Early Greeks



Mask of Agamemnon

Geography

- The Greeks lived on a Peninsula in southern Europe along the Mediterranean Sea
 - The Greek peninsula is surrounded by thousands of islands
- Mountains cover much of Greece
 - Few flat areas for agriculture
 - People gathered in the flat areas to grow crops
 - Mountains provided natural protection
- Communities formed far apart from one another
 - Became isolated from each other and created their own ways of life



Minoans

- Minoans lived on an island called Crete south of the Greek mainland
- Great shipbuilders and traded heavily in the Mediterranean Sea
 - Traded wood, olive oil, and pottery
- 1600s BCE- a volcano erupted just north of the island
 - Eruption created a giant wave that flooded much of Crete
 - Created huge clouds of ash that ruined crops and buried cities
- Eruption led to the end of the Minoan civilization
- The Minoans influenced Greek society but are not considered Greeks
 - Did not speak the Greek language

Mycenaeans

- Mycenaeans are considered to be the first Greeks
- Mycenaeans built fortresses on the Greek mainland
 - The largest and most powerful was Mycenae
- 1400s BCE- Mycenaeans took over Crete
 - Became the most powerful group of people in the eastern Mediterranean.
 - Colonized areas in northern Greece and Italy
- The Mycenaeans traded like the Minoans but not always peacefully
 - Attacked other cities in the region, most notably the city of Troy



Trojan War

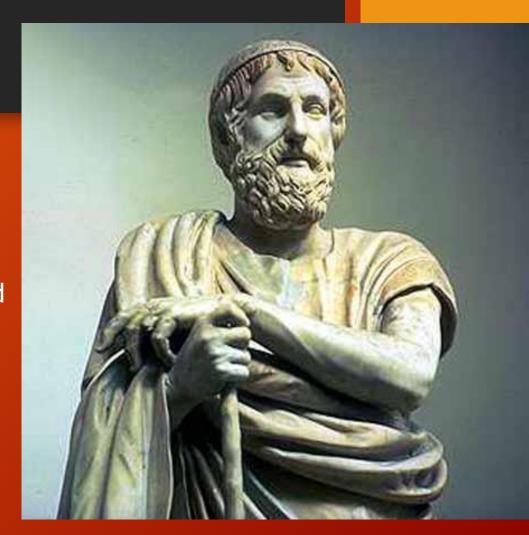
- Troy is located to the east of Greece across the Aegean Sea
- Location is important for trade in the eastern Mediterranean Sea
- Much of what we know comes from Homer
 - Homer- Famous Ancient Greek author
- Wrote 2 epics revolving around the Trojan War
 - Iliad- written about the events of the Trojan War
 - Odyssey-written about the events after the Trojan War

Trojan War

- 1200 BCE- the Mycenaeans launched an invasion of Troy
- Trojan prince Paris took Helen of Sparta away to Troy
- Menelaus of Sparta wanted Helen back
- Agamemnon of Argos united the Greek city-states
 - Provided the Greeks an excuse to attack Troy
 - Troy was considered a wealthy city

But Did It Happen?

- Iliad was written 400-600 years after
- Homer wrote the Iliad for entertainment
 - Gods were involved in the war
 - No proof that the people in the poem ever existed
 - What's real and what's not?
- Could one ruler unite all of Greece too fight together?



Trojan War

- Trojan War lasted for 10 years
- Considered a stalemate until the Mycenaeans tricked the Trojans
- Trojan Horse
 - Destroyed ships to make a large wooden horse
 - The horse was considered to be an important animal to the Trojans
 - Left the horse for the Trojans
- Greek soldiers were hiding inside the horse
 - Snuck out during the night and opened the city gates
- Troy was destroyed



Mycenaean Decline

- 1200s BCE- Mycenaeans begin decline
 - invaders from Central Asia
 - Earthquakes destroyed many Mycenaean cities
- Greek world falls into the Dark Age
 - lasted almost 300 years
 - No written records
 - What we know comes from archeologists