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Course Overview

Welcome to Social Studies 170! Throughout the thirty-six units of this course, you will study a wide variety of events, people and decisions that have not only affected our past but that directly influence our present and future. From Ancient Greece to the First Global Age, you will explore how the world changed and evolved. It will help you to understand the global community in which you live and to process information. Experiencing this form of time travel and discovering why people behaved as they did can be fun. Let's get started!



IN AND AROUND THE AEGEAN SEA



Fresco Painting from the Palace of Knossos

Unit Overview

Although Greek civilization began in a small corner of Eastern Europe, it had and continues to have global impact. It began with early societies on the island of Crete with a people known as the Minoans and on the Greek mainland in the city of Mycenae, which we would probably view as more of a town. What do we know about these people and how did we learn it? Do we know all about them or are their still mysteries to solve? Let's find out!

The Minoans and the Island of Crete

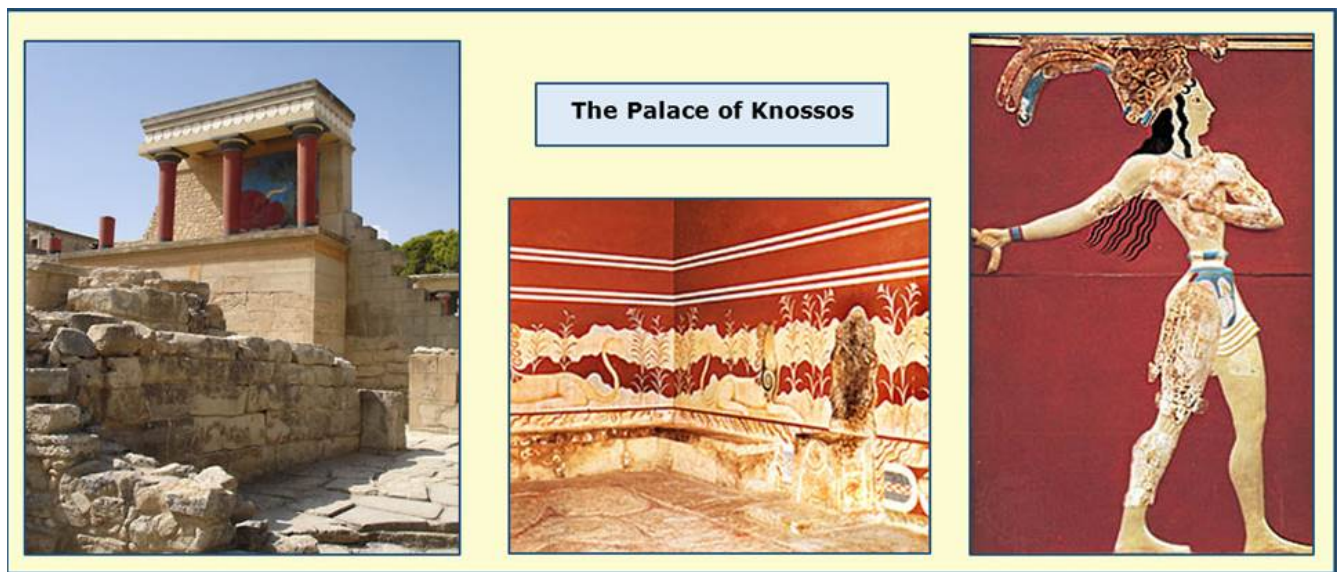
The Aegean Sea is home to a large number of islands, but Crete is one of the most famous. A brilliant and significant early civilization grew here and reached its greatest success from 1750 B.C. to 1500 B.C. The people who built this civilization were called the Minoans by Sir Arthur Evans, a British archeologist who unearthed the ruins of their buildings during the early decades of the 1900s. He based the name on the island's legendary King Minos and became an early pioneer in the field of archeology in the area surrounding the Aegean Sea.



Unlike other ancient civilizations, the Minoans did not achieve their success through conquest but became traders instead. They set up outposts in the lands touched by the Aegean Sea and came into contact with other people, such as Egyptians and Mesopotamians. By sailing to different ports in the region, they not only acquired objects from other cultures but also gained new ideas and technology which they adapted to their own culture. This process is called cultural diffusion; it spreads different products, concepts and customs from one group of people to another. Click on the icon below and watch the video segment to learn more about the Minoans.



The leaders of Crete's trading empire surrounded themselves with the luxuries of the day in their home, the massive Palace of Knossos. The structure had banquet halls, a throne room, chambers for all the royal family and workshops for artists. It also included shrines or sacred places dedicated to the worship of gods and goddesses. Frescoes, colorful wall paintings done in wet plaster, decorated the palace walls and tell us many things about Minoan life. For example, we know about the clothes that were worn by the people and the activities that they enjoyed.



The Palace of Knossos

One thing we do not know about the Minoans, however, is how their civilization ended. By 1400 B.C., it appears to have vanished. Was it destroyed by a volcanic eruption or a deadly earthquake followed by a tidal wave? We simply do not know. Maybe you will become the archeologist who solves this mystery. In the meantime, we are certain that the palace was invaded and raided by the Mycenaeans, the first Greek people to leave written records of their history.

Mycenae and the Trojan War

From 1400 B.C. to 1250 B.C., the Mycenaean civilization controlled the Aegean world. They, too, were sea traders, but, unlike the Minoans, they traveled beyond the Aegean realm to Sicily and Italy. The Mycenaeans learned the art of writing from the Minoans, and they passed this skill to others living on the Greek mainland. Mycenaean warrior-kings established separate city-states and built thick-walled forts for their protection. Archeologists have uncovered gold ornaments and other treasures from their tombs. It was their interest in trade and valuable objects that brought the Mycenaeans into conflict with the wealthy city of Troy, once located in the modern-day country of Turkey. Although most historians agree that Troy's control of the straits between Black and Mediterranean Seas was the cause of the controversy, legends gave the war a romantic twist. When Paris, a Trojan prince, kidnapped Helen, the beautiful wife of a Greek king, the Mycenaeans recruited soldiers from Greece and sailed to Troy to reclaim her. The two sides battled for ten years, but the Mycenaean forces eventually burned Troy to the ground.



An Artist's View of the Trojan War Centuries Later: Franz Matsch, 1892

For centuries, historians regarded the Trojan War as a product of folklore, but this view changed in the 1870s. Heinrich Schliemann, a wealthy German businessman, was determined to prove that the stories of the Trojan War were not purely

fictional. He conducted excavations at the sites of ancient Troy and Mycenae. Although he drew several conclusions that eventually proved to be incorrect, Schliemann's work convinced most scholars that the Trojan War was actually an historical event. You can view the ruins of Mycenae as they look today by clicking the icon below and watching the video.



Ancient Greece and the Dark Ages

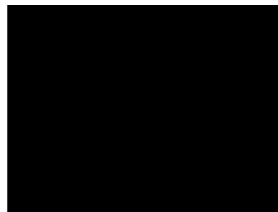
The success of Mycenae in the Trojan War did not, however, ensure the city's long-lasting power in Greece. Its wealth soon attracted raiders from the sea and invaders known as Dorians from the northern regions. As the attacks increased, Greeks abandoned their cities and lived in small, isolated villages. They lost interest in trade and had very limited contact with the outside world. Between 1100 B.C. and 800 B.C., their civilization appeared to slide backward. For this reason, historians later referred to this era as the Dark Ages.



The Ruins of Ancient Troy

Much of what we know about life during the Dark Ages comes from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the two great epic poems of Greece. Epic poems are long poems that describe a series of events on a grand scale. Although the poet Homer is credited as their author, some scholars believe that they are the work of several different writers. Traditionally, Homer has been described as a blind man who traveled from village to village and orally passed on stories about the Greek heroes and their adventures. The *Iliad* concentrates on the Trojan War from the Greek point of view and emphasizes the impact of the gods and goddesses on its outcome. The *Odyssey* tells the story of the long voyage endured by the Greek warrior Odysseus when he turned to his homeland after the fall of Troy. To see what the actual poem is like, read the opening lines of the *Odyssey* pictured in the graphic below. You can also learn more about the exploits described in the poem by clicking on the icon and watching the video. Because they stress the values of courage, loyalty and honor, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have inspired writers and storytellers for over three thousand years.

Homer: The Opening Lines of the Odyssey	Notes
<p>Tell me, Muse, of the man of many ways, who was driven far journeys, after he had sacked Troy's sacred citadel.</p> <p>Many were they whose cities he saw, whose minds he learned of, many the pains he suffered in his spirit on the wide sea, struggling for his own life and the homecoming of his companions.</p> <p>Even so he could not save his companions, hard though he strove to; they were destroyed by their own wild recklessness, fools, who devoured the oxen of Helios, the Sun God, and he took away the day of their homecoming. .</p> <p>Translated by Richmond Lattimore</p>	<p>Muse: One of the nine Greek goddesses who inspired artists, writers, musicians and others engaged in creative activities.</p> <p>Citadel: A fort on high ground that is used to protect a city.</p> <p>The man: Odysseus</p>



A History Mystery: The Mask of Agamemnon

The Mask of Agamemnon, pictured below, is an artifact that was discovered in 1876 at Mycenae by the archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann. In Greece, Egypt and other areas of the ancient world, funeral masks were sometimes crafted and placed over the face of a royal body at the time of burial. This particular mask is made from gold and is about twelve inches in height. Schliemann believed that the mask and the body were those of Agamemnon, the legendary Greek king and leader of the Greek forces in the Trojan War. Since it does not seem to match the styles of others found at the same site, some modern researchers have disputed this claim and have argued that the mask is from a much earlier time. Other scholars insist that the mask is a forgery, placed at the site by Schliemann to enhance his reputation as an archaeologist. Even though the controversy continues and its authenticity remains in doubt, the Mask of Agamemnon is a prized discovery and is on display at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, Greece.



The Mask of Agamemnon

What Happened Next?

As the Greeks slowly emerged from the Dark Ages, their geography shaped their development. It has been said that, although the mountains divided them, the seas united them. The Greeks traveled the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas to connect with other people and to trade. City-states expanded from villages to small cities and developed forms of government. Although they were similar in some ways and held some of the same values, each Greek city-state was unique. In the next unit, we will examine the two most powerful city-states, Athens and Sparta. How were they alike? How were they different? What have we learned from them? We will explore all this and more in the next unit. Before moving on to Unit 2, review the information in this unit; then, complete Questions 21 through 30.