

Ancient Greek Theatre



In Ancient Greece, the theatre was a very important aspect of daily life. Crowds of 15,000 people would gather to see a play. Every town had at least one theatre.

The ancient Greeks held drama competitions with winners for writing plays and performing. These competitions were not only held in their own towns, but also they had competitions with other towns.

Large outdoor theatres were built on the side of a hill to be able to hold the large number of people that attended. Theatres were built on hillsides because it allowed the audience to see what was going on in the orchestra pit - the stage area. The seating section was called the Theatron, which is where we get the word 'theatre' from. One reason plays were so important is that originally plays were performed to honour the God- Dionysus (the god of the theatre).

Sophocles was the most famous ancient Greek playwright. He wrote 120 plays.

There were three types of plays:

1. **Tragedies:** In tragedies, one or more main characters always suffered a disastrous end.
2. **Comedies:** In comedies, the plays always had a happy ending.
3. **Satires:** Satire plays in ancient Greece were often political and affected people's opinions about current events that were happening.

Greek Theatres:

- Greek theatres were large and semi-circular, with rows of tiered seating (like some theatres today).
- The centre was circular with an altar dedicated to Dionysus, the god of the theatre.
- The stage was raised within the circle – this shape made sure all of the audience could see and helped to amplify the sound.
- Very important visitors would sit in the front seats.
- Women could attend the plays, but all the actors were men.

The audience

- The audience would throw food and a stone if they thought the acting wasn't good enough! Oh dear!
- The actors wore masks. They wore bright colour masks for comedy plays and dark colours for tragedy plays.
- You could tell if the character was happy or sad by the shape of their mask.
- The masks were made from fabric, stiffened with plaster.



Design your own ancient Greek theatre mask.

Create a drawing of your mask and include a one paragraph description.

Include what type of play/actor it could be used in.


