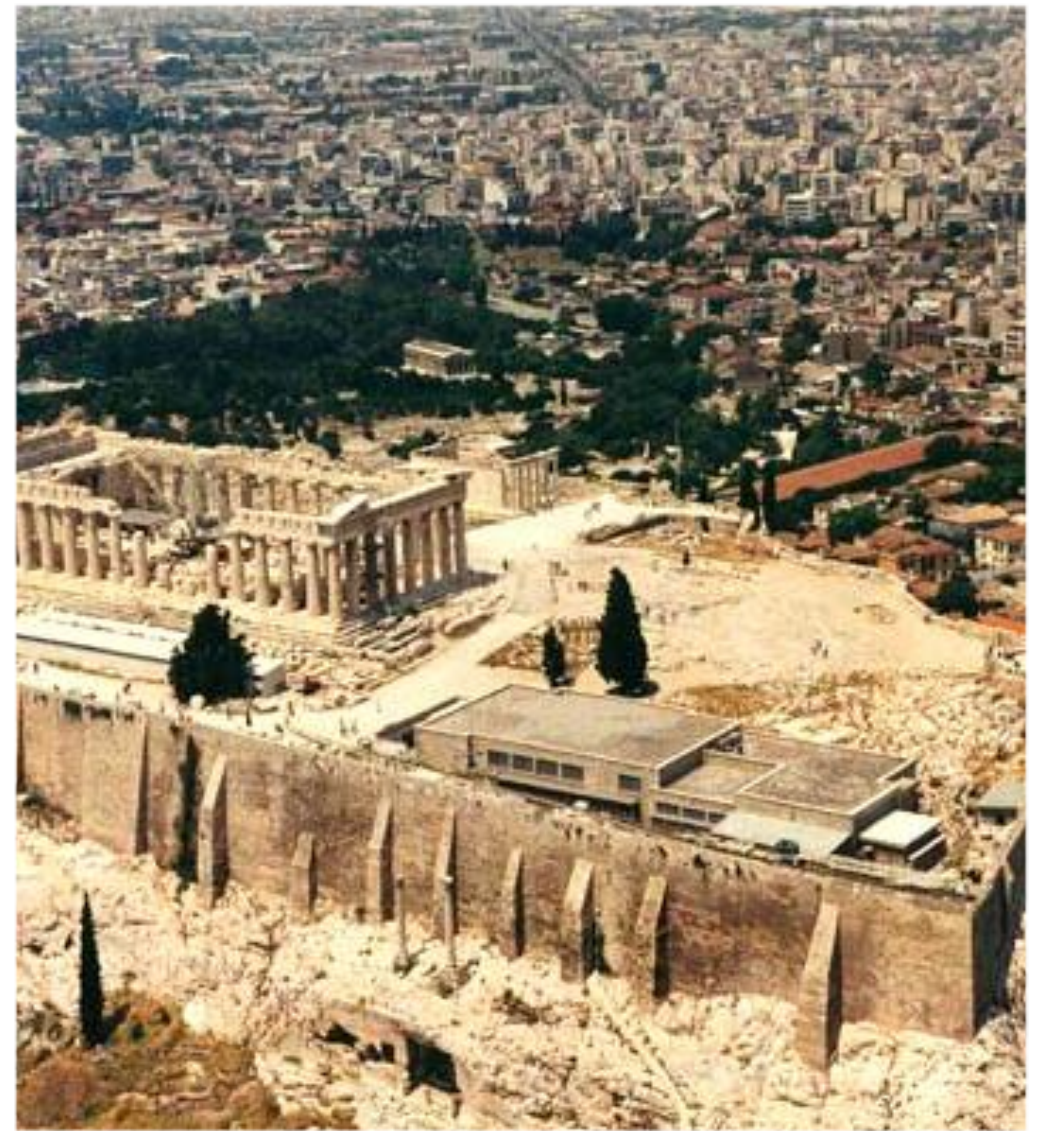# The Greco-Roman World

Origins

- Although distinctive, still influenced by contact with Persian, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian civilizations (e.g. Phoenicians)

- Indo-European ethnically--like those who invaded India.

- Early civilization on Crete, Mycenaeans, influenced by Egyptian monumental architecture, and told of in Homer's epics, eventually conquered by Indo-Europeans.

Decentralized Civilization

- Greeks united linguistically and culturally, but not politically.

- Mountainous terrain makes unifying difficult.

- By 800 B.C.E, City-States emerge as the dominant political unit.

- Dynamic trade between city-states

- Written language (inspired by Phoenician alphabet) leads to rich literary tradition.

- Intra-Peninsula athletic competition: the Olympics. Emphasis on individual events and excellence.

- Sparta and Athens dominate the scene and provide useful contrasts:

    - Sparta dominated by a military aristocracy supported by slave-labor agriculture.

    - Athens more commercial and artistic (although Athens also had its share of slaves)

Gender Issues

- Strictly patriarchal

- Sparta an exception

Golden Age, War, Defeat

- Pericles brings democracy for all adult male citizens and rebuilds the city (it had been wrecked by the Persians). The Parthenon is built.

- Pericles forms the Delian League, a confederacy of city-states not unlike NATO.

- Greek Philosophy was less mystical, more based upon reason and observation, as was its science. There's a good reason why they were pioneers in mathematics and physics.

- Greek Art: Drama (tragedies and comedies), sculptures, architecture, pottery.

- Greek accomplishments would, in part, inspire the European Renaissance nearly 2,000 years later.

Greek Architecture

Peloponnesian War

- Athenian wealth and culture lead to arrogance. Sparta objects.

- Read Thucydides.

- Peloponnesian Wars (431-404 BCE). Sparta wins, but the conflict weakens everyone and enables the Macedonian conquests.

Alexander The Great

- Philip II's son, begins conquering at age 20.

- From his father's conquests in Greece, he will expand the empire across Mesopotamia, into Egypt, through Persia, and just beyond the Indus River.

- Never lost a battle

- He stops only because he dies, aged 33.

Hellenistic Period

- Alexander's armies spread Hellenism ("Greekness").

- Greek art, architecture, and culture spreads across the Middle East.

- Library of Alexandria (in Egypt) stored all ancient knowledge. When it burned to the ground, much was lost.

Problems With Alexander's Empire

- When he died, it was divided amongst his three best generals. This weakened the whole and allowed for the rise of Rome.

- Antigonid Empire: Greece and Macedonia.

- Ptolemaic: Egypt and Palestine

- Seleucid: Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Persia.

We've still got Rome and some comparin' to do

All Roads Lead to Rome

- Rome had been a minor city-state.

- After abolishing the monarchy (nemo est rex!), aristocrats ruled Rome and its territories as a republic.

- The republic spread its borders across Italian Peninsula, conquering Greek colonies in southern Ionia and Sicily.

- Like the Chinese, their expansion may have started simply as a means to protect their central territory, but whatever their original motives, they didn't stop.

You Gotta Problem, Carthage?

- Carthage was a powerful Phoenician city-state in northern Africa. It dominated much Mediterranean trade.

- Rivalry with Rome led to the Punic Wars (264-146 BCE)

- Carthage ultimately defeated, razed, and its fields sown with salt. Clearly this was about more than a trade dispute, but what?

The Problem With Caesar

- As Rome's borders expanded, politics became more volatile.

- Julius Caesar crosses the Rubicon, defeats Pompey and Crassius (the first Triumvriate) and becomes master of Rome.

- The Senate elects him "dictator," but that has a term limit. Many suspect that Caesar want's more. When he pushes to be named "Dictator for Life," they assume he plans to make himself king.

- So they stabbed him, and stabbed him, and stabbed him.

Octavian "Augustus" Caesar

- Julius Caesar's grand-nephew and adopted son.

- In the years after his uncle's assassination, Octavian vies with Marc Antony and Brutus for power (Second Triumvriate).

- Strong arms the senate, people die (Cicero), a new emperor for a new empire.

Roman Emperors

- Augustus emphasized a virtuous life, but subsequent emperors were corrupted by power and experience.

- Nero

- Caligula

- But Marcus Aurelius was cool.

Greco-Roman Religion

- The gods matter. What the Pantheon means.

- Polytheism until Theodosius II.

- Socrates and the problem with Greek religion.

- Roman problems with Christians.

- Christianity and Rome.

Greco-Roman Culture

- Arts and sciences

- Philosophy

- Theater, Colosseum

- Architecture

Greco-Roman Economy

- Importance of trade because arable soil limits on the peninsulas.

- Mediterranean a perfect pond.

- Slavery--not exactly like in the US.

Greco-Roman Values

- Excellence: physical and mental

- Science, practical and theoretical.

- Philosophy, practical and theoretical.

- Family and patriarchy.

- Law.

Rome's Fall

- Centuries in the making.

- Inept emperors.

- Overreach.

- Barbarian hordes.

- Aristotle, Book X.

Classical Comparisons

- All three involved expansion from localized beginnings and integration as they assumed dominance over conquered peoples.

- All three regressed in both expansion and integration between 200 C.E and 500 C.E.

- Why couldn't the great empires push back the nomadic invaders?

- Why did different regions see different patterns of decline, with different results?

- What did each civilization's decline mean for the immediate and distant future?

Comparing Expansion

- Expansion is preceded and accompanied by the need to define a people's values: Confucius, Buddha, Socrates--all three lived within 150 years of each other.

- Chinese expansion: emphasis on political centralization.

- Indian expansion: localized and diverse, but held together by Hinduism.

- Mediterranean expansion: localized and diverse, affected smaller populations and limited political unity.

Comparing Integration The issue of territory

- Chinese integration: efforts to resettle northerners into southern regions, promote a common language.

- Indian integration: spread of caste system and Hinduism will unite territories.

- Roman integration: much local autonomy and tolerance, expansion of citizenship means less resentment; interdependent trade network unites regions.

Comparing Integration
The Social Issue

- Greeks distrusted and disrespected foreigners.

- Pericles and citizenship

- Issues of toleration in Roman Empire