

What was life like for children in Ancient Greece?



What was daily life like for children in Ancient Greece?

Objectives

- To explore different areas of daily life for Ancient Greek children
- To find out about popular Ancient Greek toys
- To consider how we can know about what daily life was like so far in the past



Stand Up - Sit Down!

Listen to your teacher reading out the statements and stand up to the ones that apply to you. You score one point for each time you are standing.



Jump Back in Time!

Now take an Ancient Greece character card from your teacher. Read the key information.

Play the **Stand Up - Sit Down** game again in role as your character. What was different for you this time? Swap cards and play again.



Digging Deeper



How different would your life have been if you had lived in Ancient Greece?

We are going to look at four key areas of daily life for Ancient Greek children:

- **Food**
- **Clothing**
- **Education**
- **Entertainment & Toys**

Have your sheet ready to make notes as we look at the four different areas. Think about what life would have been like for someone of your age and gender.



Food

People ate with their fingers and food was cut up before it was served. Usually, men and women ate separately. Children usually stayed with their mothers in the house in the women's quarters upstairs. If a family had their own slaves, it was the job of the slaves to serve food for the men first, then the women, then themselves. If there were no slaves, the women and children would serve the food.

Meat and seafood (including octopus) were usually eaten by richer people or on special occasions, while most people enjoyed **vegetables, grapes, honey, olives, eggs, figs, bread dipped in wine, nuts, cheese and porridge**. In general, it was a very healthy diet.



Clothing



The climate in Ancient Greece was hot, so people wore light and loose clothing often made of linen. However, inside the home often children would be found wearing nothing at all!

Once they reached school age, children usually wore the same style of clothes as adults. Generally, people wore two pieces of clothing – a **tunic** (sometimes called a chiton or peplos) and a **cloak** (called a himation). Women's tunics were often ankle-length, whereas men's clothes usually came to their knees. **Fasteners**, like buttons, pins and brooches, were important for keeping the clothing in place.

Many people walked around barefoot in the house, and sometimes wore leather sandals or soft shoes. White **make-up** for women was fashionable, and **hats** and **jewellery** were also popular.



Education

In many cities, children stayed at home **until they were seven**. Then, **boys were sent to school**, where they learned **to read and write**. They were also taught **maths, science, poetry, gymnastics and playing musical instruments**. Families had to pay for schooling, so only boys whose families could afford the fee were able to go to school. Poorer boys learned to work as craftsmen, farmers or fishermen instead.



Girls stayed at home and were educated in household matters. They learned how to **cook, weave clothing and look after the home**. Many girls would be married by the age of 13. In wealthier families, some girls would learn **a little bit of reading and writing** at home.

The city of Sparta had a different system of education to many other places. **In Sparta, both boys and girls could go to school**, but the focus of lessons was physical strength, endurance and becoming good warriors or strong mothers.



Entertainment & Toys



Children often entertained themselves by playing games like **marbles, hoops or ball games**. They had balls made from rags or inflated pigs' bladders. A popular game was **knucklebones**, in which small pieces made out of the ankle bones of a sheep were tossed in the air and caught in the hand to earn points.

Archaeologists have found plenty of Ancient Greek toys, including **puppets and dolls, hobby horses, toy chariots, pull-along animals on wheels, spinning tops** and even an early version of a **yo-yo**.

Some children were also allowed to **keep pets** like dogs or chickens.



Spot Check

Give me 5!

Write down 5 ways in which your modern life is different to how life would be for someone of your age and gender living in Ancient Greece.





How do we know?

Piecing together an accurate picture of the past from a small bank of historical sources is not easy! Remember, there were no videos, photographs or social media accounts in those days to record what life was like!

Some objects that tell us about daily life have survived in good condition, like the wheeled toys.

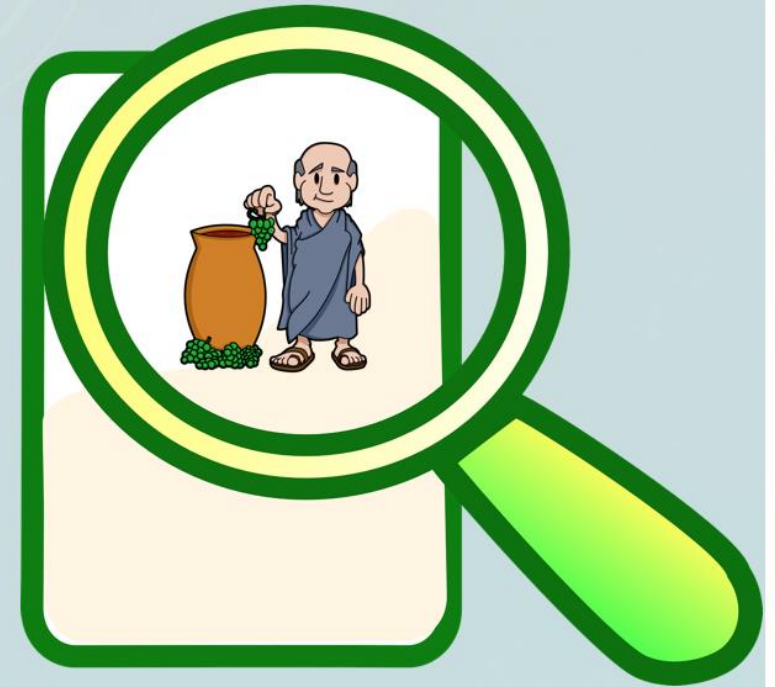
Other objects, like food and clothing, decayed long ago and we have much less direct evidence about these areas.



Looking for clues

Have a look at the surviving sources of evidence from Ancient Greek times, shown on the next four slides.

For each one, decide which area(s) of daily life it gives clues about.



food

entertainment

clothing

education





Photo credit: Heiko Gorski

Source 1

Headless statues of a man and woman at the 'House of Cleopatra' in Delos, Greece (138 BC).



food

entertainment

clothing

education





Photo credit: Marsyas

Source 2

A figurine showing a woman kneading bread dough. It comes from the Greek town of Tanagra, near Athens. (500-475 BC)



food

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education



Source 3

Part of a cup with a painting of a school scene, by Greek vase painter Douris (500-460 BC).



Photo credit: Pottery Fan / Wikimedia Commons



food

entertainment

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Source 4

A stone slab from Athens, showing a girl with a puppet, a small bird and a goose (310 BC).



food

entertainment

clothing

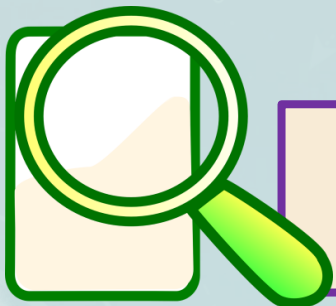
education



Something to think about...

Imagine that historians thousands of years from now were trying to find out what life was like for children from today's times.

What kind of objects might survive over time to give them clues about each of the four areas of daily life? Can you think of examples of things that would not survive, too?



food

entertainment

clothing

education



Design a Wheeled Toy



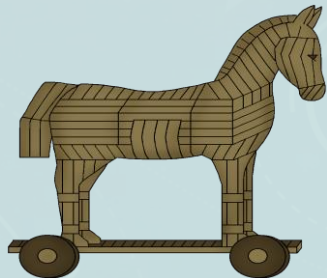
Have a look at the pictures of wheeled toys from Ancient Greece.



Photo credit (3): Sharon Mollerus



Photo credit (4): Tilemahos Efthimiadis



Then, design your own moving toy animal with wheels.



Design a Wheeled Toy (example)

