Democracy and Greece’s Golden Age

BEFORE YOU READ
In the last section, you read about the government of the city-states.
In this section, you will read about democracy and the Golden Age of Greece.

AS YOU READ
Use the web below to show characteristics and events of Greece’s Golden Age.

Pericles’ Plan for Athens (pages 134–135)

How did Pericles change Athens?
Pericles led Athens during its golden age. He served in this role from 461 to 429 B.C. Greek culture reached new heights under his leadership. Pericles had a great influence over Athens. Pericles took many steps to make Athens better.
He set three goals. One goal was to make Athens much more democratic. More people served in the government. Pericles helped bring about direct democracy. This meant that citizens ruled directly and not through representatives. An assembly of male citizens had a voice in making laws for Athens.
Another goal was to make Athens stronger. Pericles tried to increase its wealth and power. He helped build up Athens’s navy. It became the strongest in the Mediterranean.
Another goal was to make Athens beautiful. Pericles used money from the empire to buy gold, ivory, and marble. He helped fund great works of art.
1. What were Pericles’ three main goals for Athens?

Glorious Art and Architecture
(pages 135–136)

How was Greek art unique?
One of the glories of Athens was the Parthenon. This temple was built to honor the goddess Athena. It is a masterpiece of art. Like other buildings and sculptures in Greece, it is an example of classical art. It reflects order, balance, and proportion.

2. Why was the Parthenon built?

Drama and History (page 136)

What kinds of drama did Greeks produce?
Athens also became home to a group of very skilled playwrights. Some wrote tragedies. These plays were about the pain and suffering of human life. Love, hate, and war were common themes. The main characters were called tragic heroes. They had flaws that caused their downfall.

Other playwrights wrote comedies. These plays made audiences laugh about important ideas. Some plays were critical of customs, politics, and people. Such performances showed that Athens was a free and open society.

Also, such writers as Herodotus and Thucydides pioneered the accurate reporting of events. Their works led to the development of the subject of history.

3. What was the purpose of Greek comedies?

Athenians and Spartans Go to War (pages 137–138)

What was the Peloponnesian War?
After being rivals for many years, Sparta and Athens finally went to war. The Peloponnesian War began in 431 B.C. The conflict ended badly for Athens. In 430 B.C. a horrible plague killed a great many people in Athens. After several battles, the two sides signed a truce. However, they were soon back at war. Finally, Athens gave up in 404 B.C. Athens had lost its empire.

4. What was the result of the Peloponnesian War?

Philosophers Search for Truth (pages 138–139)

What did philosophers contribute to Greek culture?
After Athens’s defeat, this city-state became home to several philosophers. They were thinkers who tried to understand human life. One of these great thinkers was Socrates. He believed deeply in truth and justice. Yet many people did not trust him. They thought his teachings were a danger to young people. Socrates was brought to trial and condemned to death.

His pupil, Plato, recorded many of Socrates’s ideas. Plato became an important thinker in his own right. Plato’s student, Aristotle, wrote books that summarized the knowledge of the Greeks. He also developed a way of reasoning. His system of logic became the foundation of scientific thought used today.

5. Who were three important Greek philosophers?