

Bonds Uniting the Greeks

Although divided into several hundred independent city-states, the Greeks were united by a common culture.

1. **Language and Literature** –

The people spoke dialects of the Greek language and shared Greek literature. The famous Greek poet Homer wrote two long epic poems, the “Iliad” and the “Odyssey”.

2. **Religion** –

The Greeks shared a polytheistic religion. The most important “deities” (Gods) were Zeus (the chief God), Apollo (the sun God), Athena (Goddess of wisdom), and Aphrodite (Goddess of love).

These divine beings supposedly live on top of Mount Olympus in Greece. The Greeks attributed human appearance and characteristics to their Gods. The Gods’ personal

lives, rivalries, and participation in human affairs are described in ever-popular Greek mythology. The Greeks believed that priests could receive prophecies from the Gods at holy places called “oracles”. Many Greeks sought advice at the famous oracle of Apollo at “Delphi”.



3. **Olympic Games** –

The Greeks shared an interest in the “Olympic Games”, held to honor the Gods, especially Zeus. These athletic contests attracted many spectators and were held every four years at the city of Olympia. The finest Greek athletes competed in racing, jumping, discus throwing, boxing, and wrestling. All Greeks celebrated the victors, often in songs and poems.

4. **Fear of Persia** –

The Greeks feared that the mighty Persian Empire planned to conquer them. When the Persians attacked, most Greek city-states temporarily cooperated to preserve their freedom. Conscious of these unifying bonds, the Greeks felt superior to non-Greek people and referred to them as “barbarians”.

Questions to Answer

1. How did language and literature bond the Greeks?
2. Who were the important Greek deities (Gods)?
3. Why were the Olympic Games held?
4. How did the Greeks defend themselves against the Persians?