

Meet Alex from Ancient Greece

Standards of Learning

Social Studies 3.4, 3.6

English 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.9

Objective

Students will:

- Locate Greece on a map
- Explain how the people of Greece adapted to their environments to meet their needs
- Interpret geographic information from maps
- Compare and contrast agriculture in Greece to that in Virginia

Materials

- Map of the Mediterranean (handout provided)
- Letter from Alex (handout provided)
- Agriculture Map of Virginia (a class set is distributed during your AITC workshop)
- Compare/contrast worksheet (handout provided)

Background Knowledge

This lesson focuses on the agricultural products grown and used by the Ancient Greeks and compares them to those currently produced in Virginia. The geography of Greece is central to its culture. Greece is located among numerous mountains and rocky hills and on the Mediterranean Sea. Its location on the Mediterranean Sea meant that the people of ancient Greece were excellent sailors, fishermen, and traders. The mountains caused Greece to develop as separate city-states, rather than a unified nation. Additionally, the people of Ancient Greece had to adapt by farming on hillsides. The climate consists of hot, dry summers and rainy winters. Farming was difficult for the people of Ancient Greece because there was very little fertile soil. The Ancient Greeks used plows pulled by oxen and walked behind, spreading the seeds. The Ancient Greek farmers plowed every spring and fall. The Ancient Greeks grew wheat, beans, barley, peas, lentils, grape vines, and olive trees. Additionally, they ate a lot of fish due to Greece's location on the Mediterranean Sea. Many of the families owned hens to make eggs and goats for milk and cheese. The Ancient Greeks ate little meat, but sometimes hunted wild boar, deer, and hare.

Procedure

1. Ask the students if they have ever heard of the country of Greece.
2. If so, ask the students if they can tell you anything about Greece. (You might prompt students by asking them if they know where the Olympics began)
3. Tell the students that people lived in Greece thousands of years ago.
4. Tell them that today they will be talking about the lives of the Ancient Greeks.
5. Hand out the map of Ancient Greece to each student.
6. Ask the students to locate Greece on the map.
7. Ask them to make observations about the location of Greece. (For example, the fact that Greece is located on the Mediterranean Sea.)
8. Ask how Greece's location may affect the people who live there now or lived there many years ago.



Access to the Mediterranean Sea made them excellent fishermen, sailors, and traders. While the mountains and lack of large rivers discouraged unification.

9. Hand out the letter from Alex to each student.
10. Ask the students to read the letter to themselves.
11. After they have all read, ask the following questions:
 - What was the landscape of Ancient Greece like?
 - What were the seasons like?
 - Was farming an easy task for Alex and others living in Ancient Greece?
 - Name some of the crops Alex planted.
 - How did living by the Mediterranean Sea impact the foods available to the Ancient Greeks?
12. After fully discussing the letter from Alex, tell the students they are now going to decide how agriculture in Ancient Greece compares to Virginia agriculture of today.
13. Give each student an agriculture map of Virginia.
14. Go over with the students how to read the map.
15. Hand out the chart comparison sheet to each student and place one on the overhead.
16. Ask the students to look at the map and name a similarity between the agricultural products in Virginia and those Alex talked about.
17. Ask some students to share their observations with the class.
18. As the students list their observations, write them on the overhead sheet and tell the students to write them on their worksheet.
19. After the class has listed some similarities, ask them to list some differences. Write these on the chart as well.
20. When the comparison chart is complete, tell the students to take out a piece of paper.
21. Ask the students to write a letter to Alex, describing the similarities and differences between his agricultural products and those from Virginia.
22. Ask a few students to share their letters.
23. Ask the students the following questions:
 - Would you have liked to live in Ancient Greece? Why or why not?
 - Did you find more similarities or differences?
 - Alex lived thousands of years ago across the world from you. Why do you think there are similarities between his farming products and those in Virginia?

Extension

Ask the students to create a poster on the differences in farming and food between the wealthy people of Ancient Greece and the poorer people.

References

History for Kids. (2004). *Ancient Greece*. <http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/greeks/index.htm>

Pearson, A. (1992). *Ancient Greece*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Suzanne, B. (2001). *Plato and His Dialogues*.

http://plato-dialogues.org/tools/images/bigmaps/east_med.gif



Dear student,

Hi, my name is Alex. The year is 800 B.C. and I live in Ancient Greece. While your job is to be a student, my job is to be a farmer. I am going to share with you a little bit about my country and my life. Since Greece is covered with mountains and hills, our communities are separated from each other. This makes planting a difficult job because we must farm on hillsides and there is very little fertile soil to plant on. Our weather also makes farming hard because we have hot, dry summers and rainy winters. Due to this, we farm in the spring and fall months.

I farm my land using a plow pulled by two oxen. I follow behind the plow and spread the seeds by hand. It is a long, hard job. And in order to keep the land healthy, I must plow every spring and fall. I have a lot of crops on my land, including wheat, beans, peas, lentils, and barley. I also grow grape vines and olive trees. Dried grapes are my favorite. What do you call dried grapes?

Since farming is a difficult job, we have other ways of getting food as well. Since Greece is located on the Mediterranean Sea, we are able to catch fish for food. Also, almost all the families I know keep hens to make eggs, which we eat very often. Many families also have their own goat to make milk and cheese. We don't eat meat often, but sometimes we will hunt for food. When we hunt we usually catch wild deer, wild boar, and rabbit.

I need to get back to work, but thanks for letting me share some information about myself with you. Write back and tell me about farming where you live.

Sincerely,
ALEX



Name: _____

Date: _____



Complete the following chart comparing agriculture in Ancient Greece to that in Virginia.

Similarities	Differences



Map of Ancient Greece

