

大学英语素质教育拓展教材



西方文化掠影  
CULTURAL SNAPSHOTS: WESTERN MIND

总主编 江滨  
主 编 江滨 武力 李小红

 天津大学出版社  
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# 前 言

近年来,随着我国大学英语教学改革的逐步深化,英语教学已成为英语教育,其功能已由单一传授知识向传播文化、训练语言技能、培养交流能力、提高文化素养和思想品德的多元化功能转化。为此,我们为非英语专业本科生开设了大学英语素质教育拓展课程——大学英语系列选修课,包括语言技能类、文化类、文学类以及应用类,旨在实现大学英语教学的个性化教育与综合素质培养的目标,结合语言学习,综合提高学生语言文化能力和应用能力,使大学英语教学能够全面提升学生的语言素质、心理素质和文化素质,发掘大学英语课程的隐性功能。经过改革、创新从而形成新层次的教学实践,为素质教育提供更宽广的发展空间。

本书对以欧洲文化为核心的西方文明进行导论性的介绍,以西方文化发展的历程为主线,介绍西方文化的起源、西方的社会人文环境以及西方的人文思想,每个核心主题所涉及内容的选取侧重于文化继承和影响。西方文化群星灿烂,包罗万象,孕育了从苏格拉底、柏拉图到爱因斯坦等众多知识精英。本书共十章,每章包含知识预测、知识概述、知识复习和知识拓展四个板块。通过对西方文化的学习,旨在使学生了解西方国家在不同历史时期各个领域的文化发展。

此教材的出版是编者多年教学积累和资料梳理的成果。在此出版之际,我们向曾经一起开设课程、共同研究、共享教学资源的周可荣、殷鸣、田文娟、王立松等几位老师,向给予许多建设性意见的张纹祯老师,向对知识孜孜追求、给予我们动力出版此教材的学生们,向始终在默默地支持和奉献着的编者家属们表示由衷的敬意。感谢你们!

大学英语素质教育拓展教材编写组

2011年春于天津大学

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# Chapter 1 Ancient Greece, the Cradle of Western Civilization



## Preview 知识预测

1. Do you know the Trojan War?
2. Who is Homer? What did Homer do?
3. Who are the three great tragic dramatists of Ancient Greece?
4. Who are the three great philosophers of Ancient Greece?
5. What is the enduring symbol of Ancient Greece?



## Overview 知识概述

Ancient Greece, civilization that thrived around the Mediterranean Sea from the 3rd millennium to the 1st century B. C. , is known for advances in philosophy, architecture, drama, government, and science. The term “Ancient Greece” refers to both where Greeks lived and how they lived long ago. Geographically, it indicates the heartland of Greek communities on the north coast and nearby islands of the Mediterranean Sea. Culturally, it refers to the ways ancient Greeks spoke, worshiped, understood the nature of the physical world, organized their governments, made their livings, entertained themselves, and related to others who were not Greek.

As the foundational culture of western civilization, ancient Greek culture provides the creative energy and models for later forms of western

society. Culture achievements, social and economic developments in Ancient Greece mark the real beginning of western civilization. Ancient Greece, the cradle of western civilization, is an enduring excitement in Europe and elsewhere.

### **The Historical Period of Ancient Greece**

There are no fixed or universally agreed dates for the beginning or the end of the Ancient Greek period. In common usage it refers to all Greek history before the Roman Empire. Generally, its history is usually divided into several periods, among which we introduce three of them.

History of Mycenaean Greece was from 1600 B. C. to about 1100 B. C.. Mycenae, which was located in the Peloponnesian, was a country where slaves were commonly used in agricultural and handicraft production and on construction sites. The slave-owners were principally kings and monastery authorities. By about 1400 B. C. the Mycenaean had become very prosperous. Excavations of Mycenaean graves revealed that they buried their dead with gold jewelry, bronze swords, and silver cups. The Mycenaean lived in independent communities clustered around palaces and ruled by kings. The Mycenaean had a warrior culture that enabled them to conquer the others. The Trojan War, a famous battle told centuries later by Homer in his two famous epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, broke out at the end of Mycenaean civilization, which was known as "Heroic Age" culminated in the war, such as Hercules, Ajax, Achilles and Agamemnon. After that, still other records showed several minor fights. The Mycenaean's eagerness to fight contributed to their downfall.

The wars caused Greece's economy to collapse and its population to plummet, which created poverty and political confusion that lasted for more than 200 years. This period traditionally is called the Dark Age of Greece (from 1100 B. C. to 800 B. C.), partly because a lack of written evidence

limits our knowledge of it, but also because living conditions were harsh. Greeks had lost the distinguishing marks of civilization.

The other period, the reign of Alexander the Great, ended with his death in 323 B. C. . It is called the "Golden Age" by some historians, lasting for about four hundred years or so and consisting of a number of distinct phases: the archaic period, with the first Olympiad of 776 B. C. , is generally accepted as the arbitrary starting-point of the Greek chronology; the central period was created with the greatest Greek glories from the fifth to the middle of the fourth centuries B. C. . Greek culture reached a high point of development in the 5th century B. C. . This was marked by the successful repulse of the Persian invasion early in the century. In the second half of the 4th century B. C. , all Greece was brought under the rule of Alexander, King of Macedon. His armies went out to conquer large areas of Europe, Asia and Africa, spreading Greek culture wherever they found themselves.

### **Ancient Greek Literature**

Greek literature is the oldest and the most glorious literature in Europe. Greek culture is considered to consist of epic, lyric poetry, Aesop's fables and drama.

#### Homer and Homer's epics

Greek literature begins with two masterpieces, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Although it cannot be accurately dated, they are attributed to the poet Homer. Before Homer the two epics were just raw materials and it was Homer who shaped them into two great poems. Homer lived in around the 8th century B. C. . Homer did not write these two poems down but he just formed into two poems coherently in oral form because there was not literacy in Homer's time. It was not until the 6th century that these two epics were noted down. They are not about events of Homer's own time, but



about great men and wars of a remoter age, probably in the period 1200 B. C. - 1100 B. C. .

These two epics are based on a really happened war that took place in about the 12th century B. C. when some Greek tribes or clans who lived on Greek Peninsula united and launched a war against Troy on the coast of Asia Minor. These Greeks defeated the Trojans and destroyed the city of Troy. After the war, many stories about the heroes in the war spread forward. These stories were passed on from mouth to mouth or they were told orally, during which they became more and more rich and systematical.

The *Iliad*'s subject is war, and its characters are men in battle. The war is fought by the Achaeans against the Trojans for the recovery of Helen. It is said the war is caused by the Story of Golden Apple. The war lasted for ten years long, but the *Iliad* mainly describes the events of a few weeks in the ten-year siege of Troy. The particular subject of the poem is the anger of Achilles. His anger was initiated by the chief commander Agamemnon, who took away Achilles' woman prisoner by force. Achilles refused to fight for the Greeks. It was his closest friend Patroclus' death in Hector's hand that awakened him and he fought again and killed Hector, a prince of Troy. The whole war ended with the strategy of wooden horse designed by Odysseus. Troy was sacked and burned by the Greeks.

The other Homeric epic, the *Odyssey*, is concerned with the peace that followed the war and in particular with the return of the heroes who survived. Its subject is the long, hard return of one of the heroes, Odysseus of Ithaca, who had come farther than most (all the way from western Greece) and who was destined to spend ten years wandering in unknown seas before he returned to his rocky kingdom. During his absence, especially during the ten years after war, many people think that Odysseus has died on his way home. So his palace is full of suitors, who wish to

marry Odysseus' wife Penelope and want to be in possession of Odysseus' fortune. After many struggles and dangers, Odysseus gets home eventually, kills all the suitors, and reunites with his faithful wife Penelope.

These two poems played an important role in the development of Greek civilization, and they became the basis of an education and, therefore, of a whole culture. The great characters of the epics served as models of conduct for later generations of Greeks.

### Drama

Greeks performed plays at religious festivals. A powerful drama developed in the 5th century B. C. . Performances were given in open-air theatres, with the audience sitting on stone benches and looking down at the stage from three sides.

The three great tragic dramatists of Ancient Greece are Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

Aeschylus (525 B. C. – 456 B. C. ) wrote such plays as *Prometheus Bound*, *Persians* and *Agamemnon*. Aeschylus is noted for his vivid character portrayal and majestic poetry.

Sophocles (496 B. C. – 406 B. C. ) wrote such tragic plays as *Oedipus the king*, *Electra*, and *Antigone*. He contributed greatly to tragic art. He added a third actor and decreased the size of the chorus. Sophocles has had a strong impact on European literature. The Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud's term "the Oedipus complex" was derived from Sophocles' play.

Euripides (484 B. C. – 406 B. C. ) wrote mainly about women in such plays as *Andromache*, *Medea*, and *Trojan Women*. He was more of a realist than Aeschylus and Sophocles, concerned with conflicts. His characters are less heroic, more like ordinary people. He may be called the first writer of "problem plays". The English poetess Elizabeth Browning called

him “Euripides the human”.

### Lyric Poetry

Of the many lyric poets of Ancient Greece, two are still admired by readers today: Sappho and Pindar. Sappho, a woman poet noted for her love poems of passionate intensity, was considered the most important lyric poet of Ancient Greece. Pindar is best known for his odes celebrating the victories at the athletic games, such as the 14 Olympian odes.

### Aesop's Fables

Aesop is famous for his fables: short tales which illustrate truths about life and human nature. Most of his fables feature familiar animals, including *The Grasshopper and the Ant* and *The Tortoise and the Hare*. Little is known about the true life of Aesop himself, and some believe that no such person ever really existed. Those who believe Aesop existed generally agree that he lived during the 6th century B. C., lived for some time on the island of Samos, and was for at least part of his life a slave. It's also generally agreed that not all of Aesop's fables were actually created by him; his fame grew so great that many other fables were eventually put in his name.

Anthropomorphism, or animals with human capabilities, is the common thread throughout Aesop's fables. The most famous among them is *The Tortoise and the Hare*, in which the plodding turtle and the energetic rabbit hold a race. The arrogant hare is so confident that he rests and falls asleep halfway; the wiser tortoise plods past and wins. “Slow but steady wins the race,” the fable concludes. This and other Aesop fables stress either the folly of taking on a stronger power, or the cunning which the weaker must deploy if he is to stand any chance of success, and they often warn that nature never changes.

Several phrases are traced back to the fables of Aesop, such as “don't count your chickens before they are hatched”, which concludes the tale of

the greedy *Milkmaid and Her Pail*. In *The Fox and the Grapes*, a fox ambles through the forest and spies a bunch of grapes. Thirsty, he tries in vain to reach them but finally gives up and walks off muttering that they were likely sour anyway. From this comes the term "sour grapes".

While the Aesop's fables today are often cast as stories for children, for the early Greeks the fable was a technique of criticism and persuasion, which by its indirectness might avoid giving offense, while at the same time making a powerful impression by its artistry. It was especially valuable to the weak as a weapon against the powerful.

Aesop's fables emphasize the social interactions of human beings, and the morals they draw tend to embody advice on how to deal with the competitive realities of life. The Western fable tradition effectively began with these tales.

### **Greek Mythology and Religion**

Greek culture is based on a religion which took shape during the Homeric Age and was developed from animism and fetishism into polytheism. A number of major gods like Zeus and Athena date back to Mycenaean age. The religious tales became fully developed myths in the Homeric epic and thus contributed greatly to the later development of all Greek art.

In Greek myth, the major gods and goddesses of Ancient Greece were thought to live on Mt. Olympus, hence the name Olympian Gods. The chief god is called Zeus who keeps order with thunderbolts, both in heaven and on earth. His wife, Hera, is the goddess responsible for marriages and family. Among the gods also include Poseidon, looking after the seas; Athena, a deity of wisdom; Apollo, the god of the sun; Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty; Dionysus, the god of wine and drama.

There are many types of immortal beings in Greek mythology. Some are depicted as humanoid, some as part animal, and some personifications

are not readily visualized. The gods and goddesses of Mt. Olympus can walk among mortals undetected. They each tend to have a special area they control. Thus, you have the god of thunder or grain or the hearth.

Greek myths and legends tell some of the major stories about the Greek gods and goddesses and the fantastic adventures of the heroes of Greek mythology, as well as glossary entries on many of the famous names from Greek mythology. Greek mythology has had lasting impact on the western tradition. In addition to being an inspiration for sculpture, paintings, and literature, the sciences, especially astronomy, have adopted the names of the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology. What we call myth is part of Greek religion.

### **Ancient Greek Philosophy and Science**

#### Philosophy

Greek Philosophy was marked by a series of important concepts about materialism, idealism and dialectics. The most influential philosophers in Ancient Greece are Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, who were active in Athens in the 5th and 4th century B. C. .

We know Socrates chiefly through what Plato recorded of him in the famous *Dialogues*. Socrates was the founder of the dialectical method. In 399 B. C. , at the age of seventy Socrates was put on trial on a charge of "injuring the city" by not acknowledging its gods and corrupting the young. This trial was recorded by Plato in the *Dialogue* "The Apology of Socrates".

Plato's important work *Dialogues* was not only as philosophical writing but also as imaginative literature. Plato's philosophy was called "Idealism" because in his system of philosophy only such "ideas" as beauty, truth and goodness were regarded as completely real while the physical world was regarded as only relatively real. Many of Plato's ideas were later

absorbed into Christian thought.

Aristotle was regarded as the greatest thinker and most learned person of the ancient times. His works covered a wide range of areas such as philosophy, psychology, science. . . Among his many interests were ethics, politics and rhetoric. For what should be man's aim in life, Aristotle's answer was happiness. To students of literature, Aristotle's most influential writing was *Poetics*. However, Aristotle did differ from his teacher Plato. For one thing, Aristotle emphasized direct observation of nature and insisted that theory should follow fact. This was different from Plato's reliance on subjective thinking. Also, Aristotle thought that "form" (= idea) and matter together made up concrete individual realities. Here, too, he differed from Plato who held that ideas had a higher reality than the physical world.

In the 4th century B. C. , four schools of philosophers often argued with each other. They were the Cynics, the Sceptics, the Epicureans, and the Stoics.

The Cynics got their name because Diogenes, one of their leaders, decided to live like a dog and the word "cynic" meant "dog" in Greek. The Sceptics followed Pyrrhon, who held that not all knowledge was attainable. The Epicureans were disciples of Epicurus, who believed pleasure to be the highest good in life. Epicurus, who believed that the world consisted of atoms, was a materialist. To the Stoics, the most important thing in life was not "pleasure", but "duty". The chief Stoic was Zeno. He was also a materialist, asserting the existence of the real world.

### Science

Pythagoras ( about 500 B. C. - ? ), Greek philosopher and mathematician, was the founder of scientific mathematics. He founded a school that emphasized the study of musical harmony and geometry. To Pythagoras and

his school we owe the abstract conceptions underlying mathematics—point, line, magnitude, surface, body—and the first theory of proportion /Pythagorean theorem.

Heracleitus (about 540 B. C. – 480 B. C. ) believed fire to be the primary element of the universe, out of which everything else had arisen. He held the theory of the mingling of opposites and believed it was the strife between the opposites that produced harmony. To him, “all is flux, nothing is stationary”. He also said, “You cannot step twice into the same river; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you. The sun is new every-day.”

Democritus (about 460 B. C. – 370 B. C. ) speculated about the atomic structure of matter. He was one of the earliest exponents of atomic theory. He was one of the earliest philosophical materialists and Marx's first published work was a study of Democritus.

Euclid (3rd century B. C. ) is even now well-known for his *Elements*, a textbook of geometry, perhaps the most successful textbook ever written, because it was in use in English schools until the early years of the 20th century.

Archimedes (287 B. C. – 212 B. C. ) did important work not only in geometry, but also in arithmetic, mechanics, and hydrostatics. He discovered that when a body was immersed in water its loss of weight was equal to the weight of the water displaced. To illustrate the principle of the lever, Archimedes was said to have told the king, “Give me a place to stand, and I will move the world.”

### Architecture and Sculpture

The most important of the temples the ancient Greeks left us is Parthenon in Athens, which has always been a great tourist attraction for people all around the world. So it is considered as an enduring symbol of Greek

culture. Parthenon, built to give thanks to Athena, the city's patron goddess, is the most perfect of all the Greeks temples, 240 feet long and 110 feet wide. It is a rectangular structure with evenly spaced lines of columns around. Greek architecture can be grouped into three styles: the Doric style, Ionic style and Corinthian style.

Sculptures reflect ancient Greeks' expression of harmony of mind, body, action and a great appreciation of the beauty of the human body. *Discus Thrower*, *Venus de Milo*, *Laocoon* are the most famous representatives of the ancient Greek Sculptures. In *Discus Thrower*, the relaxation and contraction of the muscle are successfully brought out and the sense of body movement is remarkably strong, bringing out a good sense of harmony and the balance of opposites. *Venus de Milo* is the most famous of all the sculptures of Venus, discovered in the island of Milo in 1820. Its broken arms have long been the focus of discussion in artistic circles. This ancient Greek sculpture has been looked upon as a symbol of beauty, grace and health, a personification of vitality and dignity. *Laocoon* shows a priest of Troy named Laocoon who warned the Trojans against Greek attack. He was made to suffer a slow death and killed by serpents with his sons because of this. This sculpture is known for its successful depiction of the expressions of Laocoon's face—fear, sympathy and terror.

### **Influence on Western Culture**

Ancient Greek civilization has been immensely influential on the language, politics, educational systems, philosophy, art and architecture of the modern world, particularly during the Renaissance in Western Europe and again during various neo-Classical revivals in 18th and 19th century Europe and the Americas. Karl Marx, once wrote about the Greeks: "Why shouldn't the childhood of human society... exercise an eternal charm, as an age that will never return?" The Greeks invented mathematics and



science and philosophy; they first wrote history as opposed to mere annals; they speculated freely about the nature of the world and the ends of life, without being bound in fetters of any inherited orthodoxy. Besides, the Greeks achieved supreme achievements in nearly all fields of human endeavor. What's more, the Greeks set an example by the bold effort they made to understand the world by the use of human reason, which has a lasting effect not only to the western culture but to the world culture.

## Reinforcement 知识复习

### I. Multiple Choice

1. Which period in Greek timeline is known for the reign of King Agamemnon, and the wars against Troy?

- A. History of Mycenaean Greece.      B. Greek Dark Ages.  
C. The reign of Alexander the Great.      D. Odysseus.

2. Who was the founder of scientific mathematics?

- A. Heracleitus.      B. Socrates.      C. Pythagoras.      D. Aristotle.

3. In Ancient Greece, the period under the reign of \_\_\_\_\_ is called the "Golden Age" by some historians, lasting for about four hundred years or so.

- A. Mycenaean Greece      B. Alexander the Great  
C. Hector      D. Agamemnon

4. \_\_\_\_\_ is said to have told the king: "Give me a place to stand, and I will move the world."

- A. Plato      B. Euclid      C. Aristotle      D. Archimedes

5. Which of the following is NOT a tragic dramatist of Ancient Greece?

- A. Socrates.      B. Euripides.      C. Sophocles.      D. Aeschylus.