

Men

Rights and Freedoms

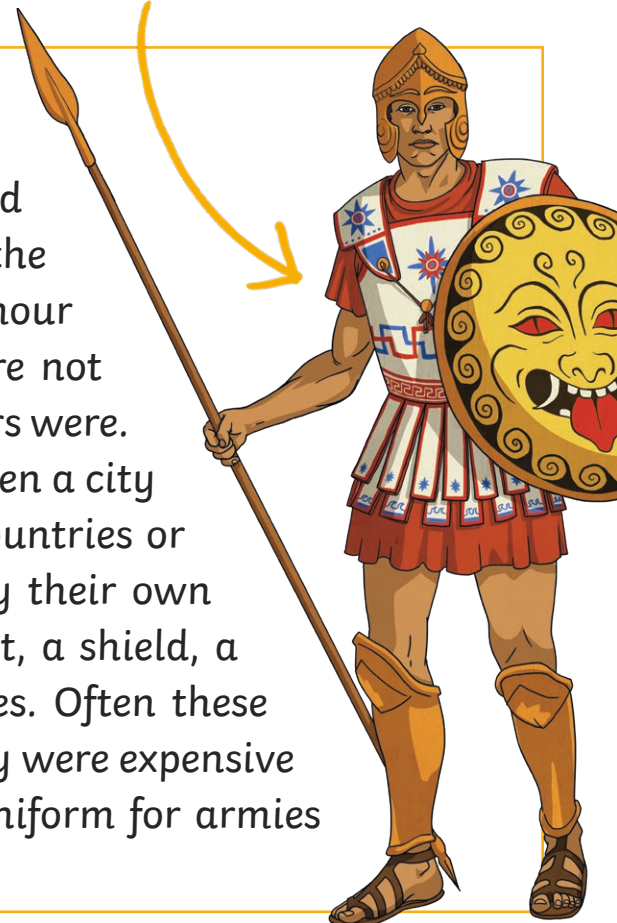
Men had very different lives to women in ancient Greece. Whereas women stayed mostly in the home and had few rights and opportunities, men had many freedoms (unless they were enslaved men).

Men were seen as the heads of their households and women and children needed their permission to leave the house. Men were viewed as superior in ancient Greek times. Only men could be citizens and only men could take on important roles and be involved in running the city state. Men could wander around the city where they lived, especially the agora (an important outdoor meeting place in cities), and could stop and chat with whoever they wanted. Men could take part in hunting or horse riding for leisure too.

In the Army

This image shows a typical foot soldier (a hoplite).

Only men could fight in the army. Some enslaved males were set free if they demonstrated bravery when fighting in a war. Another role that enslaved men played in the army was accompanying the man who enslaved them, carrying all his armour and belongings. The ancient Greek soldiers were not paid in the same way that ancient Roman soldiers were. Every man was expected to fight in the army when a city state went to war. Wars might be with other countries or with other city states. Soldiers even had to buy their own equipment. The men needed to provide a helmet, a shield, a sword, a spear and some armour for themselves. Often these items were passed down through families as they were expensive to buy. For this reason, there was no specific uniform for armies of ancient Greece.



The Symposium

Men regularly attended and hosted eating and drinking social gatherings. These were only for men to attend. A party of this kind was called 'the symposium' and it was an important part of life in ancient Greek society. Some of these banquets would be well planned but at other times, men would invite people they happened to bump into when they were out and about in the city.

When the custom of the symposium first began, it was only for ancient Greek leaders and then it became popular with very rich and important men. By 450 BC, this had spread to all wealthy ancient Greek men.

The enslaved people of the household would welcome the guests at the door. They would then wash the hands of the guests and take their sandals off for them. The guests would be led into a large room called an andron, where they would be offered a couch to lie on. They would then be served food to eat while lying on the couches. After eating, the enslaved people would put perfume on the guest and place a garland of flowers around their necks. (This was a custom but also was believed to stop the wine from giving them headaches.) The guests would then drink and talk for the rest of the night. The only women permitted to enter the andron would be there as entertainers, often playing instruments, such as the lyre and the flute.

Theatres

Men could also be entertained by visiting the theatre. The ancient Greeks built huge outdoor theatres. Plays were performed which explored ideas about what it meant to be a human being. Only men could be actors and they wore masks to show what their character was like.

Many ancient Greek theatres still remain today in Greece and throughout countries that were part of the empire.

