



Greek actors wore masks that showed which character they were playing.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle was fascinated by living things. He collected information about many types of animals and plants. Then he organized animals into groups, such as “those with backbones” and “those without backbones.” He divided plants into such groups as “herbs,” “shrubs,” and “trees.” The way we classify, or group, animals and plants today reflects the work of Aristotle.

31.9 Architecture

The word *architecture* comes from a Greek word that means “master builder.” Greek architecture was one of the achievements of the Golden Age of Athens. One feature was the way that the Greeks used columns to make their temples look balanced and stately. Another feature was the pediments, the triangular shapes where roof lines come together. And a third architectural feature was the decorated bands called friezes.

Today, Greek styles are still used in many buildings. They are common in public structures such as government buildings, schools, churches, libraries, and museums. The U.S. Capitol has elements of Greek architecture, such as columns and pediments. The building that houses the U.S. Supreme Court is another example of a public structure inspired by Greek architecture.

You can also see Greek building styles in homes and stores. For example, many houses have covered porches. The design of these porches reflects a feature of Greek architecture called a stoa. This is a covered line of columns.

31.10 Theater

The word *theater* comes from a Greek word that means “a viewing place.” Greek theaters were built as semicircles. The rows of seats rose steeply from the stage so that everyone in the audience could see and hear. These ideas are used in theaters built today.

The Greeks even invented special effects. For example, they used hoists to lift actors off the stage, so that they appeared to be flying. They also created scenery that revolved, or turned. Revolving the scenery let them quickly change where the action in a play was taking place. Perhaps the greatest Greek contributions to the theater are their stories and plays. Writers throughout the ages have been inspired by Greek myths and stories. Greek dramas are still performed all over the world.

31.11 Sports

Many modern sports trace their roots back to ancient Greece. The most famous example is the Olympic Games.

The first Olympics were held in 776 B.C.E. to honor the Greek god Zeus. Today’s Olympic Games reflect ancient Greek customs. During the opening ceremony, an athlete lights the Olympic flame. This custom comes from the time in ancient Greece when the first Olympic athletes lit a fire on the altar of Zeus.

Many modern Olympic events grew out of Greek contests. One example is the pentathlon. *Pentathlon* is a Greek word that means “five contests.” The Greek pentathlon included the foot-race, discus throw, long jump, javelin throw, and wrestling. The Greeks invented this event as a test of all-around athletic skill. Although the five contests are different today, the pentathlon is still an Olympic event.



Two Chinese athletes take part in the torch relay to light the flame for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you learned how ancient Greek civilization affects today’s world.

Literature, History, and Government The modern alphabet, English grammar, drama and historical writing, and democratic government all trace their roots to the ancient Greeks.

Medicine Hippocrates applied scientific thinking to medicine and established a code of ethics used by doctors today. Centuries later, Greek medical students made discoveries about the heart and the brain.

Mathematics Pythagoras and Euclid made important advances in geometry that are still taught today.

Astronomy and Geography Greek scientists suggested that Earth moves around the sun. They named hundreds of stars and estimated the distances from Earth to both the sun and the moon. Greeks created the first maps and the system of latitude and longitude that is still used today to find locations on Earth.

Biology Greeks developed the scientific study of plants, animals, and humans called biology. The way we classify animals and plants is based on the work of Aristotle.

Architecture, Theater, and Sports Greek building styles, including columns and pediments, are seen today in public and private structures. Greek plays, stories, and myths are read today. Even the Olympic Games first began in ancient Greece.