

Trading Goods in Ancient Greece

By Ancient History Encyclopedia, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.08.17

Word Count **507**

Level **570L**



In ancient Greek city-states, an area known as the Agora was the main marketplace. Here, the east portico of this Agora is seen. It is located in present-day Turkey. Photo: Carole Raddato/Wikimedia

The ancient Greeks had many precious goods. They made wine and grew olives. They also made beautiful pottery, which we can still see today. But the Greeks did not make everything themselves. They could get other goods through trade.

The Greeks loaded their goods onto ships. They carried these goods to other parts of the world. The Greeks sold their goods and spread their culture. In return, they bought what other people made.

Local trading grows to international trade

The Greeks began trading about 4,600 years ago. They bought and sold goods from their neighbors.



About 2,000 years later, the Greeks started trading even more. They moved and brought their goods to new areas. They also fought harder against pirates. The seas became safer for ships.

The Greeks started building special trading ships. These ships could carry more goods than before. New trading posts were set up around the Mediterranean Sea. This sea touches Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

Merchants would sail across the sea. They stopped at trading posts. They bought and sold their goods and then continued on their journey.

Athens was one of the most important Greek cities. Its port was called Piraeus. About 2,400 years ago, Piraeus became the most important trading center in the Mediterranean. Goods from all over the world were sold there.



Many items to trade

Greek cities bought and sold many goods. Some of these were grains, olives, cheese and tools.

Pottery was very popular. The Greeks sold it all over the ancient world. Greek pottery was found as far away as Africa.

The Greeks bought goods from other places. They sold cloth, gold and spices from other areas.

They also sold wheat and slaves from Egypt. Slaves were people who were captured. They were forced to do what their owners told them to do.

Some traded goods were taxed

The Greeks paid taxes when they bought or sold goods outside of their city. Taxes are sums of money paid to the government. The government uses the tax to build things like roads. It also uses it to give services to citizens.



Greek governments usually did not deal in trading. But there was one item that the government was in charge of. This was grain.

Many people lived in Athens and needed food. The government made sure that the prices of grain were just right. Prices could not be too low or too high.

About 2,400 years ago, the Greek city-states began fighting each other. They lost much of their power. People started trading in other parts of the world. Many Greek cities still remained important places for trade.

Quiz

1 Read the introduction [paragraphs 1-2].

Which sentence from the introduction explains WHY the ancient Greeks needed to trade?

- (A) The ancient Greeks had many precious goods.
- (B) They also made beautiful pottery, which we can still see today.
- (C) But the Greeks did not make everything themselves.
- (D) They carried these goods to other parts of the world.

2 Read the section "Some traded goods were taxed."

Select the sentence that explains WHY ancient Greece lost some of its power in the world.

- (A) The Greeks paid taxes when they bought or sold goods outside of their city.
- (B) Greek governments usually did not deal in trading.
- (C) The government made sure that the prices of grain were just right.
- (D) About 2,400 years ago, the Greek city-states began fighting each other.

3 Look at the map in the section "Local trading grows to international trade."

What detail from the section does the map show?

- (A) The Greeks began trading about 4,600 years ago.
- (B) The Greeks had trading posts around the Mediterranean.
- (C) The Greeks fought hard to make the seas safe from pirates.
- (D) The Greeks built ships that could carry more goods.

4 Look at the photograph in the section "Many items to trade."

What does the photograph help the reader understand about Greek pottery?

- (A) It came in different sizes.
- (B) It could be traded or sold.
- (C) It was found very far away.
- (D) It showed detailed images.