

# Early Greeks



Mask of Agamemnon

# Geography

- The Greeks lived on a Peninsula in southern Europe along the Mediterranean Sea
  - The Greek peninsula is surrounded by thousands of islands
- Mountains cover much of Greece
  - Few flat areas for agriculture
  - People gathered in the flat areas to grow crops
  - Mountains provided natural protection
- Communities formed far apart from one another
  - Became isolated from each other and created their own ways of life



# Minoans

- Minoans lived on an island called Crete south of the Greek mainland
- Great shipbuilders and traded heavily in the Mediterranean Sea
  - Traded wood, olive oil, and pottery
- 1600s BCE- a volcano erupted just north of the island
  - Eruption created a giant wave that flooded much of Crete
  - Created huge clouds of ash that ruined crops and buried cities
- Eruption led to the end of the Minoan civilization
- The Minoans influenced Greek society but are not considered Greeks
  - Did not speak the Greek language

# Mycenaeans

- Mycenaeans are considered to be the first Greeks
- Mycenaeans built fortresses on the Greek mainland
  - The largest and most powerful was Mycenae
- 1400s BCE- Mycenaeans took over Crete
  - Became the most powerful group of people in the eastern Mediterranean.
  - Colonized areas in northern Greece and Italy
- The Mycenaeans traded like the Minoans but not always peacefully
  - Attacked other cities in the region, most notably the city of Troy

# Mycenaean Greece, c. 1250 B.C.



■ Mycenaean Greece  
● Mycenaean city  
▲ Other city  
← Trade routes  
★ Battle

**GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER:**  
**Interpreting Maps**

- 1. Location** Where was the center of the Mycenaean Civilization located?
- 2. Movement** Based on the map, how did Mycenaean traders conduct most of their trade?

# Trojan War

- Troy is located to the east of Greece across the Aegean Sea
- Location is important for trade in the eastern Mediterranean Sea
- Much of what we know comes from Homer
  - Homer- Famous Ancient Greek author
- Wrote 2 epics revolving around the Trojan War
  - Iliad- written about the events of the Trojan War
  - Odyssey-written about the events after the Trojan War

# Trojan War

- 1200 BCE- the Mycenaeans launched an invasion of Troy
- Trojan prince Paris took Helen of Sparta away to Troy
- Menelaus of Sparta wanted Helen back
- Agamemnon of Argos united the Greek city-states
  - Provided the Greeks an excuse to attack Troy
  - Troy was considered a wealthy city



# But Did It Happen?

- Iliad was written 400-600 years after
- Homer wrote the Iliad for entertainment
  - Gods were involved in the war
  - No proof that the people in the poem ever existed
  - What's real and what's not?
- Could one ruler unite all of Greece too fight together?



# Trojan War

- Trojan War lasted for 10 years
- Considered a stalemate until the Mycenaeans tricked the Trojans
- Trojan Horse
  - Destroyed ships to make a large wooden horse
  - The horse was considered to be an important animal to the Trojans
  - Left the horse for the Trojans
- Greek soldiers were hiding inside the horse
  - Snuck out during the night and opened the city gates
- Troy was destroyed



# Mycenaean Decline

- 1200s BCE- Mycenaeans begin decline
  - invaders from Central Asia
  - Earthquakes destroyed many Mycenaean cities
- Greek world falls into the Dark Age
  - lasted almost 300 years
  - No written records
  - What we know comes from archeologists