

Name: _____ Date: _____

Key Vocabulary

civilization	a large, organized society with systems like government, cities, language, and laws
society	a group of people who live together and interact, sharing relationships, traditions, and daily life
vegan	someone who does not use animals as food or clothing or harm them in any other way
just	fair, moral, and guided by a strong sense of right and wrong
customs	traditions or ways of doing things in a culture or group of people

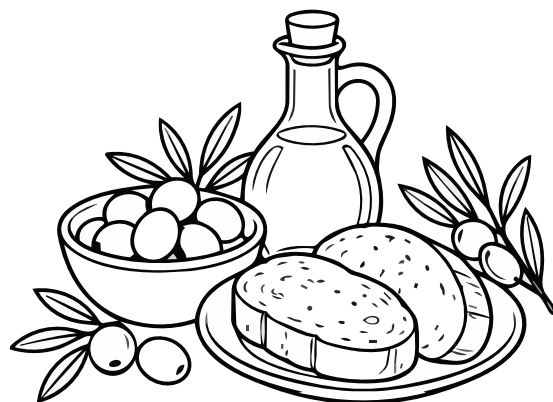
This lesson is intended to supplement the Ancient Greece unit and should be taught after students have studied Ancient Greek philosophers.

What Was on the Menu in Ancient Greece?

In Ancient Greek **civilization**, people's food choices were based on available foods and sometimes based on their beliefs about how people should treat living beings. Many Ancient Greeks chose not to eat animals.

The Ancient Greek Diet

In Ancient Greek **society**, most people ate a primarily plant-based diet. This was shaped by the environment, what was available to eat, and people's personal values.



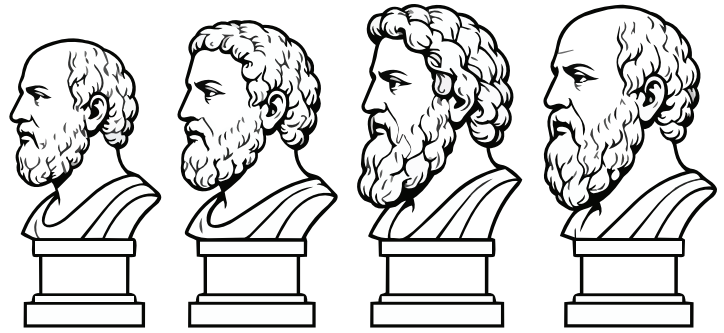
Farmers grew crops such as grapes, olives, and grains like barley and wheat. These foods were important to the Greek economy and food supply. People also ate legumes (lentils, beans, peas, chickpeas), fruits, and nuts. Meat consumption was uncommon among most people, as only a small portion of the population could afford to eat meat regularly.

Ancient Greeks usually ate three meals a day:

Breakfast (*akratisma*) was a light meal of figs and olives with barley bread dipped in watered-down wine.

Lunch (*ariston*) consisted of legumes, olives, nuts, fruits, and bread.

Dinner (*deípnōn*) was the main meal of the day and often included vegetables, grains, soups, and beans, followed by fruits and nuts.



Beliefs and Ideas About Animals

In Ancient Greece, some thinkers studied big questions about human life and society. These thinkers were called philosophers. As early as the sixth century BCE, some philosophers began questioning how people treated animals and therefore followed a **vegan** lifestyle.

They believed that a **just** society should avoid unnecessary harm and show respect for all living beings. Their ideas influenced how some people thought about food and daily life. Some of these philosophers were Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, and Plutarch.

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Pythagoras (c. 580–496 BCE)

Pythagoras was a philosopher and mathematician. He was the first to introduce to Ancient Greece and the Western world the idea that all living beings are connected. Pythagoras also believed that humans are not superior to other animals. Based on these beliefs, he taught that people should not harm animals. He and his followers observed certain **customs**, including not eating animals and avoiding animal sacrifice and hunting. These practices reflected their beliefs about the value of life.

Empedocles (c. 495–435 BCE)

Empedocles was a philosopher and a doctor. He believed that all beings are interconnected and share a common spirit. He concluded that consuming animals disrupts the balance of life. Like Pythagoras, Empedocles chose not to eat animals or take part in animal sacrifices. He believed that animal sacrifice was like murdering a family member.

Plato (c. 427–347 BCE)

Plato was an important Greek philosopher whose ideas influenced later societies. He taught that people should think carefully about the consequences of their actions. According to Plato, being cruel to animals or killing them for ease or pleasure was wrong. These ideas helped shape discussions about fairness and justice.

Plutarch (c. 46–119 CE)

Plutarch was a writer and philosopher. He believed that animals have intelligence and feelings. Additionally, he considered killing animals for food to be unnatural and unnecessary and therefore wrong. In his works, he argued that humans do not need to eat meat due to the abundance of other available food sources, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes. According to Plutarch, to achieve greatness, one must respect all life.

Orphism and Daily Life

Orphism was a religious movement in Ancient Greece, making its first appearance in Athens in the sixth century BCE. Orphics chose not to eat meat or use wool because of their spiritual beliefs. They thought these practices helped them live purer lives. This way of life demonstrates how beliefs can influence daily choices.

Conclusion

Similar to today, many people in the past made life decisions based on valuing all living beings. Their choices remind us that even long ago, people were thinking about kindness, fairness, and how their actions affect the world around them. What choices can you make today to show respect for all living beings?

Text-Dependent Questions

1. According to the text, why did most Ancient Greeks eat mostly plant-based foods?

2. What did some Greek philosophers believe about how people should treat other animals?

3. What were two rules observed by Pythagoras and his followers?

4. What argument did Plutarch make about eating meat?

5. Which sentence best summarizes the main message of the article?

- a. Ancient Greek philosophers developed important methods that led to changes in the Greek diet.
- b. Ancient Greek society was entirely uniform, with all people sharing the same beliefs about nature and philosophy.
- c. Ancient Greek diet choices were based only on wealth and had nothing to do with personal beliefs or philosophical ideas.
- d. In Ancient Greece, most people ate a vegan diet because of the available food options and their belief systems, which were influenced by philosophers and religion.

Analysis Questions

1. How did the environment and available food options affect the lives of Ancient Greeks?

2. Explain how beliefs influenced the daily lives of some Ancient Greeks.

3. How were the ideas of Plutarch and Orphics different when it comes to eating animals?

4. How were the ideas of Pythagoras and Empedocles similar when it comes to animals?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Do you think the diet of Ancient Greeks was shaped more by necessity (availability of foods) or by choice (beliefs and values)? Explain your reasoning using evidence.

2. How might Ancient Greek society have been different if more people had followed the beliefs of philosophers like Pythagoras?

3. How do the beliefs of Ancient Greek philosophers compare to the ideas people have today about animals and food?

4. What does this article suggest about the relationship between beliefs and daily life in a society?

Class Discussion Prompts

1. Should people's beliefs influence what they eat? Why or why not?
2. Is it possible for a whole society to change its diet based on beliefs? What challenges might that create?
3. Which philosopher's ideas do you find most interesting or convincing? Why?
4. How are your own food choices influenced by culture, family, or personal beliefs?
5. Do you think values or traditions have a stronger influence on people's actions? Why?
6. Can people follow their beliefs even when they are in the minority? What makes that difficult?
7. Do you think beliefs about animals are more influenced by culture or personal experience? Explain.

Common Core Standards Addressed: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.6, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2

Answer Sheet: ‘What Was on the Menu in Ancient Greece?’

Text-Dependent Questions

1. According to the text, why did most Ancient Greeks eat mostly plant-based foods?

Possible answer: Most Ancient Greeks ate mostly vegan because plant-based foods were widely available and easy to grow in their environment. Meat was expensive and difficult to obtain, so only a small percentage of people could afford to eat it regularly. Plus, eating meat conflicted with some Ancient Greeks’ sense of living in balance and valuing all life.

2. What did some Greek philosophers believe about how people should treat other animals?

Possible answer: Some Greek philosophers believed that people should avoid harming animals and treat all living beings with respect and kindness. They thought that harming animals was wrong and did not fit with a just and fair society.

3. What were two rules observed by Pythagoras and his followers?

Possible answer: Two rules followed by Pythagoras and his followers were not to hunt and not to eat animals.

4. What argument did Plutarch make about eating meat?

Possible answer: Plutarch argued that it is wrong to eat animals and that humans do not need to eat meat because there are other healthy, harmless food options available, including fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes.

5. Which sentence best summarizes the main message of the article?

Answer: d. In Ancient Greece, most people ate a vegan diet because of the available food options and their belief systems, which were influenced by philosophers and religion.

Analysis Questions

1. How did the environment and available food options affect the lives of Ancient Greeks?

Possible answer: The environment made it easy to grow crops like grapes, olives, and grains, so these foods became the main part of people's diets. Because they were grown in large amounts, the crops also became valuable goods for trade and helped support the economy.

2. Explain how beliefs influenced the daily lives of some Ancient Greeks.

Possible answer: Beliefs shaped how Ancient Greeks lived each day, including what they ate and how they treated animals. Some philosophers and religious groups taught that all living beings should be respected, so their followers chose not to eat animals or take part in hunting and animal sacrifice. These ideas influenced daily habits and showed how values can guide people's choices.

3. How were the ideas of Plutarch and Orphics different when it comes to eating animals?

Possible answer: Plutarch thought it was unnecessary—and therefore wrong—to eat meat because of the abundance of plant-based food sources. Orphics chose not to eat meat for spiritual reasons, believing that this practice would lead to a purer life.

4. How were the ideas of Pythagoras and Empedocles similar when it comes to animals?

Possible answer: Both Pythagoras and Empedocles believed that people should not harm animals. They thought all living beings should be respected and chose not to eat animals because of these beliefs.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Do you think the diet of Ancient Greeks was shaped more by necessity (availability of foods) or by choice (beliefs and values)? Explain your reasoning using evidence.

Possible answer: Students should select one side and then support their argument using evidence from the article. Some students may choose to select one primary argument, while also supporting a second argument.

2. How might Ancient Greek society have been different if more people had followed the beliefs of philosophers like Pythagoras?

Possible answer: If more people had followed Pythagoras's beliefs, Ancient Greek society would have been shaped by a collective respect for all animals. Fewer animals would have been killed for food and sacrifices. More Ancient Greeks would have focused on the connections between humans and other animals, embracing the belief that animals should not be harmed or used.

3. How do the beliefs of Ancient Greek philosophers compare to the ideas people have today about animals and food?

Possible answer: Some ideas are similar because many people today also choose not to eat animals for ethical or health reasons. Like some Ancient Greek philosophers, modern vegans believe animals should not be harmed. Furthermore, some people agree with Pythagoras's philosophy that all living beings are connected, while others agree with Plutarch's belief that we do not need to eat animal products because there is an abundance of nutritious vegan food options.

4. What does this article suggest about the relationship between beliefs and daily life in a society?

Possible answer: The article suggests that beliefs can strongly influence daily life in a society. In Ancient Greece, some people changed what they ate and how they lived based on what was important to them. This reveals that culture, beliefs, and traditions can change. These beliefs didn't just affect personal choices—they also shaped how people treated others and what their communities thought was right or wrong.

Class Discussion Prompts

Consider dividing students into small groups or pairs and assigning one question to each group. Students can share their responses in writing, with a partner, or in a whole-class discussion.

1. Should people's beliefs influence what they eat? Why or why not?

Possible answer: Answers will vary. Students may discuss ethical or health-related beliefs. For example, some people may choose not to eat animals because they believe it is wrong to harm them. Others may believe food choices should be based only on health or culture rather than personal beliefs.

2. Is it possible for a whole society to change its diet based on beliefs? What challenges might that create?

Possible answer: It is possible, but it would be difficult. A society would need most people to agree on the same beliefs, which can be hard. Challenges might include food availability, cost, traditions, and disagreements among people about what is right and wrong.

3. Which philosopher's ideas do you find most interesting or convincing? Why?

Possible answer: Answers will vary. A student might choose Pythagoras because he believed all living beings should be respected or Plato because he encouraged people to think about justice and fairness. Students should explain why the idea stands out to them.

4. How are your own food choices influenced by culture, family, or personal beliefs?

Possible answer: Answers will vary. Food choices are often influenced by family traditions, culture, religion, and personal preference. For example, some families may eat certain meals during holidays, while others may avoid certain foods for religious, ethical, or health reasons.

5. Do you think values or traditions have a stronger influence on people's actions? Why?

Possible answer: Answers will vary. Some students may say traditions are stronger because people follow what their families have always done. Others may say values are stronger because people can change their behaviors according to what is important to them, individually.

6. Can people follow their beliefs even when they are in the minority? What makes that difficult?

Possible answer: Yes, people can follow their beliefs, but it can be difficult. It may be hard because of peer pressure, lack of support, or opposition from society. However, some people still choose to follow their beliefs even if others do not agree because they feel strongly that staying true to their values is important.

7. Do you think beliefs about animals are more influenced by culture or personal experience? Explain.

Possible answer: Both influence beliefs. Culture shapes what people grow up thinking is normal, while personal experiences with animals can also affect how someone feels about them. For example, someone with animal companions may feel a heightened connection to animals' feelings and experiences.

Common Core Standards Addressed: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.6, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2