

## Geography of Ancient Greece Document Based Question

The question is based on the accompanying documents on the following pages. This question is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. Some of these have been edited for the purpose of this task. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of the document and any point of view that may be presented in the document.

### Directions:

- Analyze the documents and answer the questions that follow each document.
- Read the essay question and plan your essay using two column notes.
- Write a well-organized essay that includes an introductory paragraph, a body with several paragraphs explaining and supporting your answer, and a concluding paragraph.
- Use evidence from the documents to support your essay.
- Include specific related outside information in your essay.

### Historical Context:

Geography has always had a great influence on Greece and its inhabitants. The mountains that split the Greek lands are a major barrier to their unity as a nation. The struggle for communication by land and the significant presence of the sea have made mariners out of Greeks for numerous generations. The unique geography of ancient Greece has affected virtually every aspect of their society.

### Task:

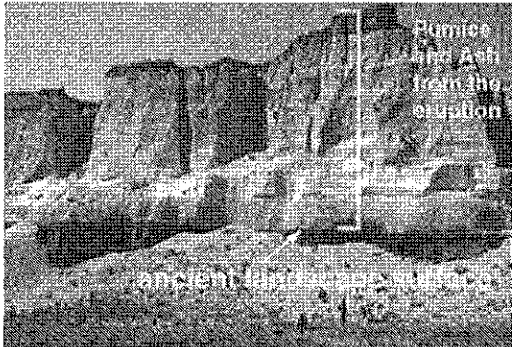
For Part A, read each document carefully and answer the question or questions after each document. Then read the directions for Part B and write your essay.

For Part B, use your answers from Part A, information from the documents, and your knowledge of social studies to write a well-organized essay. In the essay you will be asked to:

- Explain two **positive** effects geography had on the Ancient Greek civilization.
- Explain two **negative** effects geography had on the Ancient Greek civilization.

### Document 3

Another important aspect of the Greek environment is that it is very unstable. Greece is smack-dab in the middle of a very active volcanic zone, where the Europe tectonic plate meets the Africa tectonic plate. There are several active volcanoes and earthquakes are very common. There is a nervous feeling that there could be a natural disaster at any time. This got the Greeks interested in a particular kind of religion called oracles. Oracles are the gods speaking to people, often in the form of minor earthquakes, and the gods tell the people what is going to happen in the future.



Santorini Island or Thera, is one of the most picturesque islands of Greece, the rim of a gigantic sunken volcano. Half of island was sunken after a volcanic eruption in 1450B.C., which destroyed the island's civilization. Fira, the island's capital, sits on the very rim of the crater nearly 300 meters above the sea with a spectacular view to the sea.

1. Why is Greece's environment considered unstable? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ [1]

2. How did ancient Greece's unstable environment affect their religious beliefs?

\_\_\_\_\_ [1]

3. Name one positive and one negative effect of Greece's unstable environment.

*Positive Effect:* \_\_\_\_\_ [1]

*Negative Effect:* \_\_\_\_\_ [1]

#### Document 4

Olives have always grown well in Greece's hot, dry climate. Olive oil was as good as money to the ancient Greeks, since they could trade it in other lands for goods not available in Greece. In ancient days, Greeks traded olive oil throughout the Mediterranean for products like grain, perfume, fabrics, dyes, beef, and papyrus. Olive oil was so valuable that when wars were fought, one of the worst things one side could do to the other was to cut down its olive trees. Even the name Athens comes from a myth about olives:

*It seems the goddess Athena and her uncle Poseidon were both very fond of the same city in Greece. They quarreled over the city and eventually decided that the one who gave the city the best gift should have it. As his gift, Poseidon struck a cliff with his trident, and a spring of water poured out. This was a nifty trick indeed, and the people were impressed. Then Athena presented her gift--the first olive tree. Although the young tree looked humble, it became clear her gift was priceless, and the city went to Athena. The people named the city of Athens in her honor.*

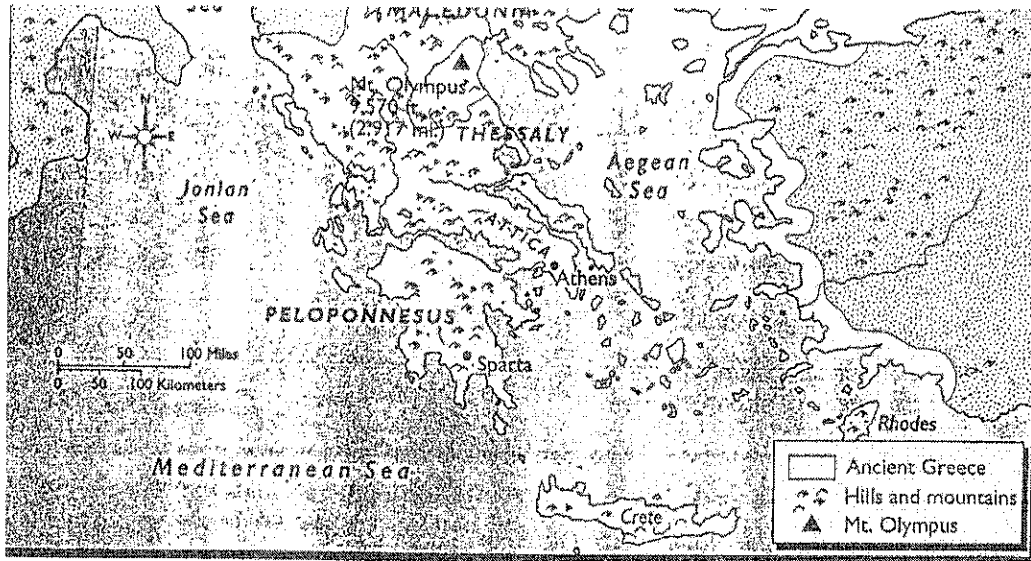
Source: Field Trip, Modern Curriculum Press © 1992

1. What land conditions are favorable to grow olives? \_\_\_\_\_  
[1]

2. Why did the people of Greece name the city of Athens in Athena's honor? \_\_\_\_\_  
[1]

3. Why was olive oil so valuable to ancient Greece? \_\_\_\_\_  
[2]

## Document 5



The mountains, which served as natural barriers and boundaries, dictated the political character of Greece. In ancient times, the Greeks lived in independent communities isolated from one another by the landscape. Later these communities were organized into poleis or city-states. These city-states were an important political innovation, which began to appear about 800 BC. Each city-state also had a special god that they chose and built a temple for on their acropolis, or a high hill in the center of the city. The city-states fought against each other, especially Sparta and Athens, who were bitter rivals and started the Peloponnesian War. However, when Greece was attacked by a different country or civilization, like Persia, most of Greece would unite and defend their country together.

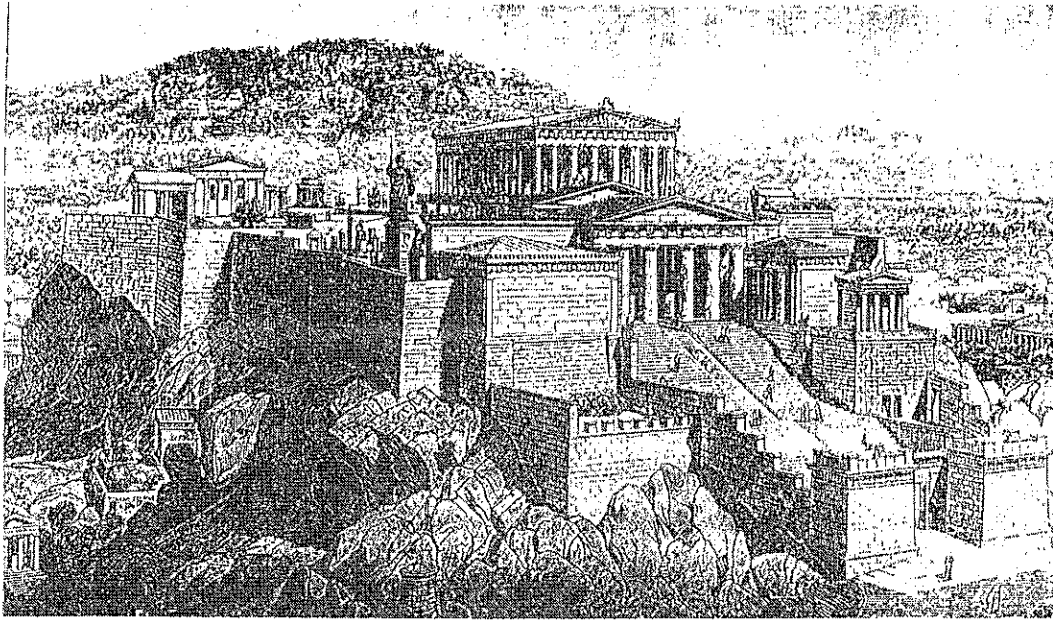
1. What naturally divided ancient Greece? \_\_\_\_\_

[1]

2. Name one negative effect this natural barrier had on ancient Greece. \_\_\_\_\_

[2]

## Document 6



High on a hill in the country of Greece overlooking the city of Athens stand the ruins of a once splendid temple. This famed temple is known as the Parthenon and it sets on a hill called the Acropolis. The Acropolis became the religious center of ancient Athens, and it was on this hill that the Greeks built the Parthenon almost 2,500 years ago. They built the Parthenon to honor Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and the Warrior Maiden. The city of Athens was named in her honor. Acropolis is a Greek word meaning "high part of the city." The Acropolis is a precipitous hill about 200 feet high. In the 300's B.C. the hill was used as a large fort. When their enemies attacked, the people would run to the safety of the fort. Later the Athenians decided to build walls around their city for protection and no longer used the fort.

[http://ri.essortment.com/parthenongreece\\_rzct.htm](http://ri.essortment.com/parthenongreece_rzct.htm)

1. What famous temple was built on the Acropolis in ancient Greece? \_\_\_\_\_

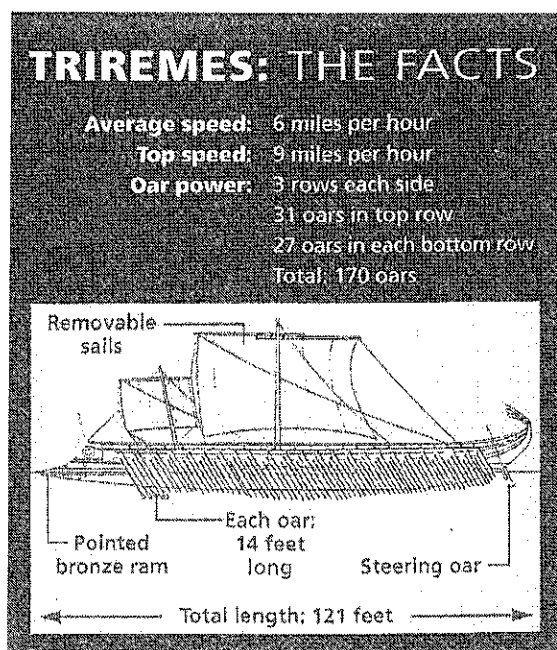
[1]

2. Why was the Acropolis a safety fort for ancient Greeks? \_\_\_\_\_

[1]

## Document 7

Greeks have always spent a lot of time sailing on the seas. The combination of good sailing and lousy farming tends to make Greeks try to get a living from the sea. This can take several forms. First, Greeks fish a good deal. Second, they sail trade routes from one city to another, both Greek cities and elsewhere, all over the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea, and make a living buying and selling things. Third, Greeks often turn to piracy or raiding to make a living, as in the Trojan War.



1. What are two ways ancient Greeks made a living from the sea? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ [2]

2. Why have the Greeks always spent a lot of time sailing on the seas? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ [2]

## PART B

Write a well-organized essay that includes an introduction, several paragraphs, and a conclusion. Use evidence from at least *four* documents in the body of the essay. Support your response with relevant facts, examples, and details. Include relevant outside information.

### **Historical Context:**

Geography has always had a great influence on Greece and its inhabitants. The mountains that split the Greek lands are a major barrier to their unity as a nation. The struggle for communication by land and the significant presence of the sea have made mariners out of Greeks for numerous generations. The unique geography of ancient Greece has affected virtually every aspect of their society.

### **Task:**

Using information from the documents and your knowledge of social studies, write an essay in which you:

- Explain two **positive** effects geography had on the Ancient Greek civilization.
- Explain two **negative** effects geography had on the Ancient Greek civilization.

### **Guidelines:**

#### **In your essay, be sure to:**

- Address all aspects of the *Task* by accurately analyzing and interpreting at least *four* documents
- Incorporate information from the documents in the body of the essay
- Incorporate relevant outside information
- Support the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details
- Use a logical and clear plan of organization
- Introduce the theme and conclude with a summation of the theme

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