

WHAT WAS SCHOOL LIKE IN ANCIENT GREECE?

If you were a child living in ancient Greece, the type of school you went to would depend on whereabouts you lived. In Sparta, adults taught their children to be strong warriors. Boys were sent to train for war at the age of seven and only learnt the basics of reading and writing. In Athens, adults wanted their children to grow up to be educated, free-thinking citizens who could take a part in running the state successfully when they grew up.

Who went to school?

It was only boys who received a proper education in ancient Greece. They started school at the age of seven and, if they could afford it, stayed in school until they were eighteen. Poorer children would receive a basic education and then learn the family trade so they could earn a living. Some could not afford to go to school at all. Girls were taught at home by their mothers. They were taught how to spin, sew, cook and run the household. Some girls learnt to read and write but only if their mothers could teach them.

What did boys learn at school?

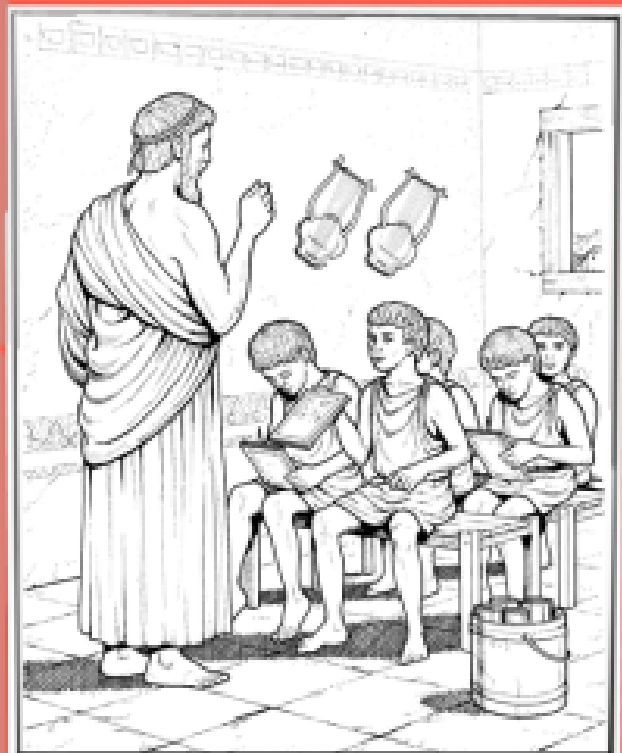
Children didn't study as many different subjects as we do today. They were first taught reading, writing and arithmetic by a *grammatistes*. A *kitharistes* would teach them how to recite poetry (Homer's poetry was most popular), sing songs and play musical instruments such as the lyre. A *paidotribes* taught athletics and dancing. He would take them to a *gymnasium* or a *palaestra* (a wrestling ground).

What equipment did Greek schools have?

Paper was very expensive so they didn't use books to write in. Instead, they used a wooden slate covered in wax which they would write on with a stick called a *stylus*. This was pointed at one end for writing and flat the other end for rubbing out.

How big were ancient Greek schools?

Most schools were simply one room in the teacher's house. A group of perhaps four or five boys would attend each school. The size of the school would depend on the size of the town or city you lived in. As well as the teacher, rich pupils would have a slave called a *paedagogus* who would take them to and from school and ensure they behaved well.



1. How old were boys in Sparta when they were sent to train for war?
2. How many years did rich boys stay at school for?
3. Why do you think girls could not go to school?
4. What did girls learn to do at home?
5. What did a grammatistes teach?
6. What was a palaestra?
7. Name two subjects you study at school that ancient Greeks did not study?
8. What was a stylus and what was it used for?
9. Why do you think ancient Greek schools were so small?
10. Who was a pedagogus?
11. Name three differences between our schools today and ancient Greek schools: _____
12. Name three similarities between our schools today and ancient Greek schools: _____