

Early Greek Civilizations

Brief #1

Focus

The physical geography of ancient Greece played a big role in how it developed.

The physical geography of any place is an important key in understanding how and why its civilization developed the way it did. Ancient Greek civilization is a good example of this idea.

Ancient Greece was located along the coasts of three large bodies of water: the Aegean Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Ionian Sea. Because of this, the ancient Greeks were excellent sailors and traders.

The interior of Greece is made up of a lot of mountains. In ancient times, this kept populations of people isolated from one

another. This isolation helped communities develop independently from one another. These areas had their own governments and their own ideas about how things should be done. Eventually, these independent communities would grow into Greek city-states. **A city-state was a region in ancient Greece with its own government and citizenry.** Athens, Sparta, and Thebes were important ancient Greek city-states.

Vocabulary

1. city-state
2. Minoan civilization
3. fresco
4. Mycenae



Crete and Mycenae

Ancient Greece consisted of many islands located out in the Mediterranean Sea. One of these islands was called Crete. **In about 2500 B.C., the Minoan civilization existed there.** The civilization gets its name from King Minos.

The Minoans were great traders. They were also skilled potters and painted beautiful frescoes on the walls of their palaces. **A fresco is a painting on a plaster wall.**

In about 2000 B.C., the Minoan civilization began to decline. No one is really sure why this happened. Scholars do know, however, that some Minoans migrated to and settled on the mainland of Greece. After a time, these settlements grew into powerful city-states.

One of these Greek city-states was called Mycenae.

It was located in an area on the Greek mainland called the Peloponnese. The Mycenae people were warriors, and they built a city which was fortified by huge stone walls. The huge stone lions that guard the entrance to the Mycenae citadel (a kind of palace) still stand to this very day.

Fast Fact

The palace of King Minos had 1500 rooms!