VI Greek Art

The art of the ancient Greeks and Romans is called classical art. This name is also used to describe later periods when artists looked to Greece and Rome for their inspiration.

Greek art owes its lasting influence to its simplicity and reasonableness, its humanity, and its sheer beauty. It exists mainly in four forms: architecture, sculpture, painting, and painted pottery.

Architecture includes temples, theatres, stadia, and stoas. Sculpture includes small figurines and life-size statues, but also relief sculptures on the sides of buildings. The works of the Greek painters have disappeared, but there are many vases. The earliest were in the so-called geometric style. Later realistic figures were painted in black on red clay. In the 6th century red-figure pottery developed in Athens.
1) Read the text and

a) Explain the meaning of the word “classical” in this sentence:
   “A building constructed in the classical style”

b) Name the main characteristics of Greek art

c) Complete the illustrations below with words from the text:

Terracotta
_______________, 7th century BC
Dimensions H. 39.5 cm (15 ½ in.)

sculpture from the Parthenon.

Dypilon vase
c a 750 BC

Belly Amphora
by the Andokides painter
Ca 520 BC

d) Comment on the examples of Greek pottery below:
The Temple of Concordia at Agrigentum.

**THE GREEK TEMPLE**

Most of the earliest ancient Greek structures were built with wood and did not survive. At the beginning of the Archaic period, however, building in stone began. Influenced by the Egyptians, the Greeks started constructing columned stone temples. However, Greek buildings are human-sized. The dimensions of the Greek temples are not as colossal as the Egyptian.

The Greek placed a special emphasis on the design of temples. There is great concern for proportion and harmony. This is why architects followed very strict mathematical rules for the construction of their buildings. The roofs are flat and rest on high columns. The Greek did not use arches or vaults.

Greek temples served as homes for the individual god or goddess who protected the community. The main part of a Greek temple consisted of a room where there was a statue of the god or goddess. As the city-states of Greece became more affluent the temples grew accordingly. A major advance was the 'peripteral temple' which had columns all the way around. This is the classical temple. There were a few developments, but the outward appearance did not change significantly. The temples were often painted in bright colours, usually red, white and blue.
1) Read the text on the preceding page:

a) Comment on

   i) The differences between Greek and Egyptian architecture.
   
   ii) The importance of mathematics for Greek architecture.
   
   iii) The shape of the roof of Greek temples.
   
   iv) The function of Greek temples.

b) What does the illustration on the right represent?

THE PARTHENON

The most famous Greek temple by far is the Parthenon. This is the huge temple that stands on the sacred rock of the Acropolis, looking down on Athens. It is the largest and most important building on the Acropolis. It was the temple built for Athena Parthenos, the virgin goddess. The Parthenon was richly decorated with sculptures. Inside was the great gold and ivory statue of Athena Parthenos. There were eight columns along the front, and seventeen on each side. The decoration on the Parthenon is organised into three elements: there are two triangular pediments at either end, panels called metopes around the outer wall.
The Three Orders of Columns

The design of the columns varied over time and from one part of the Greek world to another. Two orders developed more or less at the same time.

The Doric order predominated on the mainland and in the western colonies. The columns are thick looking and plain. They stand directly on the base of the temple, and the tops of them are fairly simple. The Doric masterpiece is the Parthenon (448–432 BC) crowning the Athens Acropolis.

The Ionic order originated in the cities on the islands and coasts of Asia Minor, which were more exposed to Asian and Egyptian influences. The columns are more slender and stand on a sort of pedestal. The tops of the columns feature a carved scroll on each side.

As time went on, the Ionic style spread across the whole of Greece, although it never reached the Greek-speaking south of Italy. Then a new style started in the Peloponnese and spread to the whole Greek-speaking world: the Corinthian style. Here the tops of the columns are carved in fancy shapes to resemble the leaves of an acanthus plant.

1) Find two words in the text that are used to describe Greek architectural orders and write them under the illustrations on the left.
2) **Look at the illustrations above the text and find a word that means “top of the column”: ______________**

3) **Identify the order of the columns of these temples.**

4) **Find out more about Greek Temples. Read the text on the next page and match the names of the temples with sentences on the right:**

   a) The Temple of Hephaistos in Athens
   b) The Temple of Apollo in Bassae
   c) The Temple of Zeus in Athens
   d) The Tholos in Delphi
   e) Temple of Zeus at Olympia

   i) has Doric and Ionic columns
   ii) only 3 columns survived
   iii) contained one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World
   iv) only 15 Corinthian columns survived
   v) is the biggest temple
   vi) is the best preserved temple
   vii) is a circular temple
   viii) was the most famous temple
A) The Temple of Hephaistos, Ancient Agora, Athens
This small temple is the best-preserved in the whole of Greece, although not as well known as the Parthenon. Built in 449BC, it was right in the middle of the city of Athens, on a small hill overlooking the ancient agora. The temple was dedicated to two deities, Hephaistos and Athena. Their cult images were made of bronze. The temple is built along classical lines with Doric columns.

B) The Temple of Apollo Epikourios, Bassae, The Peloponnese
High in the mountains east of Olympia in the Peloponnese stands the Temple of Apollo Epikourios ('Apollo the Helper'). It was built up in the mountains because the locals recovered from a plague and wanted to thank the God Apollo. The location has helped preserve it, as no one wanted to dismantle it to use the stone to build nearby cities, as happened with many other temples. This is a huge temple, and in very good shape, being rated the second best-preserved of all temples after the Temple of Hephaistos. The temple includes both Doric and Ionic columns.

C) The Temple of Olympian Zeus, Athens
Situated on the flat area known as the Olympieion to the south of the Acropolis, the Temple of Olympian Zeus was one of the biggest temples ever built. It was started in 515BC, the temple was not finished until the time of Emperor Hadrian, in 130AD. All that is left now is the base and 15 of the original 104 Corinthian columns, 13 at one end and two at the other, along with the remains of a 16th which has collapsed. These in themselves are well worth seeing as they are enormous! The temple was 41m wide and 108m long, with columns 17m high.

D) The Tholos, Delphi, Central Greece
The sacred site of Delphi, home of the Oracle, in the mountains above the Gulf of Corinth, had many temples. One of the most distinctive was the Tholos, or circular temple. Only three columns of this temple are still standing, but the image of these with the mountains in the background is one of the most enduring ones in Greece.

D) The Temple of Zeus at Olympia
The Temple of Zeus in Olympia was probably the most famous temple in Greece in its day. Situated in the sacred grove of Olympia where the Olympic games were held every four years for over a millennium this temple contained one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the statue of Zeus that was 13m high. The temple was closed down in 391 AD by order of the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius, who banned all forms of 'pagan' worship, as the official religion was now Christianity. All that remains now is the base (28m x 64m).
GREEK SCULPTURE

The sculpture of the Greeks and Romans represents one of the major arts of antiquity. It decorated temples and public buildings, commemorating the dead, the famous, a victory, or as an offering to the gods. The majority of the reliefs and statues represented gods and goddesses and heroes.

The Greek had a large supply of marble, which was what they used most in their sculptures. But bronze was also used in their artistic work of humans. Many of the original sculptures were damaged or destroyed. In the Middle Ages, most Greek statues were not valued, and they were burned to make cement. Yet, many Romans copies of the original works survived.

Once it was rediscovered by the Renaissance Greek sculpture became the standard for most western art down to the 19th century. It is therefore highly relevant to our understanding and enjoyment of much that we see around us. There are three main periods of Greek Sculpture; Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic.
1) Read the text on the preceding page. Are these sentences true or false?

a) Greek sculpture had no religious function.
b) The Greeks only used marble to make sculptures.
c) Not much Greek sculpture has survived.
d) Some Greek sculpture is known from Roman copies.
e) Greek sculpture had no influence on western art.

2) Read the text next to the illustration.

Archaic Greek Sculpture

As the Greeks came out of the Dark Ages, they began to produce life-size stone sculpture. The Greeks learned how to make big stone statues from the Egyptians. One Egyptian technique is to have a triangle for the face and two upside-down triangles for the hair. This makes the hair help support the neck, which otherwise might be too thin to hold up the head. Another Egyptian idea is to have one foot a little in front of the other, which also helps the statue to stand up and not fall over. One difference is that the Greeks always made their statues nude while the Egyptian statues always wore clothes. This is because the Greeks thought that men's bodies were sacred and that the gods liked to see them. But their statues of women wore clothes.

3) Comment on

a. The hair of the statues

b. Their feet

4) Say why the statues are different from Egyptian statues.
Classical Greek Sculpture

The Second period, the classical period shows a very large shift from the stiff Archaic, to a more realistic and sometimes idealistic portrayal of the human figure. Sculptors began to make statues more true to life, and with more feeling in their faces and their movements. Instead of standing straight up and looking sacred and peaceful, now statues began to do things: drive a chariot, carry something, throw a spear, or ride a horse.

The sculptors also became more interested in the three-dimensionality of sculpture: people could see the sculptures from all different sides, and not just from the front. At the same time, sculptors took more interest in making the muscles and bones look true to life too.

One of the most famous sculptors of the Classical period was Phidias. His most famous work does not survive: it was a great gold and ivory statue of Zeus for the temple of Zeus at Olympia, made about 440 BC. Phidias also was responsible for the sculptures on the Parthenon. The figures on the Parthenon represent human perfection, almost godliness.
5) Read the text on the preceding page and do the exercises:

a) the statue on the left

i) comment on

* its movement

* its muscles and bones

ii) explain the meaning of “three-dimensional”

b) The statue on the right

i) where was the original statue that inspired the Roman copy?

ii) who was the author of that statue?

iii) what else was the author famous for?

6) Read the text and find out more about the Parthenon Frieze.

The Parthenon Frieze was sculpted between ca. 443 and 438 BC most likely under the direction of Phidias. About 880% of the original frieze survives. At present, about two-thirds of the frieze is at the British Museum in London (forming the major part of the controversial Elgin Marbles); most of the rest is in Athens.
Hellenistic Greek Sculpture

In this period Greek art lost much of its simplicity and ideal perfection of form, its serenity and restraint, but it gained in intensity of feeling and became more realistic. Two works of the period are the 'Dying Gaul', sometimes called the 'Dying Gladiator', and the beautiful 'Apollo Belvedere'. The 'Laocoön' group depicts a father and his sons crushed to death by serpents, and illustrates physical suffering.

7) Write the names of the statues under the illustrations:

__________________  __________________  __________________

9) Complete the text below with the words in the box

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a) feelings;</th>
<th>b) movement;</th>
<th>c) static;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) schematically;</td>
<td>e) moods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Greek sculptures evolved very much over time. The sculptures of the Archaic Age are very i) _______ and represent figures ii) _______. In the Classical Age, sculptors learnt to represent iii) _______ in the human body. And in the Hellenistic Age, sculptors reflected people’s iv)_______ and v) _______.

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