

MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND SPORTS • ACROPOLIS RESTORATION SERVICE • DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND EDUCATION



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A Greek temple.... for kids!

In the	cla
when Athens had	ach



What did an ancient sanctuary look like?

How was an ancient temple designed and built? This book will give you answers to these questions and to many others. You will get to know what kind of work each one of us does and also how important it is to work together in order to perfect our dedication to the gods.

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This booklet aims to familiarise children with the architecture of ancient Greek temples in a pleasant way. It is based on the book "A Greek Temple" by Ch. Bouras, M. Korres and C. Hadziaslani. It accompanies the educational museum kit "A Greek Temple" of the Information & Education Department. The booklet can be combined with the online application ancienttemple.ysma.gr.

ssical period, during the 5th and 4th century BC, nieved much power and fame, many great temples were built. Most of them were dedicated to the twelve Olympian gods.

Let's start our journey to ancient Athens!

sacred place

I am Lysimache, the priestess, and I hold the key of the temple. Every day I take care of with the help of my assistants. During the official state festivals of organizing rituals, overseeing sacrifices as well as saying the prayers.

Manager and Charles and State Street of the

The **temple** is the home of a god or a goddess. It houses his/her cult statue. Besides, the temple itself is a tribute to the gods by the entire city. It is usually placed inside a restricted sacred place in or out of the city. The decision where to found the **sanctuary** and build a temple often results from the appearance of a god in a specific place or the beauty of the natural landscape. The earliest temples were of mud bricks and wood. Later on though, various kinds of stone have been used for their construction. Yet, marble is used to build the most impressive temples.

in front of the entrance, where there is always an altar. There are some sanctuaries without a temple, but none without an altar! wine, fruits, flowers or they sacrifice animals, such as rams, oxen or pigs. Everyone can find shelter in the altar because it is a sacred place. Those who do not respect it, are severely punished!

In the open air, in front of the temple, apart from the altar, there stand many votive offerings, such as vases, reliefs, stelai and mainly statues, dedications of the faithful.

Do you know that... the believers honour their gods by organizing religious festivals with athletic contests in the sanctuaries?

Religious festivals, which are very important social events and attract believers from all over the Greek world. are organised at Olympia, Delphi, Isthmia and Nemea; these are places where the most renowned and major sanctuaries are found. These festivals, apart from the sacrifices, hymns and ceremonies, are accompanied by **athletic games**. They last for many days offering the chance for competition, fun and rest from everyday activities.

- The entrance of the building is on the eastern side and the worship takes place in the open air,
- Here the believers gather to worship their gods. They usually offer them milk, honey, olive oil,

Awards in these athletic games are wreaths of olive. laurel, pine or wild celery.

There are of course local games in every town awarding money and precious gifts.

The planning begins

My name is Kallias. I am a member of the supervising Committee of naopoioi (temple-builders), who are responsible for the erection of the temple. Fortunately I am not alone! It would have been terrible if a single person were responsible for carrying out such an important

project!



The erection of a temple begins with the planning of its construction. In Athens, the Assembly of Citizens, firstly approves the proposal of a citizen for the construction of a temple. Then, they appoint 5 Athenians who participate for a year in the supervising Committee of naopoioi (temple-builders).

naos (temple) +poio (to build) = naopoios (temple builder)

The Assembly also appoints the architect in charge and approves the design of the temple. The temple builders in cooperation with the architect are responsible for the construction of the temple.

They oversee the project, assign different parts to contractors or individual craftsmen, check the quality of the materials used and finally approve payments for everyone involved.

The construction and completion of a temple is a demanding task and so it needs the work of many people of different specialities:

merchants, sailors and masters for the transport of materials by sea and by land and a great number of workers and assistants.

You may now ask yourself where the money for the construction comes from. Well, the necessary money comes from the city's revenue, spoils of war and even provided by wealthy donors.





Texts relating to the execution process, the work organization and the amount spent on various sub-projects are engraved on marble stelai, the building inscriptions. They are displayed in public areas so that every citizen can be informed for the project.

I am the architect of the temple. My name is Archilochos. My job is rather complex. It needs much knowledge and great practical experience to achieve perfection in the construction of a temple.

The architect is one of the most important people in the creation of a temple. His job is to prepare the arrangement drawings of the building, calculate the cost and supervise the construction.

Naturally, it is him who is responsible for every necessary inspection until the completion of the temple.

The temple is designed

The architect uses various tools in order to measure and calculate before drawing the temple; among them are rulers that are called "kanones", compasses as well as corner rulers. Then he makes a model of the temple, that is the temple's physical representation in a miniature form. He also constructs "paradigmata", namely models of important architectural members, often in real size, which afterwards the craftsmen copy.

Sometimes he even uses the walls of the temple to carve on them construction drawings.

The part of the arm from the elbow to the wrist, the "pechys" (about 48cm)



The length of some body parts is used as a unit of measurement; for example:

- The foot, the "pous" (about 30 cm)
- The arm span of an adult, the "orgialis" (about 1m and 90cm)
- The length of an adult's hand, the "hand span" (about 24 cm)

The Greek temples are generally simple rectangular buildings.



There are also other types of temples, such as:





the rectangular buildings, there are also circular peripteral ones?

opisthonaos

on all four sides of the cella (peripteral temples).

The circular peripteral monuments are known as Tholoi. They have various functions. Well known are the Tholoi at Epidaurus, Delphi and Olympia.

The construction starts



I am Lysanias, the quarryman. I work together with the architect to carefully select the masses of marble that can be quarried. My job is quite tough, hard and demands a lot of experience.

The construction of the temple always starts in the quarry.

The quarryman spots the places where the massive block can be easily split from the rock. Since that moment what is needed is **teamwork**. The basic tools used by the quarrymen are wooden and iron wedges, levers and heavy sledgehammers. At first, the quarrymen make deep cuts in all four sides of the stone block they want to extract and then they place the wedges and levers into them. Finally, they use heavy hammers to drive the wedges through the cuts and they apply pressure on the levers, thus splitting off the stone. As stone and especially marble is an expensive material, it should be used wisely, without waste. Moreover, in order to reduce its weight during transfer each piece of stone is already cut at the quarry as close as possible to the dimensions needed to suit its final position in the building.





Then what follows is the transfer of the stone piece to the area the temple is being built.

This is also a difficult and expensive work. What the labourers use to effectively pull and transfer such heavy load are strong ropes, long pieces of wood, pulleys, rollers, special machinery and carts pulled by many animals. The transfer usually happens during the summer months because the roads are dry. When the stone pieces arrive at the area of the construction, the craftsmen start working to hand-turn it to the desired shape.

The dressing of a surface is done according to the position of the stone in the structure.

Then the builders and craftsmen go into action! They have to raise and place the stones in their final positions. They use special wooden cranes, winches, pulleys, wooden rollers and wooden or steel levers.

> I am Simias. one of the builders of the temple. Our work is strenuous and dangerous.





Greek temples differ from others for their construction techniques. The enduring stability of an ancient Greek structure is due to the perfect contact of the stones without the use of mortar. The large weight and perfect contact they have with one another contribute to building a really stable temple. In addition, the clamps, which join all the stone blocks vertically and horizontally, ensure exceptional stability in case of an earthquake.

Not even wind can pass through the blocks!

For the horizontal connections different shapes of clamps are used,

The form is created

I am Iasos. the stonemason. I follow the architect's design for the temple. I chisel and give shape to the marble as soon as it reaches the construction site. I carve the elaborate capitals and flutes of the columns and I help in the processing of the stones placed in the temple.



The three basic parts of a Greek temple, from below up to the top, are:

The base, that is called "crepis", the body of the temple, that is the columns and the walls of the cella behind them, and the crowning of the temple that consists of the entablature (architrave, frieze and cornice) and the pediments, the triangular areas formed by the roof at each narrow side of the temple. The roof is made with clay or stone tiles that rest on large wooden beams. The external columns and the entablature show the order of the temple. Initially there were two orders, the Doric and the Ionic. The Corinthian order was developed later than the previous two.





Let's now examine every order separately.

In the **Doric** order which is plain, unadorned and robust:

• The columns do not have a distinct base and therefore are set directly on the stylobate, the uppermost step of the crepis.

• The column capital is relatively plain, with an "echinus' and an overlying square slab, the "abacus".

• Immediately above runs the architrave, a completely plain horizontal beam that connects the columns.

• The Doric frieze or "diazoma" consists of "triglyphs", parts of the temple decorated with three vertical grooves and "metopes", square plaques usually with relief decoration. The triglyphs alternate with the metopes above the architrave.



The Ionic and the Corinthian temples are more elegant and have richer decoration than the Doric ones!

In the **Ionic** and **Corinthian** order:

- The columns have a base and their shaft has more flutes than the doric one.
- The Ionic capital has an echinus and higher up an abacus while between them there is a pair of volutes.
- The Corintinan capital consists of an abacus and a "calathos" (basketlike main body) decorated with relief leaves and pairs of volutes.
- The face of the architrave consists of three taeniae of equal height.
- The frieze is a continuous band often decorated with relief representations.





The architects try to find solutions in order to lighten the ancient temples and to endow the inanimate buildings with organic vitality. Ictinus and Callicrates are the two architects who achieved perfection while building the Parthenon. In this temple all the lines of the crepis and the entablature are very slightly convex and not exactly straight. The columns and the walls incline very slightly inwards, towards the cella. The shafts of the columns also have a barely perceptible swelling at 1/3 of their height, just as living bodies carrying heavy loads. These architectural details give to the temple a sense of movement and life and make it worth of our admiration!

there aren't any straight lines?



I am Antiphanes, the sculptor! I am an artist and my job is to decorate the temple with beautiful sculptures. The stories I recount come from the adventures of both gods and mortal heroes.

The temples are externally decorated with statues and reliefs, mainly in marble. The statues are placed on the pediments and the reliefs decorate the frieze on both the Doric and the Ionic order.

However, there are other impressive sculptures in other parts of the temple. This is the case of the **acroteria**. decorative sculptures on the top of the three angles of the pediments. They are of geometric or vegetal form or even free standing statues, usually female.

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The stone selected for all the sculptures must be of high quality so that the sculptors can create many and exceptional artistic details.





Now, we have reached the end of the works....

The moment the construction is complete the white surfaces of the architectural members are covered with colours, such as red, blue, yellow, green and gold. The sculptures of the temple have polychrome ornamentation that is enhanced with fittings such as swords, bridles, wreaths made of metal (bronze), often gilded and attached on the marble.

On these small holes you see on the marble, the metal fittings are attached!



So, after this perfect structure is completed and inaugurated it is dedicated to a god or goddess by the entire city!

We hope you have enjoyed this short journey into time and we have helped you to really learn a bit more about the temples of ancient Greece.

> If you want to admire an ancient temple you can visit the Acropolis of Athens or the closest to your house archaeological site. You can also look for "neo-classical" buildings in your area, that is modern buildings inspired by ancient temples. You can see in them many characteristics of the ancient Greek temples like the ones we showed you, such as columns, friezes and pediments. If you want to play and learn more, you can visit the online game "A Greek Temple" on the address https://ancienttemple.ysma.gr



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Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση Ευρωπαϊκά Διορθωτικά και Επενδυτικά Ταμεία



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