas.

Rome fell in the A.D. 400s. The Visigoths, a tribe from Germany in northern Europe, defeated the last Roman emperor. Rome's influence faded.

Europeans once again took interest in Greek culture in the A.D. 1400s and 1500s. This period was known as the Renaissance. Classical ideas of ancient Greece influenced artists, writers, and architects. For three hundred years after the Renaissance, Europe developed colonies around the world. The Europeans spread these classical ideas to the colonies. Greek culture continued to thrive.

CHAPTER 5

LASTING ACHIEVEMENTS

Greek water jug from 530 B.C. showing women filling vases at a fountain

The ancient Greeks made lasting contributions to art, architecture, science, and medicine. They also developed drama, literature, and philosophy. Their ideas still influence the modern world.

Architecture and Art

The Greeks built many structures that still stand today. Temples are the most famous of their buildings. Most of the temples have a similar design. The buildings are rectangular with columns holding up the sloping roof. Modern architects base many of their designs on Greek styles.

The most famous example of Greek architecture is the Parthenon. Completed in 432 B.C., this temple honored the goddess Athena. She was the goddess of war and wisdom.

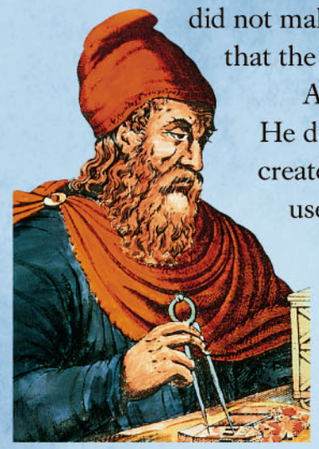
The Greeks created their own forms of sculpture, pottery, and painting. They were the first to sculpt human statues in a natural style. Greek statues usually showed perfect bodies. Earlier statues had looked stiff and unnatural. Athenians made the most valued pottery of the ancient Western world. They painted their pots with pictures of gods, heroes, and ordinary people. Greek artists decorated buildings with beautiful paintings called frescoes. These wall paintings on plaster showed scenes from Greek myths.

Sculptures of women support the roof on this porch of the Erechtheum, a temple on the Acropolis in Athens.

Science and Medicine

Ancient Greeks were among the first to use logic to explain the world around them. They wanted to discover the reasons why things worked.

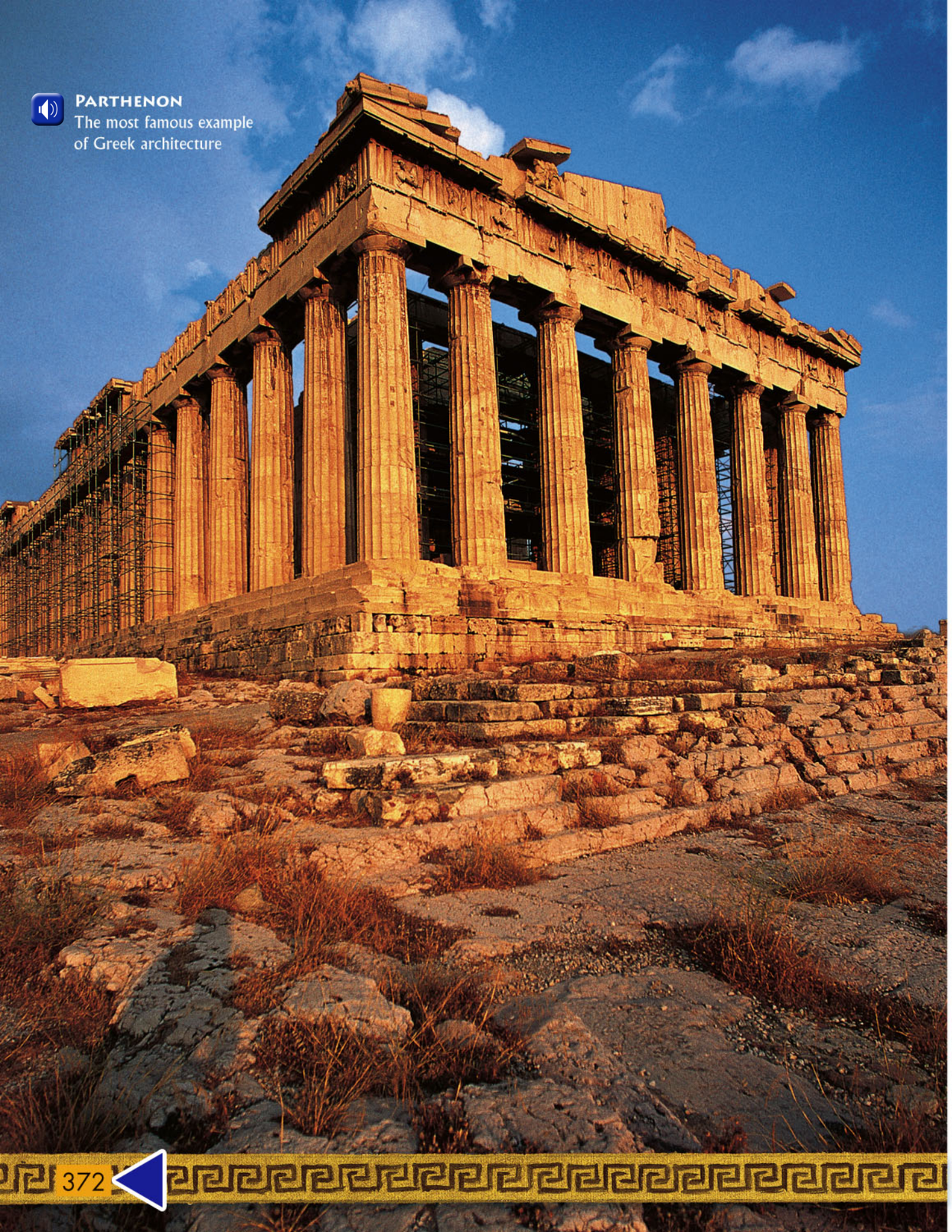
Anaxagoras was an early Greek astronomer. He learned that the moon did not make its own light. Instead, Anaxagoras believed that the moon's light was a reflection from the sun.



ARCHIMEDES

Archimedes was an inventor and mathematician. He discovered the principle of a lever. Archimedes created a complicated set of levers and pulleys. He used them to lift a large ship from water to land by himself.

Hippocrates was a Greek doctor. He is often called the father of medicine. He developed the Hippocratic oath, a promise to heal the sick. Today, many medical students take this oath when they become doctors.



PARTHENON
The most famous example of Greek architecture

Menander with theatrical masks

Drama and Literature

The ancient Greeks created drama. The earliest Greek plays were religious ceremonies. A chorus sang and acted out stories about the gods. Later, dramas told legends of Greek heroes. Many plays were about gods. Other plays told about the Persian Wars.

The Greeks were the Western world's first writers of history. Around 450 B.C., Herodotus explored the Mediterranean region. He wrote long reports of wars, geography, customs, and legends. Herodotus is often called the father of history.

Aesop is one of the most famous Greek writers. Historians believe Aesop was a Greek slave who had been freed. In the 500s B.C., Aesop wrote hundreds of fables. These short stories about animals taught a lesson. Aesop's fables include "The Tortoise and the Hare" and "The Fox and the Grapes." Many of Aesop's fables are still told today.

Philosophy

Early Greek philosophers studied life, death, and other mysteries of the natural world. Socrates was the most famous philosopher from Athens. He was one of the first to study ethics. He taught students by asking questions, rather than giving them answers. This teaching method is now known as the Socratic method.

Plato was a student of Socrates. In his book *The Republic*, Plato describes his ideas for an ideal government. He also founded a school called the Academy.

Plato's most famous student was Aristotle. Aristotle became a great philosopher and scientist. He developed a scientific system to help understand the world. The ideas of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle are still discussed today.

Plato and Aristotle, from exterior of belltower of Santa Maria del Flore in Florence

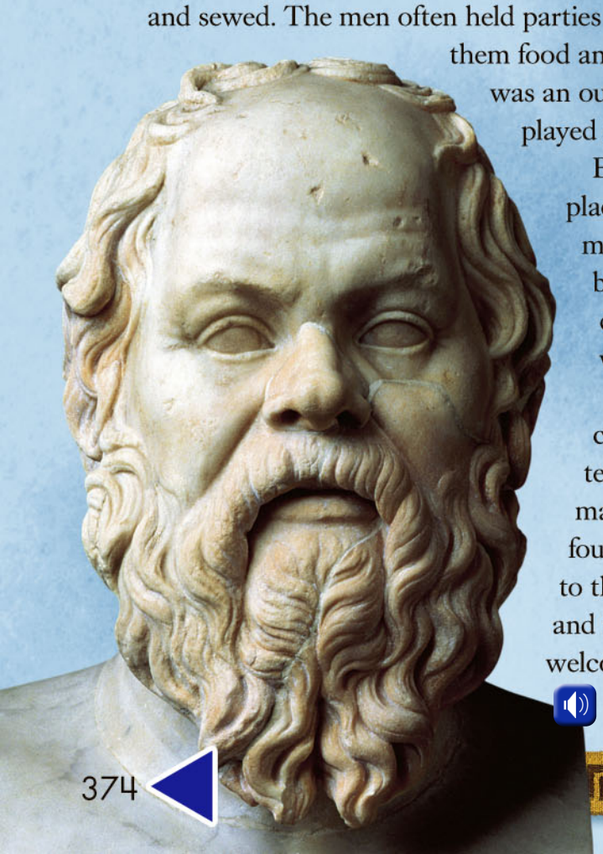
Daily Life in Ancient Greece

Most people in ancient Greece were farmers. Their farms were usually small and run by one family. Often, slaves helped them.

Men and women lived in separate parts of the house. The women had a special room. There, they played with their children, spun thread, and sewed. The men often held parties in the men's area. Slaves brought them food and drink. At the center of each home was an outdoor courtyard. There, children played games.

Each day people filled the marketplace, or *agora*. People came to shop, meet friends, and do business. Farmers brought their goods to market on donkeys. Pottery, cloth, and jewelry were also sold there.

When they became adults, children brought their toys to the temple. Girls did this before they married. Boys did this around age fourteen. Children offered their toys to the Greek gods Apollo and Artemis and then took part in a ceremony that welcomed them to adult life.



SOCRATES

CHAPTER 6

Greek Influence Today

Greece has influenced many modern governments. Democracy is now a common form of government. Ancient Greeks developed political speeches, debates, and voting. Trial by jury is another system created by the Greeks. A jury is a group of people who listens to and decides a court case.

The ancient Greeks believed in the rights of the male citizen. Aristotle wrote that the pursuit of happiness was important. When the Thirteen Colonies in North America separated from Great Britain, the colonists created the Declaration of Independence. This document borrowed Aristotle's idea. It states that people have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

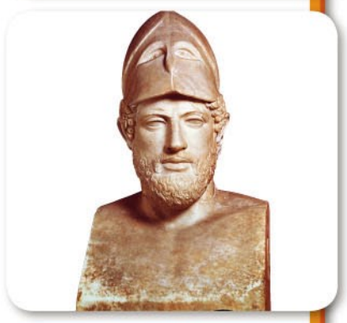
Often, government buildings also have Greek influence. Court buildings, capitols, and presidential homes have all used Greek architecture.

Every day, people take part in activities invented by the ancient Greeks. They read novels, attend plays, or exercise in a public gym. Athletes wrestle, box, and compete in track-and-field events. Philosophers explore the meaning of life. Scientists search for logical answers to problems. Ideas from ancient Greece continue to influence modern life.

Greek architecture influenced the U. S. Supreme Court building in Washington, D. C.

Objectives
- Provide evidence from the text to demonstrate understanding.
- Read independently for a sustained period of time and paraphrase the reading.

Envision It! | Retell



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Think Critically

1. How was daily life in ancient Greece like your life today? How was it different? **Text to Self**
2. Much of *Ancient Greece* tells about the different periods and conquests of ancient Greece or Greek leaders. But Chapter 5 discusses the arts and other lasting achievements. Why do you think the author thought it was important to include this information? **Think Like an Author**
3. How do the photos, drawings, and map add to the depth of your understanding of the text? **Graphic Sources**
4. How do the chapter titles and headings help you predict what you will read next and set a purpose for your reading? **Predict and Set Purpose**
5. **Look Back and Write** What does the term "the Golden Age of Athens" mean? When was the Golden Age of Athens? Look back at page 367 and write a summary of this particular period in Greek history. Provide evidence to support your answer.

TEST PRACTICE **Extended Response**