Name: _____

Date: _____

ANCIENT GREECE
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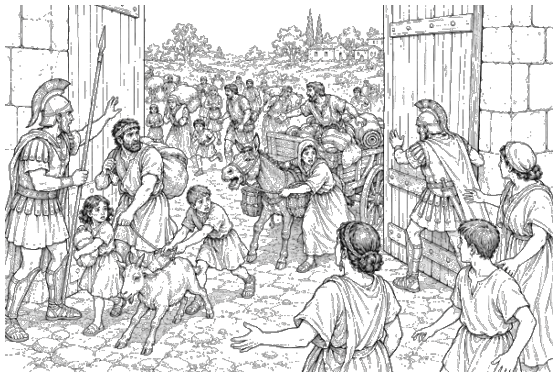
The Greek Poli

Ancient Greece gave the world democracy, philosophy, and the Olympic Games. Yet it was never a single nation. Instead, the Greeks lived in hundreds of independent, rival city-states called poli. Each polis had its own government, army, and laws.

Walled cities

Many Greek poli (also spelled *poleis)* had stone walls, leaving the surrounding farmland outside because enclosing it was too expensive. Most poli were far smaller than modern cities, usually housing fewer than 5,000 people inside the walls. Thousands more farmers lived in the surrounding villages and farms belonging to the polis.

When enemies approached, farmers fled behind the barriers. When invaders were unable to break through the walls of a polis, they surrounded the city in a siege. By cutting off food supplies and burning outer crops, they waited for starvation and disease to force a surrender from the overcrowded population within.



Citizens of the Polis

The ancient Greeks identified with their home polis no matter where they lived. A person born in Athens remained an Athenian even if they moved to another city-state, where they might become wealthy and respected but never gain citizenship.

Within the city walls, many poli had an acropolis, a fortified hilltop that served as a final refuge during an attack and held their most important temples. They also featured an agora, an open marketplace where people traded, exchanged news, and held public meetings.

Geography Divided the Greeks

Greece's mountains, rocky valleys, scattered islands, and winding coastlines isolated its communities. Because land travel was difficult, each polis developed separately, becoming fiercely protective of its own laws, customs, and independence.

Leagues

Despite their rivalries, the Greek poli frequently maintained alliances, called leagues, to guard against mutual threats. Member cities pooled their soldiers and warships under a chosen leader, yet each fiercely guarded its own local government and independence from its allies.

Shared Culture

Although the Greek poli were independent, they shared a common language, family of gods, and many customs. Additionally, every four years, athletes from across the Greek world gathered at Olympia to honor Zeus in the Olympic Games. Even poli at war usually observed a truce so athletes and spectators could travel safely.

The Olympics

The ancient Greeks believed the first Olympic Games were held in 776 BCE, although legends claimed they were much older. Because these stories were passed down by word of mouth for generations, historians cannot be certain when the Games actually began.

Since 1896, nations from around the world have gathered every four years for the modern Olympic Games, carrying on the Greek tradition of briefly setting aside conflict through athletic competition.

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Fill in the Blanks

Ancient Greece was not one nation but hundreds of i__d__p__n__e__t city-states called p__li, each with its own g__v__r__m__nt, army, and la__s. Most poli were p__o__e__t__d by stone w__l__s. During an attack, f__r__e__s remained i__s__de the walls while invaders often laid s__e__e, hoping h__n__er and d__s__a__e would force the city to s__r__e__d__r. The ancient Greeks *i__e__t__f__ed strongly with their own poli, even if they later m__v__d elsewhere. Many poli included an a__r__p__l__s, a fortified hill with important t__m__l__s, and an a__o__a, where people traded and met. Mountains, the sea, and r__g__ed coastlines kept many city-states s__p__r__t__d, although they often formed l__a__u__s for protection. Despite their rivalries, the Greeks shared a common l__n__u__ge, many of the same g__ds, and many c__s__o__s. Every four years the poli gathered h__n__r Zeus in the O__y__p__c Games, and poli at war usually observed a t__u__e so athletes and spectators could travel safely. The modern O__y__p__c Games have continued this t__a__i__i__n since 18____.

Answer in Complete Sentence

*1. Read paragraph one to properly identify the singular and plural name for the Greek city-state.

_____

_____

_____

2. Why did the poli build walls?

_____

_____

_____

3. What was a league in ancient Greece?

_____

_____

_____

4. Do you think the Olympic Games encouraged the ancient Greek poli to cooperate more or remain divided? Defend your answer.

_____

_____

_____

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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