Daily Life in Greece

Ancient Greek society depended on people doing different tasks. The wealthy lived a life of leisure, often serving in politics or debating philosophy. Many people were farmers, while others were teachers, merchants, sailors, metal workers, and marble workers. Most hard labor was done by slaves.

Home Greek Home

Within a city's walls, homes were crowded close together. The homes were one-story, with painted mud-brick walls set on stone foundations. Flat roofs provided a place where families gathered in the cool of the evening. Windows were high and had wooden shutters to give privacy from the bustle in the streets. Wealthy Greeks lived in two-story homes that looked inward over an open courtyard. No central heating was needed in Greece's warm climate. Some rooms had beautiful mosaic floors and frescoed walls, where scenes of gods and everyday life were painted onto the wet plaster. Carved chests, tables, couches, and three-legged chairs provided comfort, and carpets and curtains added more color. Homes did not have a private bath or well. People got water at the public fountain at the agora.

Slaves and Metics

In Athens, slaves did the backbreaking work. Slaves were abandoned infants, prisoners of war, criminals, or individuals bought at market from the slave traders. Slaves could not raise their own children, but they were not taxed or forced into military service. A freedman was a slave who earned his freedom by buying it from his master. Other manual laborers were metics. Metics were foreigners, or people from other places. Sometimes metics became wealthy saving the money they earned. Metics could not vote, marry an Athenian citizen, or own property in Athens. Metics still had to pay taxes and do military service.

Women's Quiet Lives

A woman's role in ancient Greek society depended on whether she was married and in which city-state she lived. A married woman in Athens stayed home, in separate quarters, away from the windows. She could go out in public for a special occasion, such as a funeral, religious festival, or family visit, as long as she was accompanied by a member of her household. It was her job to raise children, spin wool and flax, and weave it into bedding and clothes. She had to manage servants or slaves and care for them when they were ill. Athenian women could not vote, own land, or participate in business. In the city-state of Sparta, women could own property and manage it.
Women were not formally educated, but some women could read and write. Often, a girl left home at about age fifteen, for married life with a much older man who was chosen by her father.

**Clothing**
Clothing in ancient Greece consisted of a loose-fitting tunic. A cloak was worn in cooler weather and on special occasions. In times of peace and prosperity, fashions of the wealthy were showy and colorful. During war, fancy dress was not worn. Around 550 B.C., the chiton became popular. The chiton was a linen garment imported from the east that men and women wore. Wealthy Greeks wore leather sandals, although many people went barefoot in the summer. Wealthy men and women wore their hair long. Women wore elaborate hairstyles kept in place with ribbons or hairnets. Some women wore wigs. Men fastened their hair up with a gold brooch. Greek men grew beards and women used makeup made from plants to redden their cheeks and whiten their skin.

**What’s On the Menu?**
Poorer families in ancient Greece ate barley cakes, called maza, and enjoyed meat only during festivals. When times were good, they added goat’s cheese, olives, salted fish, legumes, and vegetables to the menu. The wealthy ate lamb, goat, pig, or dog every day. They drank wine, and had bread baked from grains such as wheat or barley. Flatbreads, such as pita, were used as an edible utensil to pick up food cooked in sauces. The seas provided fish and seafood. Poorer people ate salted and dried fish, while the wealthy ate shark meat, eel, and octopus.

*Household servants filled pottery jugs with water for their masters. Some homes had wells, but most servants got the water at the agora.*
Women wore a long garment called a peplos, held on by brooches and worn with a belt.

Simple, loose-fitting clothes allowed freedom of movement for men. The outer garment is called a himation.
Olive trees were grown by many Greek families. Olives were an important part of Greek life. Olive oil was spread on bread like butter and used as a cleanser like soap.

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*Every home had a hearth for cooking and an olive where sacrifices were made to the gods.*

*Women lived in a separate part of the house called the gymnasion.*

*Banquets were held in the dining room, or andron.*

*Slaves prepared meals in the kitchen.*

**Here Comes the Bride**

Marriage in ancient Greece was a business deal between the parents of the bride and groom. A girl's father offered the groom a dowry, which consisted of money, clothing, jewelry, animals, or slaves. If he accepted, the wedding was arranged. Before the wedding, a bride had a ceremonial bath and put on bright clothes and a veil. The wedding began with an all-day feast at the bride's home. Then the groom led the bride to his family's house, with guests holding torches to the darkened streets and musicians flutes and lyres. The newlyweds ate wedding cake made from sesame seeds and honey. The act of sharing food in her husband's home sealed the marriage bond.
Before the wedding, a bride sacrificed her toys of childhood to the goddess Artemis and asked her blessing for the marriage.

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