

A Teenagers Guide to youth in the ancient world



Welcome - Χαίρετε - Salvete to the Teece Museum of Classical Antiquity!

Here, you can explore more than three thousand years of history through artefacts from across ancient Mediterranean cultures. These objects tell stories of a world filled with mythical monsters, goddesses, heroes, and, most importantly, everyday people like us.

With this guide you'll discover what life was like for ancient teenagers. Through the lens of artefacts in our collection, you'll learn about everything from the societal expectations of young people to tales of legendary warrior women who lived at the edge of the known world.

As you journey through the gallery, we encourage you to take the lead—use the artefacts featured in this guide as a starting point, and explore further to uncover even more. Keep an eye out for the questions we've included throughout; these prompts are designed to spark curiosity and help you make your own connections across the museum.

We hope you'll find familiar patterns from your own life, relate to a story, or simply learn something new. Whatever the case, come with us and step into the world of the ancients...

Cast

Andromeda: Princess of Ethiopia, otherwise known as Perseus's girlfriend.

Aphrodite/Venus: Introducing heavenly Aphrodite, Goddess of Love.

Athena/Minerva: Patron Goddess of Athens, the Goddess of Wisdom, and the number one fan of Odysseus.

Demeter/Ceres: Valiant mother, Demeter, Goddess of the Harvest and Agriculture.

Eros/Cupid: Fun and flirty, meet Eros, God of Desire and son of Aphrodite.

Flora: Meet the Roman Goddess of Flowers, blossoming Flora.

Hades/Pluto: Here is the God of the Underworld, Hades, better known as Persephone's husband.

Hera/Juno: Wife of Zeus and hater of Herakles, meet the ancient Goddess of Marriage, Family and Childbirth.

Herakles/Hercules: Otherwise known as HUNKcules, meet the most famed hero of Greek/Roman myth.

Medusa: The most powerful of Gorgons, meet Medusa, cursed by Athena, killed by Perseus, and feared by all.

Persephone/Proserpina: Split between two worlds, meet Persephone, daughter of Demeter and wife of Hades.

Perseus: The demigod son of Zeus, otherwise known as 'Medusa Killer Man.'

Poseidon/Neptune: God of the Seas, Earthquakes, and Horses!

Theseus: Prince of Athens, otherwise known as 'Minotaur Killer Man.'

HERAKLES

Herakles, the Captain America of the classical world, is a legendary hero from Greek myth. Unlike the Disney film adaptation, his life in myth was full of challenging battles and death.

Zeus's wife, the Goddess Hera, was sick of Zeus running off with mortals to have children, like Herakles. She so despised Herakles that she made him go insane and kill his wife and children. To repent for these murders, he was sent to Eurystheus, the king of Tiryns and Mycenae. The king assigned Herakles 12 impossible labours as a punishment.

Herakles is pictured fighting a white-skinned figure alongside other youths on this ceramic band-cup, which would have been used to drink wine. The decoration on this cup is believed to be his ninth labour, stealing the belt of Hippolyta. Herakles had to fight the group of female warriors called the Amazons to get the belt from Hippolyta, their queen. Herakles eventually completed his labours and became a god. His story highlights that there will be challenges if you want to succeed, but with courage and determination (almost) anything is possible.



Like the myths of Perseus and Theseus, Herakles' story illustrates what was expected of young men in ancient Greece. However, like most people, Herakles was not perfect. He did dumb things, got drunk, and acted like such a drama queen! His flaws make his story a more realistic representation of a hero. Even Captain America makes mistakes.

Athenian Black-Figure Band-Cup

Greek, ca. 540-530 BCE, unattributed.

JLMC 55.58



Can you spot any
other depictions of
Herakles in the
collection?

How many can you
find?

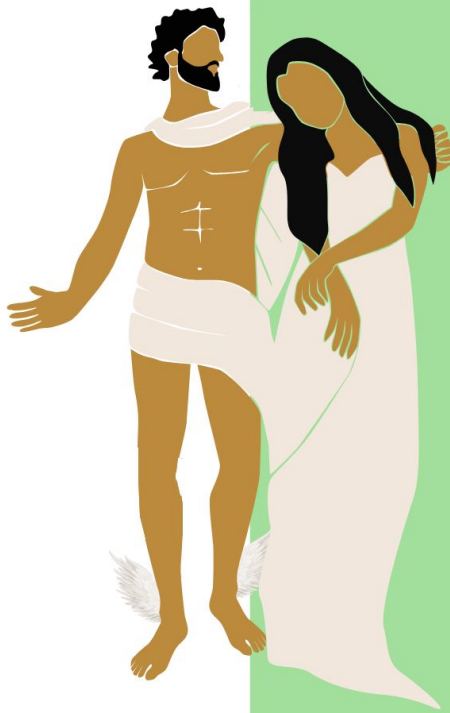
PERSEUS

Perseus, known for his good looks and bravery, is one of the most famous heroes of Greek mythology. He is a representation of the hero all young men aspired to be in ancient times.

This son of Zeus is best known for killing the gorgon, Medusa. After completing this quest, he was flying home when he saw Andromeda, a princess of Ethiopia, bound to a rock as a sacrifice to a sea monster. He used an ancient sword called a harpe to kill the monster, saving Andromeda.

This red-figure vessel has an illustration on one side which depicts the story of Perseus rescuing Andromeda from the sea monster. This vase would have been used to mix wine and water at drinking parties called symposia.

The myth of Perseus reinforced the Greek view that men need to be strong and brave, whilst women need to be saved. Myths like that of Perseus and Andromeda would have been heavily influenced by ideal gender roles in Greek society.



Red-figure Bell-Krater

Italy, ca. 375-350 BCE, unattributed.

JLMC 183.97



EROS

The ancient Greeks used to throw absolute ragers back in the day. Jugs like this oinochoe (oh-nok-oh-way) were used to pour wine for the party guests.

This jug features Eros, the winged Greek God of Lust and Love. As the son of the Greek Goddess of Love, Aphrodite, he is often portrayed as a disobedient child in many myths. He is mischievous and known for his cruel attacks, which force others to fall in love once they are pierced with one of his arrows.

This implies that Eros may have a teenage personality, full of angst and rebellion. Eros is associated with love, passion and fertility. In ancient Greek society, girls as young as fourteen could be married off to someone twice their age. Having children was expected to be a major part of women's lives. Stories about figures like Eros normalised ideas around sex and love for young girls.



Red-figure Oinochoe

Italy, 330-320 BCE, attributed to the Ganymede Painter.

JLMC 215.14



MEDUSA

Medusa's iconic hair makes her an easily recognisable monster figure from Greek myths. This item is a fragment of a lamp handle made of ceramic. Decorating the surface is a relief sculpture of the gorgon herself.

One version of her story tells that Medusa was a beautiful young girl who was assaulted by Poseidon in a temple of Athena. **Guess who got the blame?** Because you weren't supposed to have sex in a temple, Athena punished Medusa by turning her hair into snakes and cursing her so that any man who looked at her turned to stone. She became a monster.

Medusa's story shows the perspective of the male-dominated society in ancient Greece. It also shows how different perspectives can change the narrative. In the ancient world, Medusa was seen as a monster who deserved her fate. But back then she was also recognised as a force to protect people from evil. Alternative understandings portray her as a victim. Nowadays, Medusa has become a symbol of female empowerment and strength.



Lamp Handle

Egypt, ca. 50-135 CE, unattributed.

JLMC 94.68



The winged horse Pegasus was born from Medusa's blood after she was beheaded by Perseus.

AMAZON WARRIORS

Amazons were the ultimate girl bosses of the ancient world. Powerful and fearsome, this race of warrior women were said to be the daughters of the God of War, Ares, and lived somewhere at the edge of the known world in a woman-only society.

These women appear frequently in myth - always as enemies of the Greeks, because of course the Greeks believed there was no way that powerful women could defeat male heroes such as Herakles, Achilles, and Theseus. Signifying the romance and wonder associated with foreign and exotic things, their popularity in Rome was so great that sculptures such as this one were common throughout the Empire.



This carved stone Amazon meets her viewers in a forward-facing, unwavering stare. Whilst the Amazons may not have been regarded in the ancient world as the feminist icons they are today, (note the depiction of the Amazon, Diana in the film Wonder Woman), the presence of powerful, confident women in the ancient world is a refreshing switch-up from the patriarchal status-quo of antiquity.

Marble Head of an Amazon

Roman, ca. 180-190 CE, unattributed.

DG 330



FLORA

Calling all ancient girlies, wear this golden pendant and cop your next brand deal with Flora, the Roman Goddess of Flowers. Associated with all things spring, only Flora's brand can do justice to your blossoming beauty and guarantee that modest-girl energy.

Just like jewellery trends of the 21st century CE, ancient Roman girls wore pendants such as this to embody societal standards of beauty and femininity. Today there are modern trends like it-girl energy or the gold-hoop-slick-bun combo. Ancient girls were expected to wear jewellery in ways that made them appear to be perfect wives - modest, beautiful, and fertile.

Often significantly younger than their husbands, young wives were adorned in jewellery such as this Flora pendant to symbolise these ideals, representing their status as a perfect wife and displaying the wealth of their husband.

A pendant is only one example of adornment worn by the ancients! Try and find another - is there anything that you would wear?



Flora Pendant

Roman, ca. 2nd Century CE, unattributed.

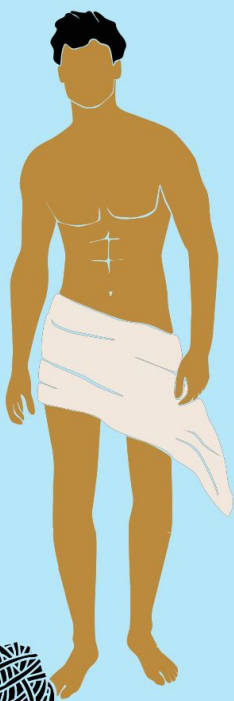
DG 120



THESEUS

Talk about any A-List celebrity at a Classics conference and you'll be met with blank stares, but talk about the Kritios Boy? Instant win. This plaster cast replicates the world-famous marble sculpture, Kritios Boy, made in 490-480 BCE.

The Kritios Boy is a dedicatory statue, representing an idealised image of an ancient male youth like the young God of Archery, Apollo, or the Greek hero, Theseus. He wears a trendy tight cap of curls and his muscular body is poised in a contrapposto stance. To reach this ideal, young men were expected to hit the gym 7 days a week.



We might compare the influence of the Kritios Boy to the influence of the insane amount of Instagram 'Gym Bros' that grace our feeds daily – both represent the beauty standards forced on young men in society. One just happens to be thousands of years old. Perhaps knowing that even the youths of antiquity were met with such high standards can be a comfort to us in the modern world - at least we don't have to deal with fighting monsters or dying from the common cold.



Plaster Cast Copy of the Kritios Boy

Greek, ca. 490-480 BCE. Cast: ca. 1988 CE.

JLMC CC15



Theseus is best known for slaying the Minotaur in the labyrinth, using enchanted string to guide him.

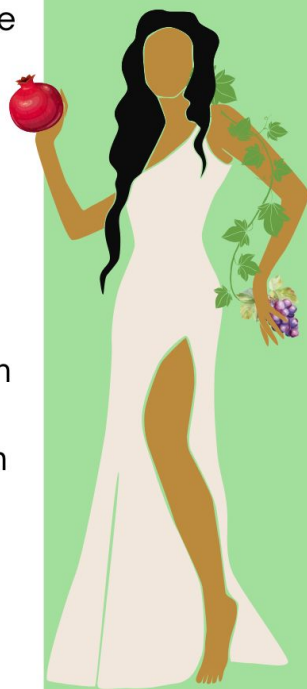
PERSEPHONE

Not all people have as close a mother-daughter relationship as Demeter, the Goddess of Fertility, and Persephone, Goddess of Spring. Demeter was incredibly protective of her beloved daughter and was said to have raised Persephone away from the other gods.

One day Hades, the God of the Underworld, kidnapped Persephone, causing Demeter to go into a fit of rage. Her emotions were so strong they affected the harvest across Greece, stopping all the plants from growing. The gods were suffering due to the lack of sacrifices from the mortals.

Eventually, a deal was made that Persephone would spend six months in the Underworld and six months with her mother. Persephone later married Hades and became queen. Persephone stayed true to her roots by remaining the Goddess of Spring.

Nowadays, Persephone's story is often re-written to give her more control over her own destiny. She's become a young person choosing to become more independent from her own family, rather than being kidnapped.



Demeter and Persephone

Marian Maguire, 2017, etching on paper.



Marian Maguire is a Christchurch artist who is inspired by the ancient world. This print of Demeter and Persephone comes from her 'Goddess' series.

Which character from antiquity do you most identify with and why? _____

If your character was around today how would they fit into modern society?

Use the grid below to think about what life might be like for your character.

How would they dress?

What would their symbol be?

Who would be their bestie?

Who would be their enemy?

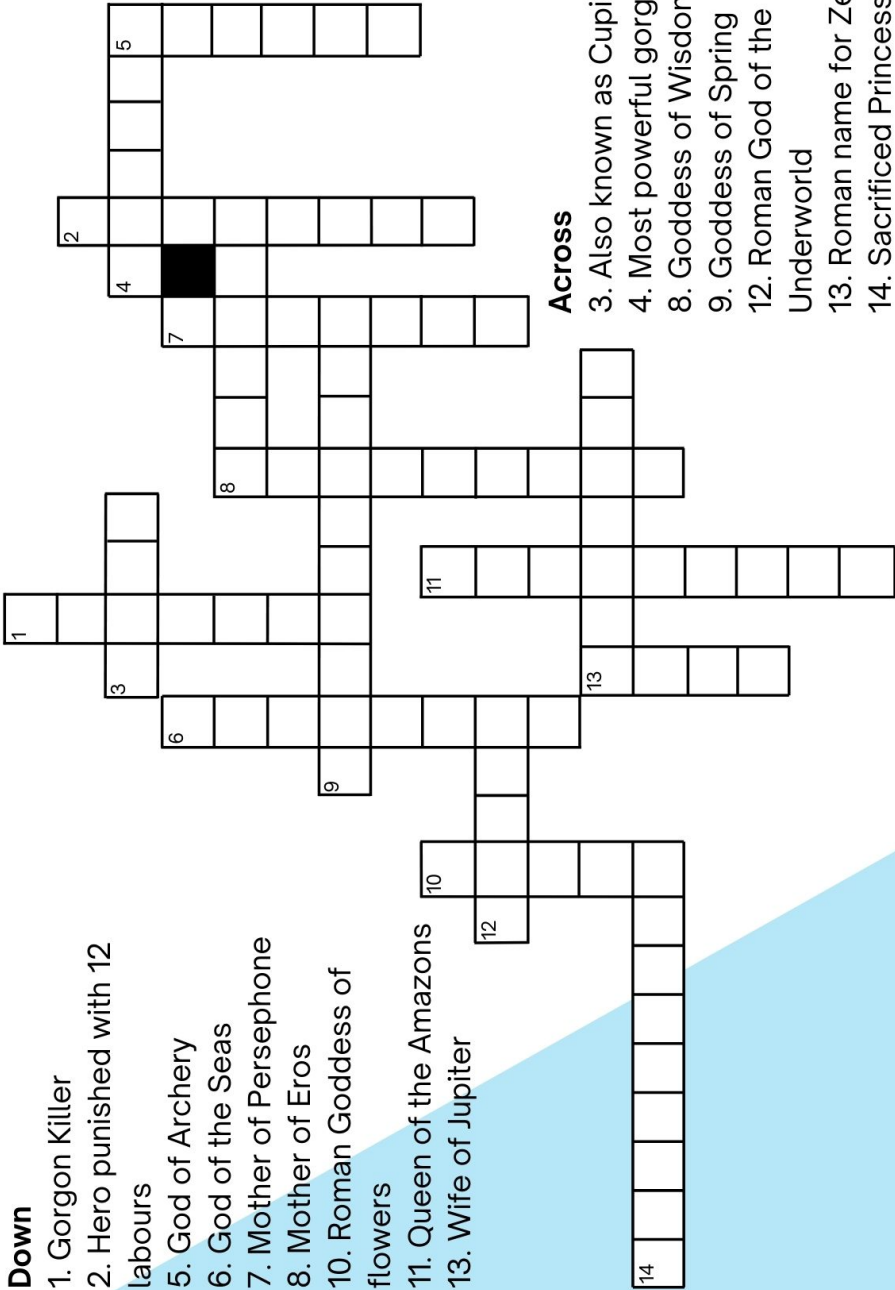
Classical Cross Word

Down

- 1. Gorgon Killer
- 2. Hero punished with 12 labours
- 5. God of Archery
- 6. God of the Seas
- 7. Mother of Persephone
- 8. Mother of Eros
- 10. Roman Goddess of flowers
- 11. Queen of the Amazons
- 13. Wife of Jupiter

Across

- 3. Also known as Cupid
- 4. Most powerful gorgon
- 8. Goddess of Wisdom
- 9. Goddess of Spring
- 12. Roman God of the Underworld
- 13. Roman name for Zeus
- 14. Sacrificed Princess





SOLDIER



BOY WITH YO-YO



HERACLES



ARCHEOLOGIST



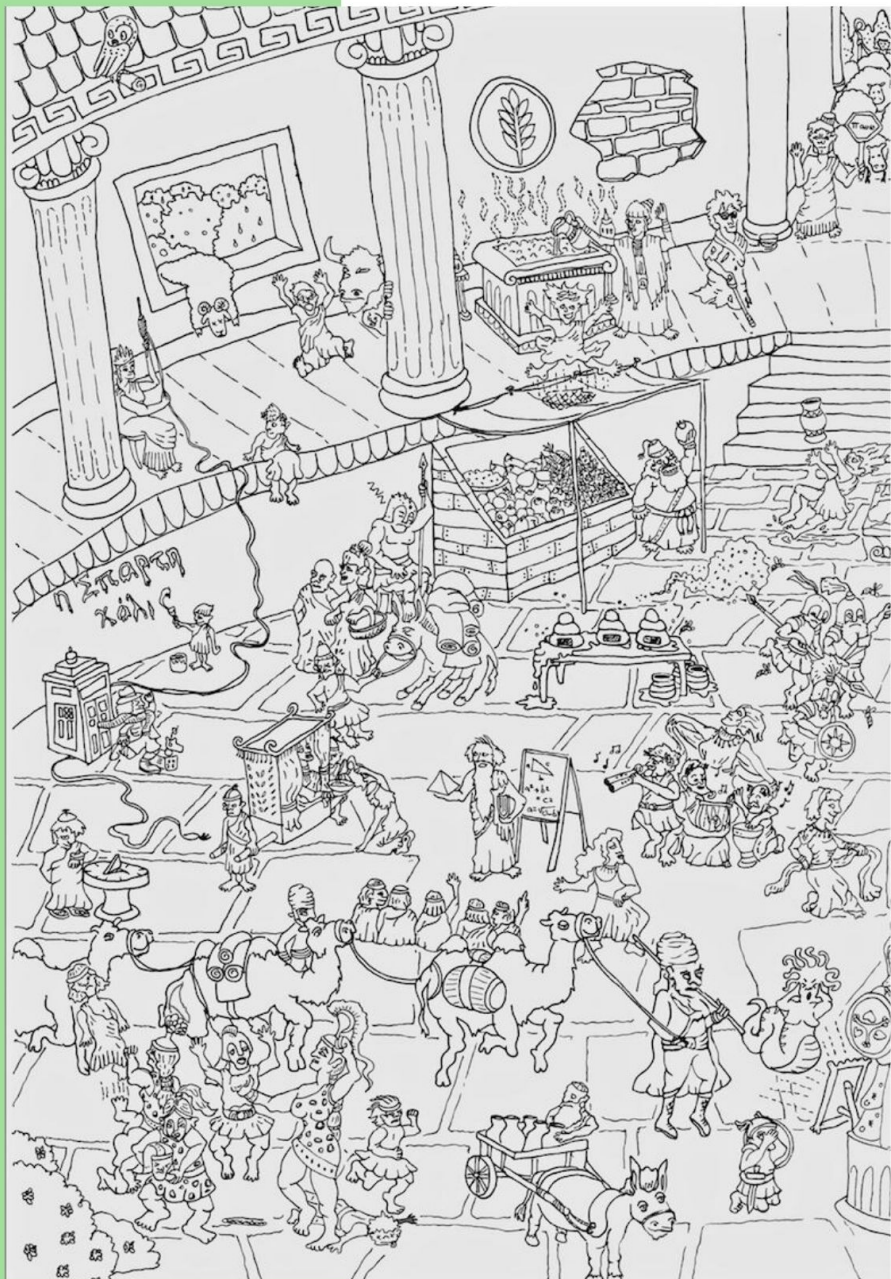
ATHENA

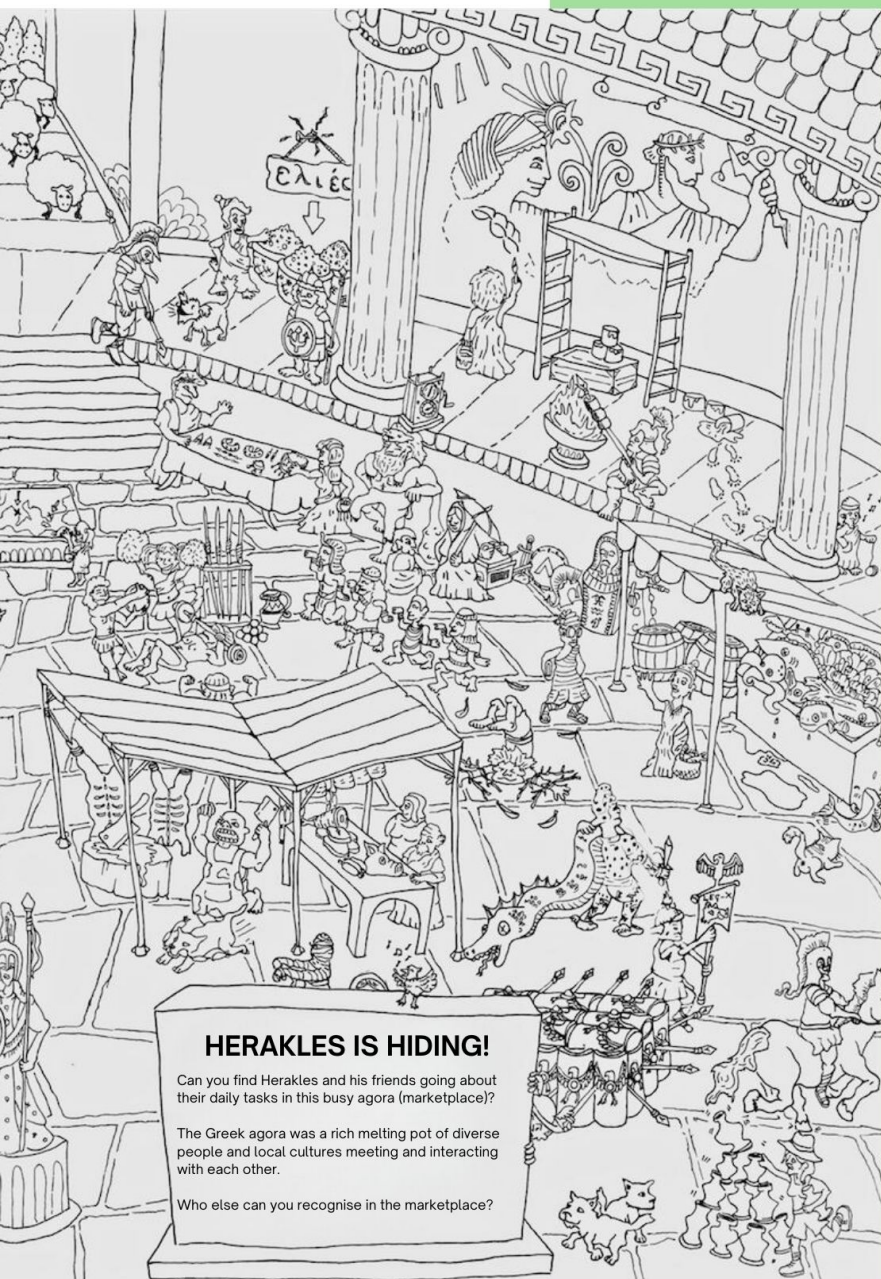


ZEUS



PENELOPE





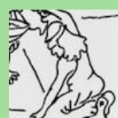
ATHLETE



PERSEUS



OWL



SLAVE



MUSICIANS



AMAZON



PRIESTESS



You might be surprised to learn that ancient statues weren't the colour of clean white marble. Instead they were brightly painted and decorated, but the pigments faded over time leaving only small traces.

Colour in this kore statue using bright colours.

This plaster cast of Euthydikos is a copy taken from the original. Explore the other statues in the collection, can you spot the difference in texture between plaster and stone?

Useful Things to Know

BCE vs CE

BCE stands for ‘before common era,’ whereas CE stands for ‘common era.’ The common era began at 1 CE and continues to this day. BCE counts for everything that happened beforehand! We are now 2,025 years into the common era.

Black-figure pottery

Black-figure pottery originated in Corinth around 700 BCE. In this type of pottery, makers used a slip that turned black after firing to paint their designs onto the natural clay surface of a vase. The background was left in the natural clay colour. Extra details were added by incising the slip or adding purple or white pigment. This style of pottery eventually gave way to red-figure pottery.

Ceramic

Ceramic is a material made by mixing clay and water, which is then formed into shapes and hardened using heat. Ancient pottery is made of ceramic and could be used to make a variety of household items such as vases, cups and lamps.

Contrapposto

The contrapposto position in sculpture depicts a figure standing upright with one foot in front of the other. The full weight of the body is distributed on the back leg. This tips the figure's shoulders and hips on an angle, allowing the body to make an s-shaped curve. The pose gives sculpture a more dynamic presence, but at the same time the figure can appear more natural and relaxed.

Harpe

The harpe was a type of sword with two blades - one blade was straight, the other sickle-like blade stuck out from one side. It was the weapon supposedly used by Kronos, Zeus, and Perseus.

Hellenes

Whilst in the modern day, we call the Greeks 'Greeks,' the Greeks actually referred to themselves as 'Hellenes.' Likewise, in the modern day, we call Greece 'Greece,' the Greeks called their homeland 'Hellas.' It was in fact the Romans that gave them their 'Greek' name after meeting an ancient tribe called the Graecians from Boeotia (an area of central Greece). They applied the name to all who lived in the land.

Krater

A krater is a vessel (a jar or vase) used to mix wine and water in ancient times. These were often used at a symposium (drinking party).

Red-figure pottery

Red-figure pottery originated in Athens around 530 BCE. This type of pottery uses black slip (a coloured black mixture of clay and water) to paint the background and the details of the figures. The figures are left the red-orange clay colour to stand out from the background.

Roman vs. Greek names

Have you noticed that sometimes there are two names for certain gods and goddesses? Greek and Roman mythology – if you hadn't noticed – are almost interchangeable. This is because the Romans adopted many aspects of Greek mythology for themselves. They simply renamed their chosen divinities and shifted their attributes to better fit Roman societal values. In large, the mythology remains the same.

Symposium

A symposium was a party held by the ancient Greeks after eating. Men would drink, dance, and socialise. Music, jokes, games, poetry, and dancing were used to entertain the guests. The plural for symposium is symposia.



Credits

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Line Drawing of Euthydikos: Ash Evergreen

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