

ANCIENT GREEK THEATRE

The ancient Greeks loved theatre! Plays were an important part of their festivals, religion and culture.



WHAT WAS GREEK THEATRE?

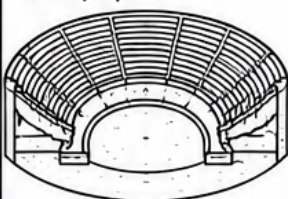
- Greek theatre began over 2,500 years ago in the city of Athens.
- Plays were performed during festivals in honour of Dionysus, the god of wine and theatre.
- There were two main types of plays: tragedies and comedies.
- Plays taught lessons, told stories from myths and explored human emotions.
- Many citizens could attend performances, and some cities helped poorer citizens pay for tickets.
- In Athens, poorer citizens could receive money from a public fund (the Theorikon) to help pay for theatre tickets.



WHERE WERE PLAYS PERFORMED?

Plays were performed in large open-air theatres built on hillsides.

The most famous theatre was the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens. It could hold up to 17,000 people!



WHO TOOK PART?

Only men performed in plays, even female characters.

Actors wore large masks so the audience could recognise different characters and emotions.

The chorus – a group of singers and dancers – sang and commented on the action.



WHAT WERE THE PLAYS LIKE?

Tragedies had serious themes and often had sad endings.

Comedies were funny and poked fun at everyday life and important people.

A third type of play, called a satyr play, was humorous and featured mythical creatures.

Famous playwrights included Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes.



DID YOU KNOW?

Plays could last all day! Three tragedies might be performed in the morning, followed by a comedy in the afternoon.

Winning playwrights and actors received prizes and great honour.



THE PARTS OF A GREEK THEATRE

THEATRON

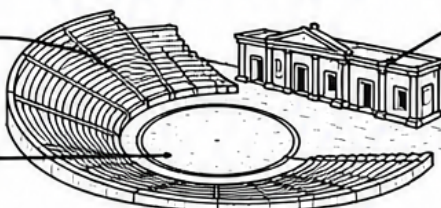
The seating area for the audience.

ORCHESTRA

The circular area where the chorus performed.

SKENE

The building behind the orchestra. It was used as a backdrop and for changing.



In later theatres a raised stage called the proskenion was added. In Classical Athens, most acting took place in the orchestra.

FAMOUS THEATRES



The Theatre of Dionysus in Athens was the most famous.

One of the best-preserved ancient theatres is the Theatre of Epidaurus, which is still famous for its wonderful acoustics today.

★ DID YOU KNOW? ★



The Theatre of Epidaurus is so well designed that people sitting in the highest seats can still hear actors speaking on the stage!



Greek theatre was more than just entertainment – it was a celebration of stories, creativity and the power of ideas.