HOW A CITY WAS RUN

The ancient Greeks invented a form of government called ‘democracy’. This means ‘power by the people’. It was a fair system because the citizens of Greece could decide how they wanted their city to be run.

An unpopular man could be sent away from the city if the citizens of Athens voted for him to go. They voted on pieces of broken pottery, called Ostraka.

In Athens, citizens held their meetings in the open air on the Pnyx hill. Its name meant ‘packing place’.
Greek citizens chose their own leaders, made laws, and decided whether to go to war or not. Citizens were men born in the city, whose parents had been born there, too. It did not matter if they were rich or poor.

GREEK CITIZENS

Only some people were allowed to be citizens of the city where they lived. Women, slaves and outsiders from other Greek cities or foreign lands, could not be citizens.
People lived in houses built from bricks of clay. Walls were painted white to keep the heat of the Sun out. Houses had several rooms, placed around a courtyard. There were separate rooms for women, men, guests and slaves. The main room was for feasting and entertaining guests.

This is how a Greek house might have looked. Everyday life centred around the courtyard. This was where children played, where food was cooked, and where visitors were met.
A woman was expected to stay at home and look after the household. She cooked, cleaned and cared for the children. She made the family’s clothes. If the family had slaves, she gave them orders.

Men were free to come and go from the house as they wished. They went to work, bought food in the market square and visited temples and festivals.

This woman is spinning wool to make cloth.