

Q: Why do we say that classical antiquity's artistic history starts in Greece's Geometric period?

A: It is partly out of convenience that art historians tend to write Greece's art history by frequently situating its beginnings in the Geometric period. However, it could be argued that Greek art history started before the ninth century BC. In Mycenae, on the Greek mainland, a form of the Greek language already existed in the fourteenth century BC and some of the gods of Greek mythology were already being honored. Arts also flourished in Mycenae in the second millennium BC. However, by the twelfth century BC, the ancient Mycenaean civilization had collapsed. Between the twelfth and the ninth centuries BC, there followed a period sometimes referred to as the Dark Age of Greece. Though art was still produced on a somewhat reduced scale during the Dark Age, the ninth century BC is often considered a Renaissance in the arts and cultural sphere, since it gave rise to influential cultural traditions for the Western world. So we can say that starting in the ninth century BC, art began to evolve into the "classical style" of Greek art that would fully realize itself in the fifth century BC. This style would be looked back upon and emulated in the Western world for many centuries. A lot of literature was also produced in ancient Greece, starting with the Geometric period when the Greeks started to become literate again. Therefore, it probably makes the most sense to begin in the Geometric period.

Tags: [Ancient Greece](#), [Geometric](#)

Q: What was the Greek *polis* to its citizens in the Archaic period?

A: A *polis*, or city-state, was an independent entity to which citizens belonged. However, not all people living in a *polis* were its citizens. Women and slaves were not considered citizens. The system was elitist and family based, since citizenship was hereditary. Each city-state was

governed according to its own rules, and kings could still lead a polis. However, generally speaking, as the city-states evolved during the Archaic period, citizens increasingly practiced their rights to participate in policy making by voting and discussing issues, and were thus endowed with civic responsibility.

Tags: [Archaic Greece](#)

Q: What were the Olympic Games in their original conception?

A: The first Olympic Games were held in the eighth century BC, in 776. The different city-states, often in conflict, announced a truce for this important event. To permit safe travels to the games, there were to be no conflicts in the time surrounding the games. The games were part of a larger religious event honoring Zeus. After the first event, they were held in Olympia every four years. Athletic competitions, such as discus and javelin throwing, running, boxing, long jump, and wrestling took place during these games.

Tags: [Ancient Greece](#), [Olympic Games](#)