

Ancient Greece

Religion, Architecture, Sculpture, & Theater



Greek Religion

- Religion was intertwined with private and public affairs throughout Greek culture.
- Greek religion was a mix of *deities* (gods) derived from the original settlers as well as invaders and foreigners. Another example of syncretism.
- Main categories of deities were the Olympian deities and the older chthonian deities.

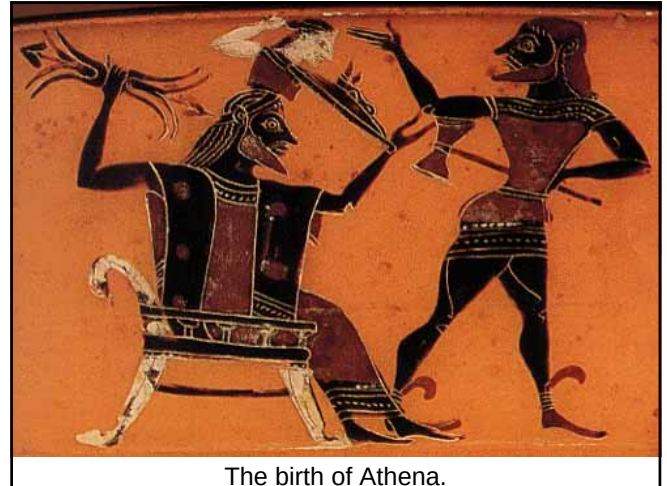
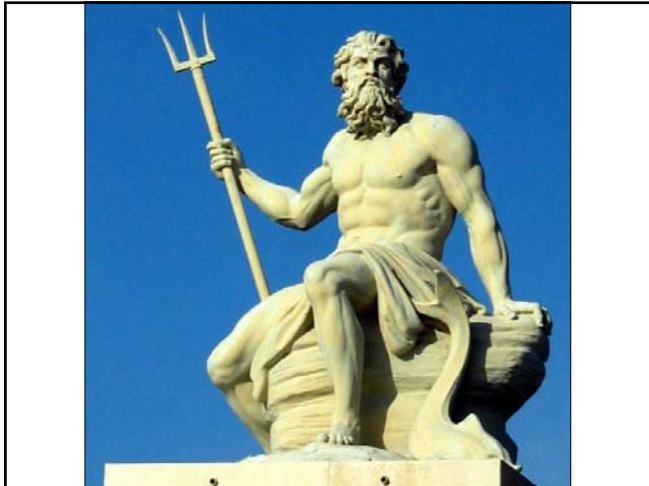


The Gods of Mount Olympus

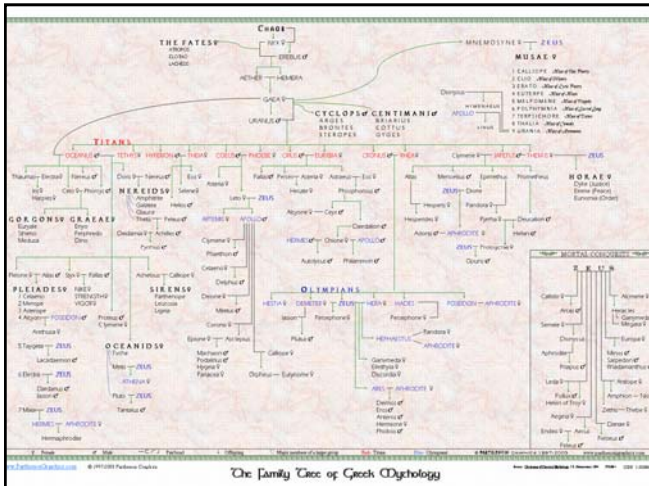
1. Zeus Chief deity
2. Hera Mother goddess, wife of Zeus
3. Poseidon Ruler of the seas
4. Hades Ruler of the underworld
5. Hestia Protector of the hearth
6. Apollo God of wisdom and prophesy...
7. Artemis Virgin goddess of the hunt
8. Ares God of war and violence
9. Aphrodite Goddess of love and beauty
10. Hephaestus Patron of craftspeople
11. Athena Goddess of heroic endeavors...
12. Hermes God of merchants and thieves
13. Dionysus God of wine...



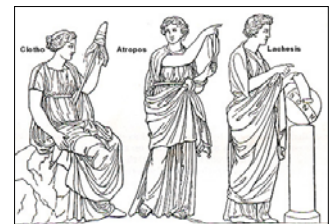
Artist's rendition of the statue of Zeus at the Temple of Zeus, in Olympia. The statue was made by the sculptor Phidias, c. 432 BC.



The birth of Athena.



The Fates are the three goddesses who were the Greek incarnations of destiny.



Clotho - spins the thread of life.

Lachesis - determines the length of the thread.

Atropos - cuts the thread of life.

The Greeks believed that creativity itself was a divine gift from the muses.

Calliope	Epic poetry	Writing tablet
Clio	History	Scrolls
Erato	Love poetry	Cithara (like a lyre)
Euterpe	Song and poetry	Aulos (like a flute)
Melpomene	Tragedy	Tragic mask
Thalia	Comedy	Comic mask
Polyhymnia	Hymns	Veil
Terpsichore	Dance	Lyre
Urania	Astronomy	Globe & compass

Clio, Thalia, Erato, Euterpe, Polyhymnia



Calliope, Terpsichore, Urania, Melpomene

Chthonian deities

- Sounds like *thōn*ian; “of the earth.”
- Derived from ancient earth and harvest deities. Cults grew in influence as the power of the *demos* increased.
- The Chthonian cults were only open to members who swore to keep silent; mystery cults from the Greek word *mystos*, “keeping silent.”
- The most famous of these was the Eleusinian Mystery, which was dedicated to Demeter and Persephone.

Demeter

- Demeter was the goddess responsible for the harvest.
- She was the mother of Persephone, who was abducted by Hades, leading to a myth which explained the change in seasons.
- This is an example of an etiological myth, a myth intended to explain the origins of observed phenomena.

Dionysus

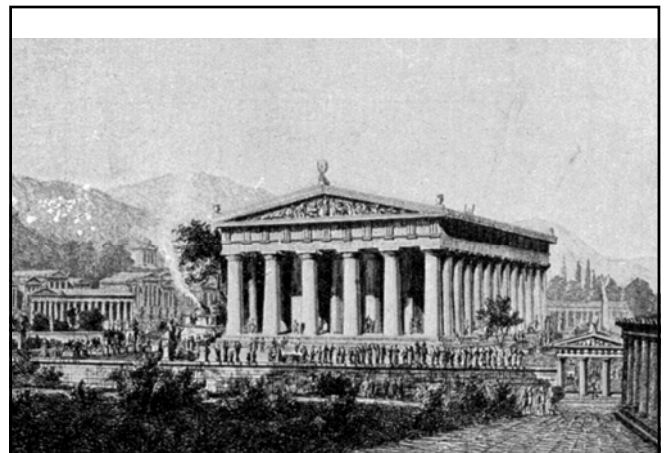
- God of wine, ecstasy, and intoxication.
- Represented the irrational, emotional, and uncontrolled aspects of human nature, in contrast to the rationality of Apollo.
- In Athens, wild rituals in the honor of Dionysus eventually evolved into the civic festival known as the Dionysia.



Apollo: God of music, archery, prophecy, reason, justice, and order.



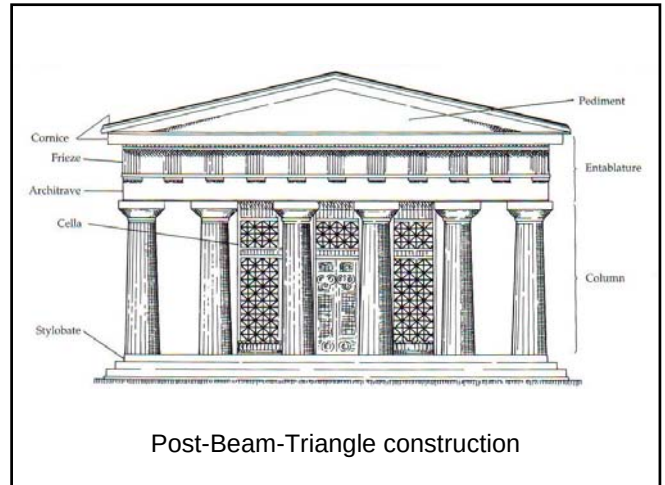
The west pediment of the Temple of Zeus depicted the Centauroomachy, the fight at the wedding of Peirithoos between the Lapiths and the centaurs, who had violated *xenia*, the sacred rules of hospitality that support the social norms. Apollo stood in the centre, flanked by Peirithoos and Theseus. The Lapiths have been taken to represent the civilized Olympian order of the Greeks themselves, while the Centaurs represent primitive nature of chthonic beings. The frieze also reminded fifth-century Greeks of their victory over the Persians.



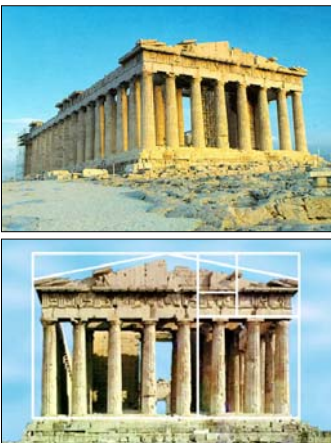
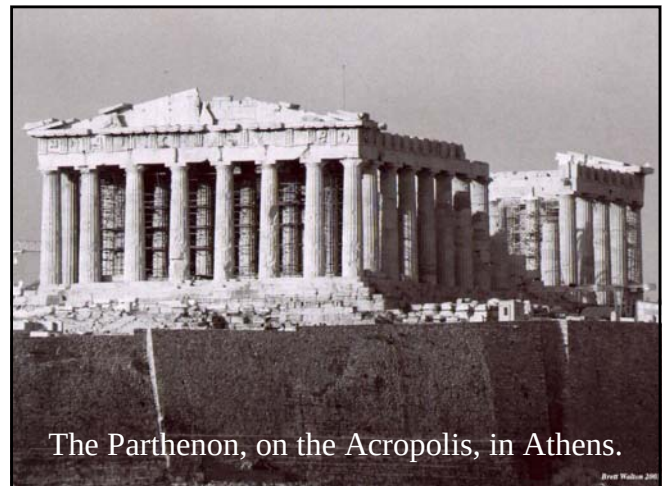
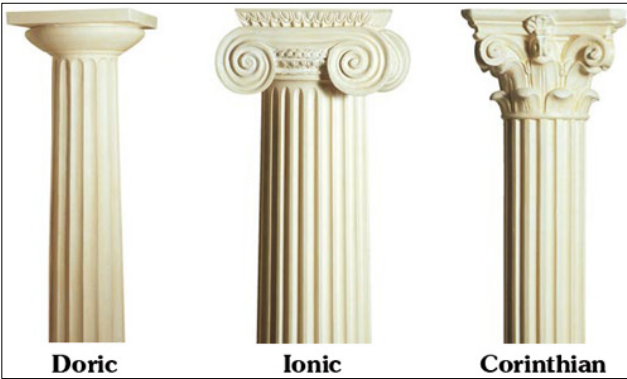
Artist's depiction of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia.

Greek Architecture

Paestum,
Italy

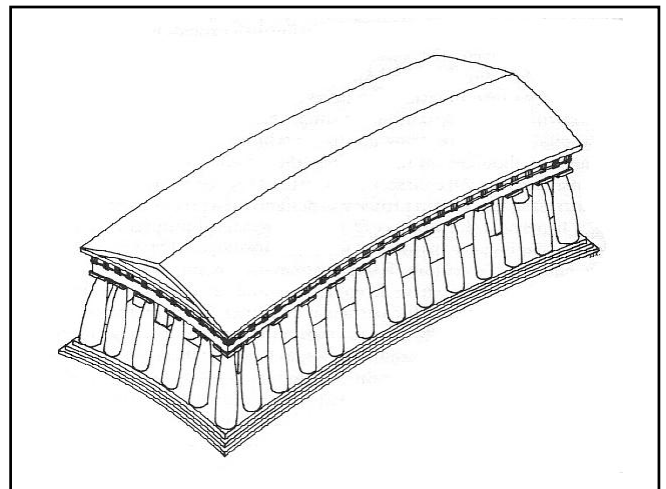


Classical Orders



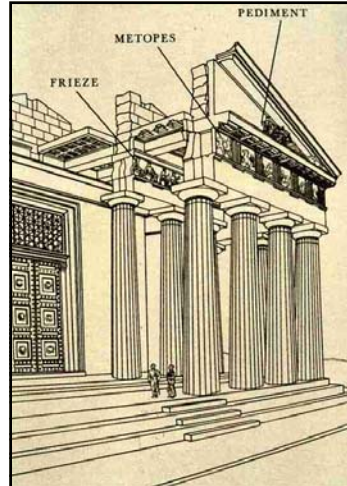
The Parthenon

- circa 440's BC.
- Perfection of the Doric style.
- 8x17 columns
- No line is exactly straight, horizontal, or perpendicular.
- Essence of the classical aesthetic.



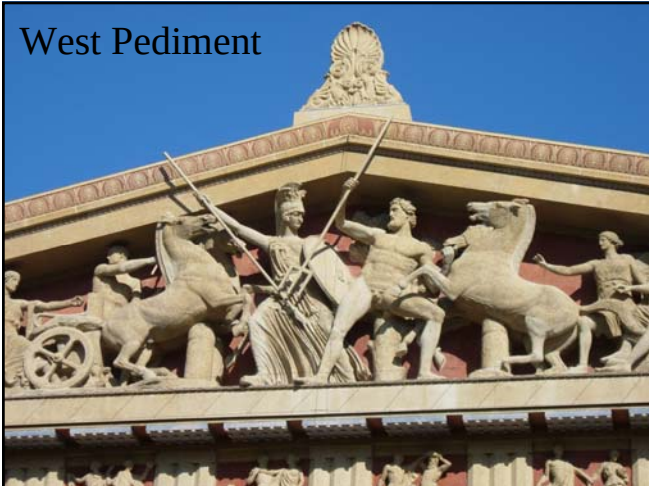
Athena

- Athena is the goddess of wisdom, peace, warfare, strategy, handicrafts and reason, shrewd companion of heroes and the goddess of heroic endeavor.
- She is the virgin patron of Athens, which built the Parthenon to worship her.

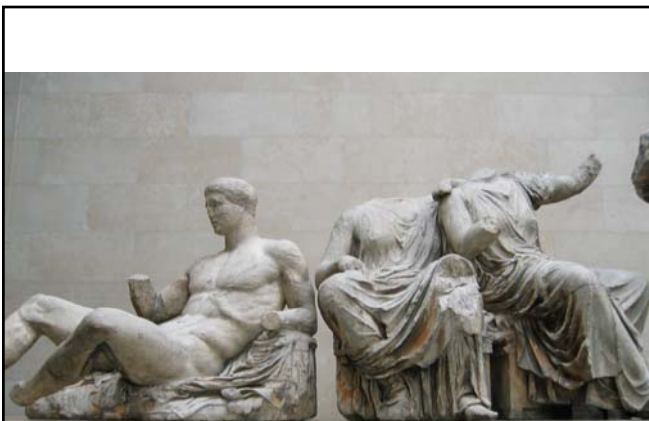
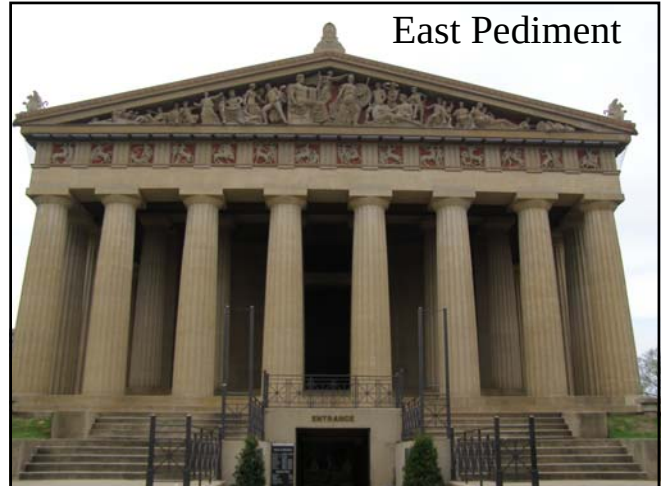


Sculptures on the Parthenon Pediments Metopes Frieze

West Pediment



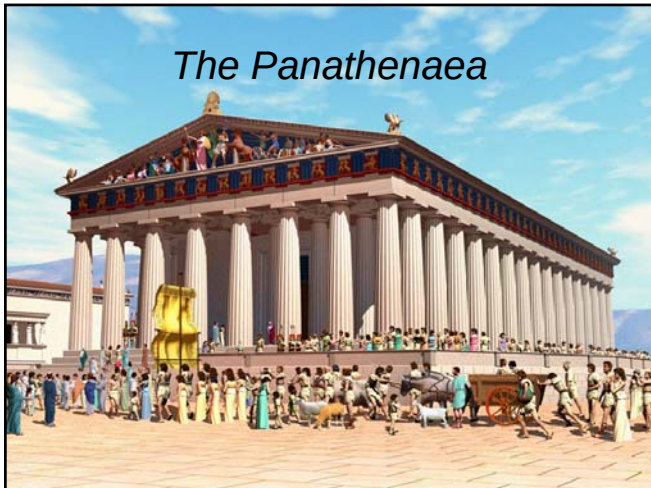
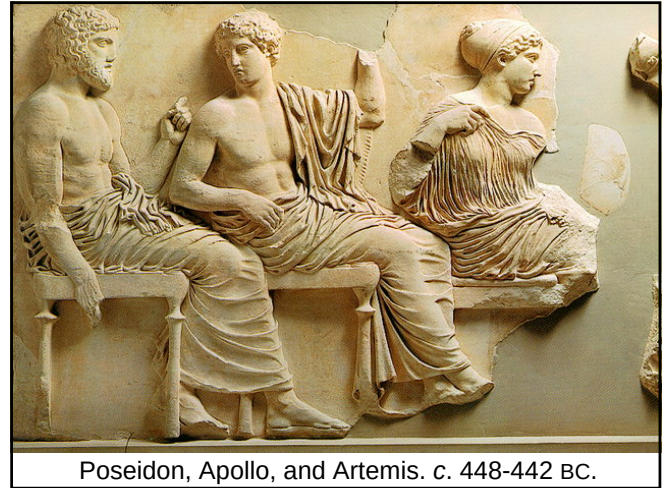
East Pediment



Dionysus watching the sunrise.



Hestia, Dione, and Aphrodite react to the birth of Athena.



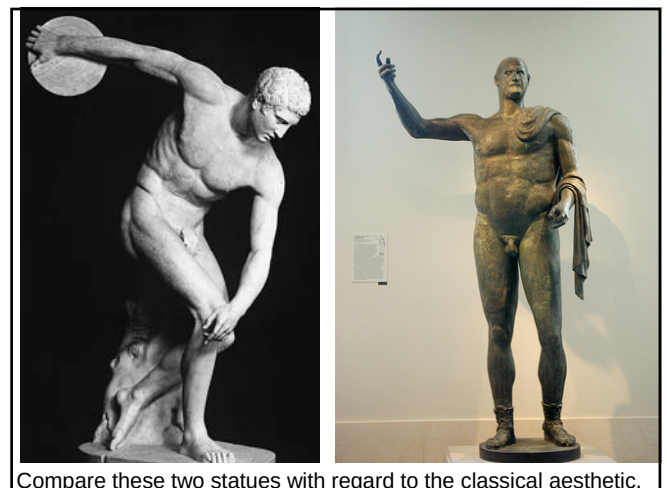
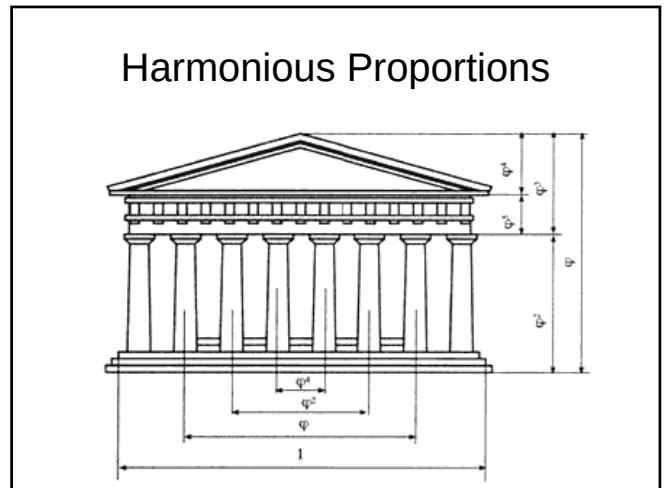
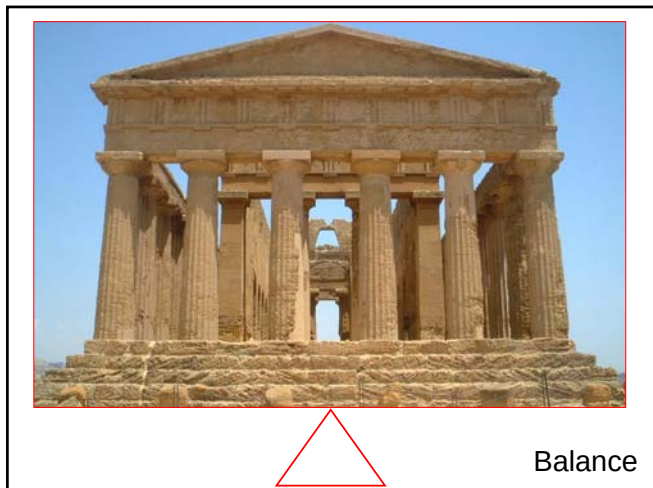
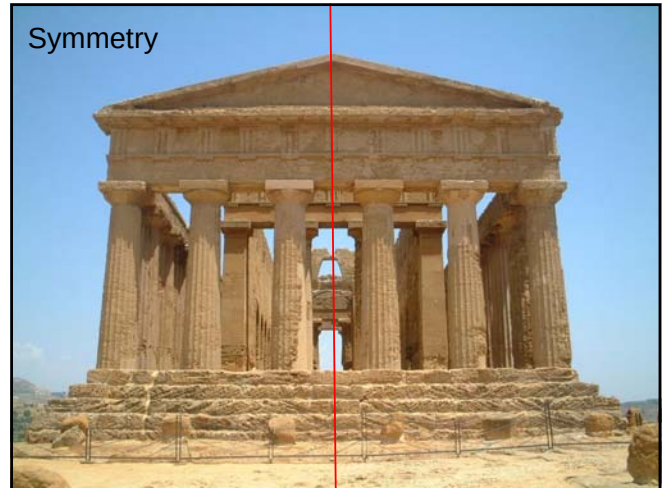
Aesthetics: What is beauty?

- Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty, art, and taste, and with the creation and appreciation of beauty.
- Aesthetics is a subdiscipline of axiology, a branch of philosophy, and is closely associated with the philosophy of art.



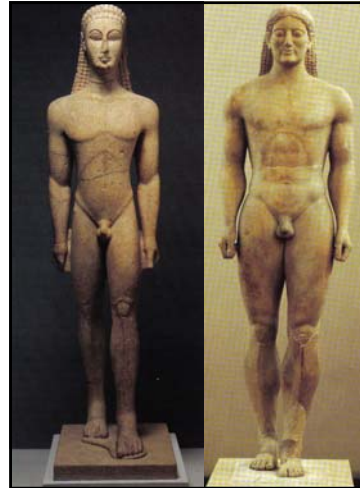
The Classical Aesthetic

- Balance (symmetry)
- Harmonious proportions
 - Simplicity
 - Restraint
 - Order



Greek Sculpture

- During the Archaic period, sculptors sought to imitate and idealize the human form.
- During the Hellenic period, sculptors did this to perfection, but they also made their art much more naturalistic.
- Greeks forged a canon (a set of rules) of idealized human proportions.
- They also developed a repertoire of postures, gestures, and subjects that have become embedded in Western art.

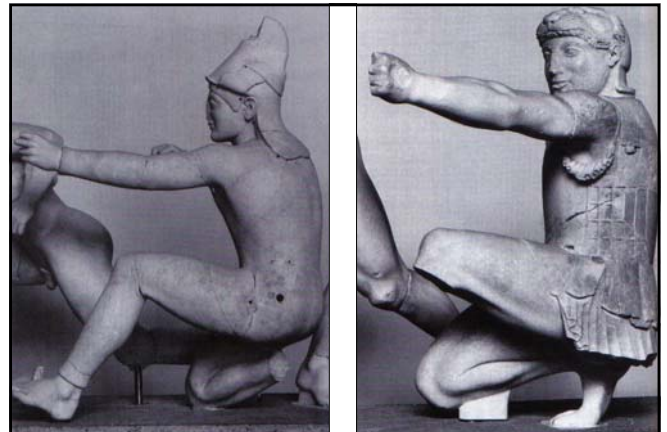


New York Kouros,
c. 615-590 BC.

Ptoon Kouros,
540-520 BC.



Auxerre Kore
compared to the
Peplos Kore.



Two sculptures from the West and East ends of the Temple of Aphaia, 15 years apart. Paris (500 BC) and Heracles (485 BC).



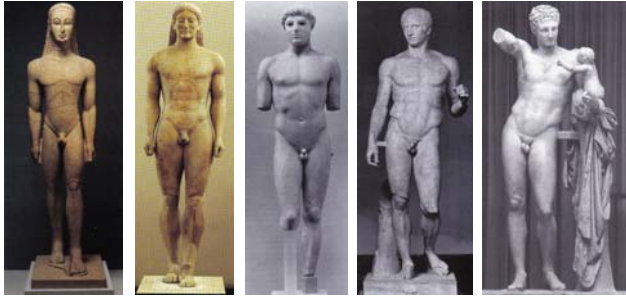
Kritios Boy

- Severe style – dignified nobility.
- Beautifully rendered muscles and sense of inner life.
- *Contrapposto* stance, freer and more relaxed.
- c. 480 BC.



Doryphoros

- High Classical style
- Ordered proportions
- Controlled musculature
- Relaxed *contrapposto*
- c. 440 BC.



600 BC 530 BC 480 BC 440 BC 345 BC

A note about Greek artists.

- Those who practiced the visual arts, including sculpture, were held in low regard in ancient Greece; they were viewed as manual laborers.
- Plutarch said “we admire the work of art but despise the maker of it.”
- Phidias and Praxiteles are exceptions to this rule. Unfortunately, no verifiably original examples of their artwork exist.

Hermes with the Infant Dionysus

- c. 345 BC.
- Attributed to Praxiteles, perhaps the most renowned sculptor of Ancient Greece.
- The Praxitelean curve
- Intense gaze and delicate features lead to a new wave of more sensual portrayals of the human figure.



Hellenistic Sculpture: Sculptors during the Hellenistic period tailored their work to the more melodramatic (less restrained) aesthetic of the time.



The Dying Gaul



Laocoön and His Sons



The Winged Victory of Samothrace,
c. 220–190 BC.



Aphrodite of Milos, better known as the Venus de Milo, is an ancient Greek statue and one of the most famous works of ancient Greek sculpture. Created at some time between 130 and 100 BCE, it is believed to depict Aphrodite (Venus to the Romans) the Greek goddess of love and beauty.

Greek Theater: Tragedy & Comedy

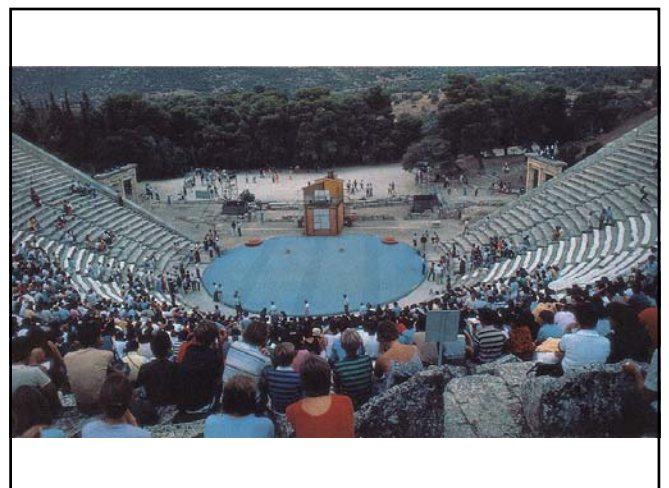


The Dionysia

- The Dionysia was the second largest religious festival in Athens. (The Panathenaea was the largest.)
- The central event of the Dionysia was the drama competition between playwrights.
- Originally, each playwright offered three serious tragedies (often in trilogy format) and one comedy.

Greek Theater: Tragedy

- Tragedies were based on myths that the audience would have been very familiar with.
- Plots dealt with fundamental human issues with no easy solutions. The heroes served as warnings, not models.
- Aristotle argued in *Poetics* that the proper effect of tragedy is catharsis - the purging of the harmful emotions: pity and fear.
- The tragedy of Greek tragedy: only the works of three playwrights survive.

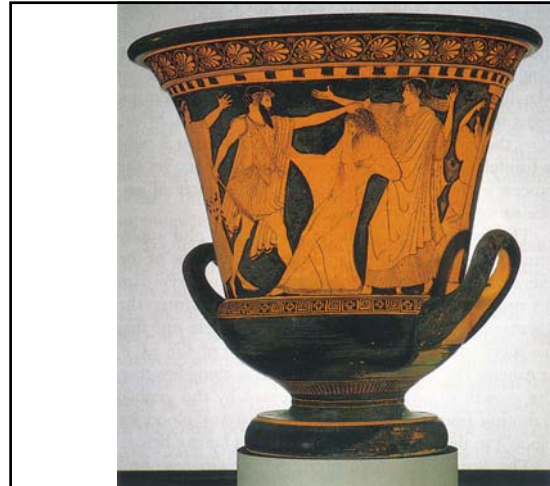


Aeschylus (525-456 BC)

- Optimistic philosophy / themes
- *Orestia* Trilogy (458 BC)
 - *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, *The Eumenides*
 - Represents the evolution of civilization through reason and order.

Timeline 3.1 PHASES OF HELLENIC HISTORY All dates B.C.

479	460	431	404		323
Dorian League	Wars in Greece and with Persia	Thirty Years' Peace	Peloponnesian War	Spartan and Theban Hegemony	Triumph of Macedonia



The murder of Agamemnon.



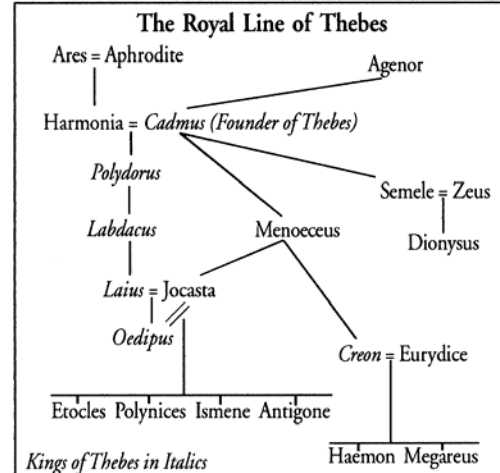
Orestes pursued by the Erinyes (Furies).



The trial of Orestes.

Sophocles (496-406 BC)

- His play *Antigone* (442 BC) explores whether human or divine law should take precedence and he gives equally powerful arguments to the play's opposing characters.
- In *Oedipus the King* (429 BC, a.k.a. *Oedipus Rex*), King Oedipus unknowingly kills his father and marries his mother, then blinds himself when he learns the truth.





Antigone recovering Polyneices' body.

Greek Theater: Political Commentary

- Originally Greek tragedy dealt with new treatments of well-known myths.
- But it also came to be used by some as a tool to reflect upon contemporary society.
- *The Trojan Women*, by Euripides, is commentary on the Athenian capture of the Aegean island of Melos and the subsequent slaughter and subjugation of its populace by the Athenians earlier that year (415 BC).

The Trojan Women, by Euripides



Greek Theater: Comedy

- Playwrights invented their own plots and focused on contemporary matters.
- Refused to take anyone or anything seriously. Parodied and satirized contemporary people and events.
- Could only happen in an open democracy?



Aristophanes (450-385 BC)

- He used satire to entertain as well as to provide political criticism.
- In *Lysistrata* (411 BC), the title character convinces the women of Greece to withhold sexual privileges from their husbands as a means of forcing the men to end the Peloponnesian War.
- Aristophanes pointed out the absurdity of Athens' engagement in the Peloponnesian War...seven years before Athens lost.
- After the war, free speech was curtailed and the great creative age of Greek theater was over.

Satire and Parody

- What is the difference between satire and parody?
- A satire tends to *invent* a fictitious situation for the purpose of ridiculing someone or some idea.
- A parody *imitates* an existing work — often in an absurd way, such as by exaggerating its characteristics — in order to make fun of it and point out its flaws.

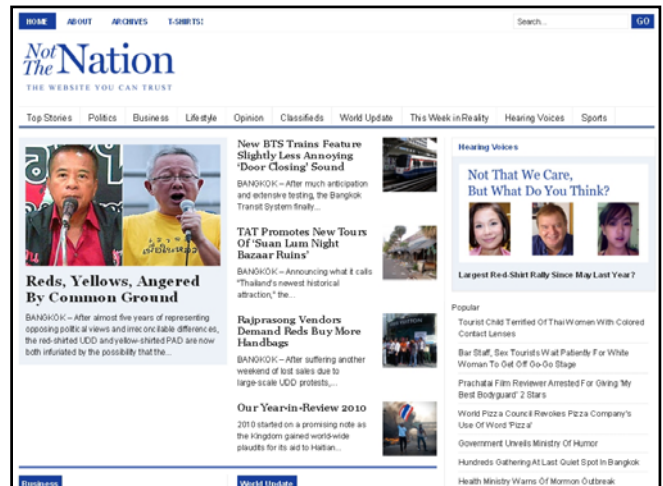
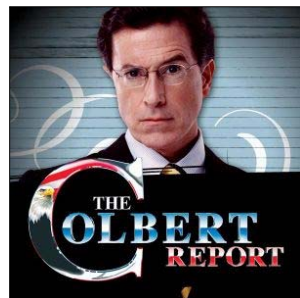
Parody: *Meet the Spartans*



Satire



News Satire



Practice Questions

- Why is Greek religion (mythology) so confused and complicated?
- What was the role of theater in Athens?
 - Religion
 - Competition
 - Universal themes
 - Political and social commentary/criticism
- What are some examples of satire and parody that are found in Thai culture?

Practice Questions

- What does aesthetic mean? What is the Classical aesthetic?
- How is Greek architecture representative of the Classical aesthetic?
- How is Hellenic sculpture representative of the Classical aesthetic?
- Why did ancient Greek sculpture improve so quickly?