

SSWH3 Overview

- ❑ Students will be expected to explain how the development of the Classical Age societies of the Mediterranean were the product of the interaction between societies in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe.
- ❑ Special attention should be placed on the religious, philosophical, technological and political developments that left an enduring legacy.
- ❑ Focus should be placed on the changes and continuities the region experienced in the transition from small regional states to large multi-ethnic empires.



SSWH3 EXAMINE THE POLITICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND CULTURAL INTERACTION OF CLASSICAL MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETIES FROM 700 BCE/BC TO 400 CE/AD



ELEMENT A: COMPARE THE ORIGINS AND STRUCTURE OF THE GREEK POLIS, THE ROMAN REPUBLIC, AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE.


ORIGINS AND STRUCTURES OF GREEK POLIS

- ❑ In the period around 700 BCE, Greece was divided into several independent and often warring kingdoms.
 - Each king's power was supported by an army made up of part-time hoplite soldiers who came from the class of small landowning farmers, merchants and artisans.
 - In several of these kingdoms, the hoplites were growing increasingly discontent with the power of their kings.
- ❑ This frustration led to the rise of tyrants in the period from around 650 BCE to 500 BCE.
 - These tyrants promised reforms in exchange for the support of the hoplites.
 - Tyrants successfully overthrew many of the kings and then attempted to establish despotic power for themselves.
 - In most cases this was unsuccessful and the tyrants were themselves overthrown by the hoplites ushering the period of the Greek polis.
- ❑ In the period from about 600 BCE to about 300 BCE Greece was divided into several (again often warring) city-states, called polis.
 - The form of government in each polis varied, with some limited democracies (Athens), some oligarchies (Sparta), and some remaining monarchies.




ORIGINS AND STRUCTURES OF GREEK POLIS

- ❑ Of the Greek polis, Athens and Sparta were the most powerful and influential.
- ❑ Political reforms instituted by Solon in 594 BCE and Pericles from 461 to 429 BCE brought Athens its closest to a true democracy.
 - However, at best, only 10% to 15% of the population of Athens was ever allowed to participate in government.
 - Women, the foreign born, and slaves (about 30% of the population) were always barred from participation.
- ❑ In c. 725 BCE Sparta conquered the neighboring region of Messenia and forced the population into slavery.
 - This population, called Helots revolted in about 650 BCE.
 - This revolt led to a series of reforms that basically turned Sparta into a military state in which all males were expected to spend the majority of their life in military service.




ORIGINS AND STRUCTURES OF GREEK POLIS

- ❑ Population growth and limited arable land led many of the Greek Polis to establish colonies around the Mediterranean.
 - This spread Greek culture and political traditions to neighboring people, including the Romans and brought conflict with neighboring empires like the Persians.
- ❑ In 338 BCE Greece succumb to invasion by their neighbor's to the north, Macedonia.
 - While in many ways the Macedonians had a culture unique from the Greeks they envied Greek achievements and thus fancied themselves a part of Greek culture.
- ❑ In 334 BCE Alexander the Great, the Macedonian king, led a combined Greek and Macedonian army to conquer the Persians ushering a brief period empire heavily influenced by Greek culture known as the Hellenistic Age.




ORIGINS AND STRUCTURES OF ROMAN REPUBLIC

- ❑ Like the early Greeks, the Romans transitioned from a kingdom to a limited representative government to an empire.
- ❑ From about 753 to 507 BCE tradition holds that Rome was ruled by a series of seven kings, the last was a tyrant and thus overthrown by the wealthy landowning class.
 - This event ushered in the period of the Roman Republic (507 BCE to about 88 BCE).
- ❑ Rome enjoyed a much more hospitable homeland than the Greeks with long growing seasons, fertile soil, vast forest, and rich iron deposits.
 - These advantages help explain how they came to surpass the Greeks in some areas of cultural and political development.
- ❑ The Roman Republic was made up of two basic social classes, the wealthy patricians and plebeians who constituted a class of laborers and owners of small farms.
 - In the early republic the patrician class maintained almost complete governmental power through its control over the main branches of government: the Senate, assemblies and elected consuls.
 - While plebeians held the right to vote in assemblies their votes counted less than those of patricians.
- ❑ Over time, discontent and rebellion among the plebeians forced reforms that granted them greater but never equal governmental power.
 - This republican government proved highly effective and Rome expanded to control all of the Italian peninsula (290 BCE).




ORIGINS AND STRUCTURES OF ROMAN EMPIRE

- ❑ Historians disagree on the exact events that mark the transition from the Republic to the Empire but most agree that the war with neighboring Carthage from 264 BCE to 202 BCE (the Punic Wars) was an important factor.
- ❑ Service in the Roman army and status in the Roman state was largely contingent on landownership.
- ❑ During Rome's extended conflict with Carthage two key factors emerged to undermine the class of small landowners that made up the bulk of the Roman army.
 1. First, extended tours of duty kept men away from their farms and thus unable to plant and harvest forcing their families sell the land to wealthy patricians.
 2. Second, expansion brought a flood of cheap slave labor into the republic which made it difficult for soldiers to find work when they returned to civilian life.
 - These factors, plus falling grain prices, caused a vast number of Romans to fall into poverty.
 - Poor unemployed Romans congregated in cities leading to urban unrest.
 - These poor landless Romans no longer qualified for military service thus decreasing the size and strength of the Roman army and making it difficult for the Roman government to maintain order.



ORIGINS AND STRUCTURES OF ROMAN EMPIRE

- ❑ While the plebeian class struggled many members of the patrician class accumulated vast personal estates and enormous wealth.
 - These conditions proved ideal for power hungry opportunist who could use their personal wealth to win the loyalty of Rome's poor.
- ❑ Men, like Julius Caesar, built private armies and Rome quickly fell into a series of civil wars that lasted from 88 to 31 BCE.
- ❑ By the time the wars ended in 31 BCE few elements of the republican form of government survived.
- ❑ The vast majority of governmental power now rested with an Emperor, of which Caesar Augustus was the first.
 - The Senate survived only to give advice to the Emperors and citizen participation in government was only allowed on the local level.
- ❑ Rome was now an Empire.



ORIGINS AND STRUCTURES OF ROMAN EMPIRE

- ❑ The Roman Empire continued to expand, incorporating most of Europe and parts of the Middle East and North Africa.
 - It was administered by an extensive bureaucracy working through a network of cities linked by paved roads.
 - Cities served as provincial capitals with local governors that each reported to the emperor in Rome.
- ❑ From about 31 BCE to 235 CE the empire prospered in a period termed Pax Romana.
 - Peace, order, and elaborate infrastructure including paved roads and aqueducts facilitated trade, cultural exchange, technological development and the arts.

