

ATHENS



Athenians thought of themselves as the **shining star** of the Greek city-states. They were famed for their literature, poetry, drama, theatre, schools, buildings, and government - virtually all importance was placed on education, and nothing else.

Before the Greek dark ages, Athens was a small village, home to a small tribe of people. After the Greek dark ages, Athens grew rapidly until it was one of the two most powerful city-states in the ancient

Greek world. (The other most powerful city-state was Sparta.)

The Athenians were very different from the ancient Spartans. The Spartans were known for their military strength, toughness, brutality and bravery. Athenians were famed for their commitment to the arts, education and the power of knowledge.

The Greeks believed that each city-state in ancient Greece had a god or a goddess in charge of it, their **special patron**. For Athens, the patron was Athena - goddess of wisdom. It is after Athena by which Athens received its name. Perhaps because Athena was patron god of Athens, people there put a great deal of importance on education.

Girls learned at home from their mothers. They learned how to run a home, and how to be good wives and mothers. Their responsibilities were to clean, cook, take care of children and stay at home - it was not allowed for women to leave their house without permission; they could even get in trouble if they did.

Boys were educated quite differently. Until age 6 or 7, boys were taught at home by their mothers. From 7-14, boys attended a day school outside the home. There, they memorized poetry and learned to play the lyre. They learned drama, public speaking, reading, writing, math, and perhaps even how to play the flute as well. After middle school, they went to a four year high school and learned more about math, science, and government. At age 18, they attended two years of military school. Athens had good reason to think highly of itself - some of the smartest, most influential people of ancient Greece were raised and educated in Athens.

Each city-state chose its own form of government. Most Greek city-states were ruled by kings. In Athens, they were not. Citizens (the men) met each week to discuss problems; once problems were identified, they worked on solutions. The men of Athens experimented with government. For about 100 years, Athens was the first, and only **direct democracy**! Click the link to understand the differences of democracy.