

# Teacher Introduction

These Common Core History Assessments are designed to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they learn about ancient Greece. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Similar sets of assessments are available (or planned) for each unit in a typical ancient history class.

## ★ *Historical Thinking and the Challenge of the Common Core*

This set includes nine assessments aligned with the first nine Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. We have left out the tenth Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard, which does not lend itself to assessments of the sort provided here. The set also includes two writing tasks aligned with two key Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards.

These Common Core standards challenge history teachers to develop in students the complex literacy skills they need in today's world and the ability to master the unique demands of working with historical primary and secondary source texts. The Common Core standards are supportive of the best practices in teaching historical thinking. Such practices include close reading, attending to a source's point of view and purpose, corroborating sources, and placing sources in their historical context. These are the skills needed to make history less about rote learning and more about an active effort to investigate and interpret the past.

These assessments are also useful in many ways for ELA teachers. They assess many of the skills specified in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, which put a good deal of emphasis on the reading of informational texts. The Anchor Standards form the basis for all of the various Common Core standards for English Language Arts.

## ★ *What Are These Assessments Like?*

- **A group of nine reading skills assessments and two writing tasks for each major era of Ancient History**

Each reading skills assessment is based on one of the key Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. Two writing tasks are based on the first two College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing, which are the basis for the Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards. The two writing standards focus on writing arguments to support claims and writing informative/explanatory texts.

- **Based on primary or secondary sources**

In most cases, one primary source is used. In some cases, an assessment is based on more than one primary source, on a primary and a secondary source, or on secondary sources alone. The sources are brief. In most cases, texts have been slightly altered to improve readability, but without changing meaning or tone. Links to online versions of print media are available in the Bibliography. Please note that these links were valid at the time of production, but the websites may have since been discontinued.

## Teacher Introduction

- **Brief tasks promoting historical literacy**

For each assessment, students write brief answers to one or two questions. The questions are not tests of simple factual recall. They assess the students' mastery of the skills addressed by that assessment's Common Core History/Social Studies Standard.

- **Two versions of each of the nine reading standards assessments**

A *basic* and an *advanced* version of each assessment are provided. The *basic* assessment addresses the Common Core Standard for grades 6–8. The *advanced* assessment is based on the Common Core Standard for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. Each version uses the same source or sources. In some cases, sources have been somewhat shortened for the *basic* version.

- **Easy to use both as learning and assessment tools**

These assessments do not take valuable time away from instruction. The primary sources and background information on each source make them useful mini-lessons as well as tools to assess student historical thinking skills. The sources all deal with themes and trends normally covered when teaching the relevant historical era.

- **Evaluating student responses**

Brief but specific suggestions are provided defining acceptable and best responses to each question asked in the assessment. The suggestions are meant to aid in evaluating students, but even more importantly they are a way for teachers to help students better understand and master the skills on which the assessment is focused.

Assessment 1 *Basic Level*

# Gods and Heroes in Ancient Greece

## ★ Key Ideas and Details

- 1. (6–8)** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

## ★ Using This Assessment

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*Assessment 1* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 1 for grades 6–8. It asks students to cite specific textual evidence from two documents. It also challenges students to adapt that reading skill to the unique demands of thinking historically as they carefully interpret textual evidence in a primary source from a time in the past and a secondary source account of that same time in the past.

## ★ Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should see that Jove is upset about the disobedience of the other gods. He demands, "Let none of you, neither goddess nor god, try to cross me." He follows this up by threatening an increasingly severe series of punishments for those who misbehave. He then asserts in dramatic terms his superior power. Some may see this as depicting Jove as the supreme and dominant god. However, the intensity of Jove's speech makes clear how much trouble these independent deities are for him. Acceptable responses to the second assessment question should note two points made by Document 2—first, that the Greek gods shared many qualities in common with humans, and second, that the human heroes in Greek myths and stories were seen as godlike in their excellence. Homer's Odysseus is said to represent an ideal that puts him on a level with the gods. In general, answers should note the way stories about gods and about human heroes both reflect a deep admiration for the bold, intelligent, courageous, and independent individual.

## Gods and Heroes in Ancient Greece

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read one primary source document and one secondary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the documents. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

### Document 1: A Primary Source

Now when Morning, clad in her robe of saffron, had begun to suffuse light over the earth, Jove called the gods in council on the topmost crest of serrated Olympus. Then he spoke and all the other gods gave ear. "Hear me," said he, "gods and goddesses, that I may speak even as I am minded. Let none of you, neither goddess nor god, try to cross me, but obey me every one of you that I may bring this matter to an end. If I see anyone acting apart and helping either Trojans or Danaans, he shall be beaten inordinately ere he come back again to Olympus. Or I will hurl him down into dark Tartarus, far into the deepest pit under the earth, where the gates are iron and the floor bronze, as far beneath Hades as heaven is high above the earth. [I will do this so] that you may learn how much the mightiest I am among you. Try me and find out for yourselves. Hang me [on] a golden chain from heaven, and lay hold of it all of you, gods and goddesses together. Tug as you will, you will not drag Jove the supreme counselor from heaven to earth. But were I to pull at it myself I should draw you up with earth and sea into the bargain. Then would I bind the chain about some pinnacle of Olympus and leave you all dangling in the mid firmament. So far am I above all others either of gods or men."

**Source Information:** The ancient Greek city-states worshipped many gods. The major gods lived on Mount Olympus, and Zeus was their leader. However, like the city-states themselves, the Greek gods mainly acted independently of one another. This passage is adapted from Chapter 8 in *The Iliad of Homer*, translated by Samuel Butler (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1898). The Greeks called their leading god Zeus, but here Butler calls him Jove, which was the Roman name for him.

## Document 2: A Secondary Source

Greek religion was unusual in that its gods were so human in many ways. They argued, fell in love, grew jealous, and fought with one another—and with humans. While Greek gods could be all too human, human heroes in Greek myths were often godlike. One of the most important human heroes of Greek mythology was a man named Odysseus. He is the main character in one of the first great classics of Greek literature—*The Odyssey*. Versions of this story had been told orally many times before a man we know as Homer finally wrote it down. Homer's *Odyssey* tells of the wanderings and adventures of Odysseus after the Trojan War. Odysseus is portrayed as brave, loyal, and wise, but also as cunning and even dishonest at times. In either case, he sums up a Greek ideal: the bold, independent individual who is a man of courage, resourcefulness, and endurance.

**Source Information:** This passage is a secondary source document about Greek religion and literature and the gods and heroes Greeks worshipped. A secondary source is an account of past events written later by someone who did not experience or take part in those events. This particular historical account was written in 2014 specifically for use as part of this activity.

### Assessment Questions

1. The source information for Document 1 says the gods of ancient Greece were very independent spirits. How does Jove's speech suggest that same idea? Cite details from the passage to support your answer.
2. What the Greeks admired about their gods may reflect what they also admired about human beings. How does Document 2 make that point? Cite details from the document to support your answer.

Assessment 7 *Advanced Level*

# The Seafaring Greeks

## ★ *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

- 7. (9–10)** Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.
- 7. (11–12)** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

## ★ *Using This Assessment*

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*Assessment 7* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 7 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to do something historians must do all the time—integrate evidence found in a wide variety of primary sources presented in many visual and textual formats. It also asks them to judge the relative strengths and weaknesses of visual as compared with written sources.

## ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment*

Acceptable answers to the first assessment question should see that all the documents have something to do with geographic conditions and other factors contributing to ancient Greece's unique nature as a decentralized society of city-states oriented to the sea and overseas trade. An acceptable thesis statement should deal with some aspect of that theme. Document 1 and Document 2 by themselves are evidence of the unique nature of ancient Greece as a seafaring nation. Document 3 helps to explain the geographic conditions that pushed the Greeks to turn to the sea, to overseas trade, and to colonies. It also explains why Greece was politically divided, compared with the powerful unified states that arose in the other ancient civilizations. Acceptable answers to the second assessment question may vary, and suggestions should be shared and discussed. Images of trade goods and related artifacts, detailed topographical maps of ancient Greece itself, accounts of rivalries among city-states, documents about Greek colonies, and many other sources could provide corroborating evidence.

# The Seafaring Greeks

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to study three documents carefully and answer two questions on what these sources have in common. In order to better understand the documents and their importance as historical evidence, read and make use of the source information located just below or next to each document itself. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 7: (9–10)** Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text. **(11–12)** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

## Document 1: A Secondary Source



**Source Information:** This map shows the Greek territories and colonies during the Archaic period of ancient Greece, which lasted from the eighth to fourth centuries BCE.

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## Document 2: A Secondary Source



Image Credit: Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

**Source Information:** This photograph shows a fleet of reconstructed ancient Greek galleys. The ships' design was based off of information from The Perseus Project, Tufts University.

## Document 3: A Secondary Source

The first great civilizations grew up in fertile valleys along rivers. Egypt emerged on the Nile, early Mesopotamian cultures along the Tigris and Euphrates, the Indus civilization on the river of that name, and ancient China along the Huang-He. Rivers provided the well-watered fertile soil that such civilizations needed. . . . Greece was different. Mountains divide mainland Greece into many separate regions. Its rocky hills and narrow valleys all seem to lead to the coast. To trade, Greeks were forced to look outward, to the islands of the Aegean Sea, and to other cultures along the coasts of the Mediterranean. This meant that ancient Greece would differ in many ways from other early civilizations.

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Greece's rocky lands made farming difficult. Yet after about 2000 BCE, the growth of an amazing civilization began in this region. From the start, trading and seafaring skills were key to this rising civilization's wealth and power. . . . The Greeks traded pottery, wine, woolen cloth, tools, weapons, and other goods for timber, metals, and other resources. As Greece's population grew, many overcrowded Greek cities also set up colonies all over the Mediterranean region and far up into the Black Sea. These further helped the Greeks develop their great trading empire.

Fertile lands along the Nile River gave that society a huge surplus of food. However, ancient Greece could not grow a surplus from its own lands. Instead, it earned its surplus by selling goods to others. Also, this surplus was earned by each individual city-state, not by one united Greece led by a single all-powerful ruler. Geography allowed the growth of hundreds of fiercely independent city-states, helping foster a spirit of individual striving and competition.

**Source Information:** This is a secondary source document about the geography of ancient Greece. The passage is adapted and expanded from Jonathan Burack's *Ancient Greece* (Culver City, CA: MindSparks, 2009).

### Assessment Questions

1. Construct a thesis statement or claim about the nature of ancient Greek civilization and explain how *all three* of these sources support that claim.
  
2. What other sources might help to back up your claim? Describe at least two other kinds of sources that might do this.