

## Section 1

# The Rise of City-States

### Key Ideas

- Physical geography helped shape Greek life and culture.
- The basic political unit of ancient Greece was the city-state.
- Early Greek history was marked by frequent warfare among small city-states.

**Key Terms** • polis • citizen • acropolis • politics • aristocracy

 **Visual Glossary**



**Reading Skill Analyze Cause and Effect** Take notes using the graphic organizer in your journal.

Statue of Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and protector of cities. Foreground: temple of Poseidon ▼



**F**ifteen-year-old Pericles, as you read in the story, watched his fellow Greeks defeat Persia, the greatest empire on Earth. The battle of Salamis was a turning point in Greek history. After Salamis, Greek culture reached a peak in art, drama, philosophy, and political science. It helped form Western civilization—the civilization of Europe and the Americas. The Greeks gave us words and traditions such as *democracy*, *geometry*, *politics*, and *the Olympic games*. How did the Greeks come to have so much influence on our world?

### Geography of the Greek World

In ancient times, there was no country called Greece. Instead, there were communities of Greek speakers scattered across the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean Sea. This early Greek world lay on the fringe of two continents—Europe and Asia. Travelers and traders passed through the region exchanging goods, ideas, and customs.

**A Rugged Land** Modern Greece occupies a large peninsula that juts into the Mediterranean Sea. A peninsula is a land area almost surrounded by water. A number of other peninsulas also extend from the peninsula of mainland Greece. The largest of them, in southern Greece, is called the Peloponnesian (pel uh puh NEE shun) Peninsula.

About 2000 B.C., Greek-speaking peoples entered these lands from the north. They settled on mainland Greece. A mainland is an area of land that is part of a continent. Greek speakers also settled on the islands of the Aegean [ee JEE un] Sea.

Mainland Greece is divided by mountain ranges. Between these ranges lie narrow valleys and small plains. The mountains were good for grazing sheep and goats, but they were too steep and rocky for farming. Less than one quarter of the land could be used to grow crops. The only fertile land was in the lowland valleys and plains. Here people settled in farming communities.

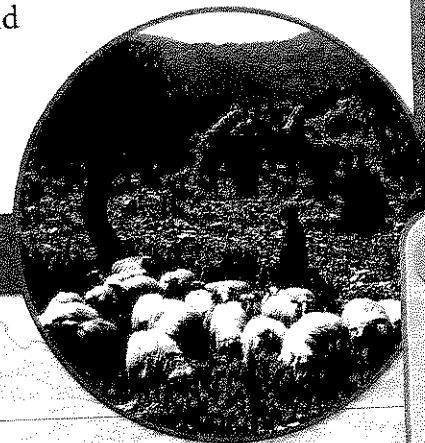
The mountains isolated these lowland communities. So a fiercely independent spirit developed among the Greeks. They never attempted to unite under a single government. In fact, Greek cities were often at war with one another.

**Surrounded by the Sea** Although mountain ranges isolated communities, the sea brought contact with the wider world. The Greeks became skillful sailors and merchants. Greek fishing and

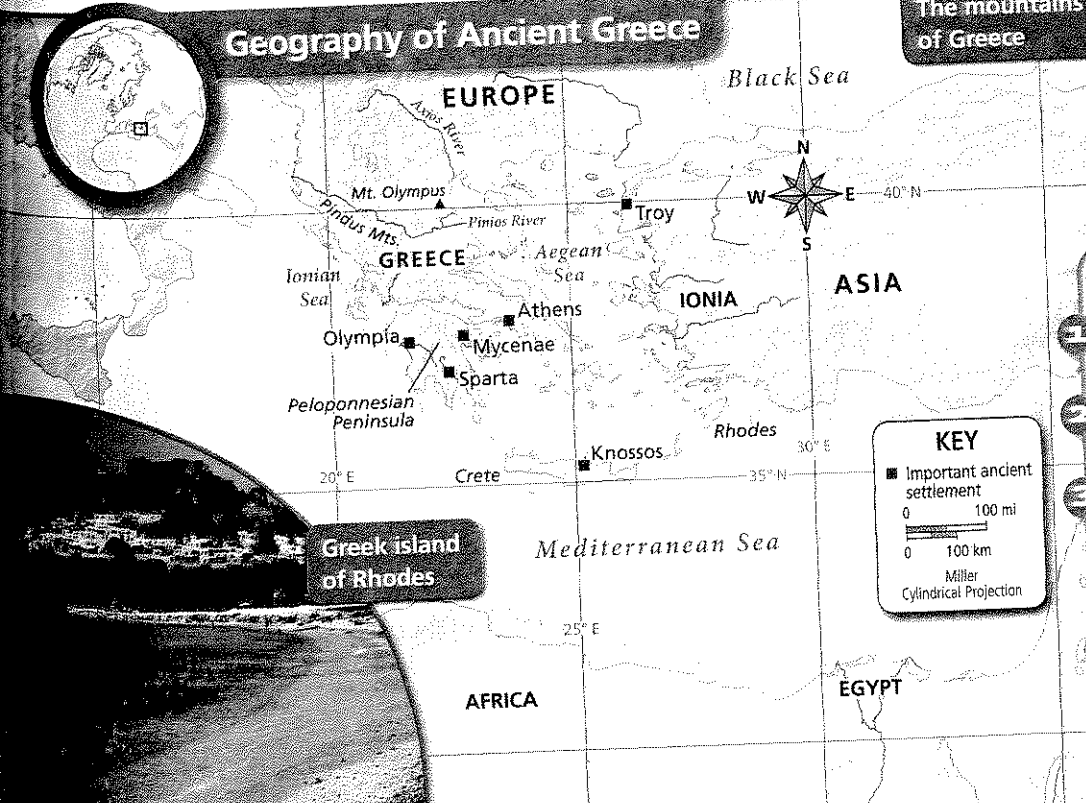
trading ships crisscrossed the waters of the Mediterranean Sea to the south, the Aegean Sea to the east, and the Ionian (eye OH nee un) Sea to the west. This led to contact with the older, more complex cultures of North Africa and Asia.

**A Mediterranean Climate** Greece has a Mediterranean climate, with mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers. The lack of rain made it difficult to grow shallow-rooted crops such as grains, which need frequent watering. So the mainland Greeks were always searching for foreign sources of grain. On the other hand, the Mediterranean climate was ideal for growing deep-rooted plants such as olive trees and grape vines. Olive oil and wine became important trade goods and brought in wealth.

**Reading Check** How did physical geography shape Greek culture?



### Geography of Ancient Greece



The mountains of Greece

Greek island of Rhodes

### Map Skills

- 1 **Location** Which continents lie to the east and south of Greece?
- 2 **Location** What is the largest island to the south of Greece?
- 3 **Places to Know!** Label the following places on the outline map in your Student Journal: Athens, Sparta, Ionia, Peloponnesian Peninsula.