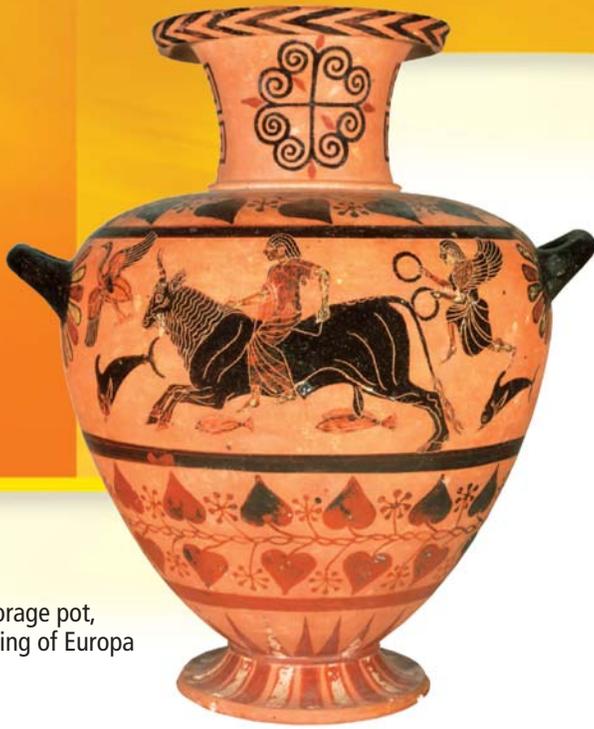


SECTION 1



WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

### Zeus Kidnaps Europa

Europa, the beautiful daughter of the king of Phoenicia, was gathering flowers when she saw a bull quietly grazing with her father's herds. The bull was actually Zeus, king of all the Greek gods, who had fallen in love with her. When Europa reached up to place flowers on his horns, he suddenly bounded into the air and carried the weeping princess far across the Mediterranean Sea to the island of Crete. Eventually, Europa married the king of Crete and gave her name to a new continent—Europe.

**Focus Question** How did the Minoans and Mycenaeans shape early Greek civilizations?

Greek amphora, or storage pot, depicting the kidnapping of Europa

# Early People of the Aegean

### Objectives

- Identify the influences on Minoan culture and how the civilization prospered.
- Summarize how Mycenaeans ruled the sea trade and started the Trojan War.
- Describe the works of Homer and their influence on Greek culture.

### Terms, People, and Places

- Knossos
- shrine
- fresco
- Trojan War
- strait
- Homer

### Note Taking

**Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas** Create a table like the one below. Then, use the table to record the main ideas relating to the groups of people discussed in the section.

Minoans	Mycenaeans	Dorians
•	•	•
•	•	•

The island of Crete (kreet) was the cradle of an early civilization that later influenced Greeks living on the European mainland. The people of Crete, however, had absorbed many ideas from the older civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Europa's mythic journey from Phoenicia to Crete suggests this movement of ideas from east to west.

## Minoans Trade and Prosper

Washed by the warm waters of the Aegean (ee JEE un) Sea, Crete was home to a brilliant early civilization. We do not actually know what the people who built this civilization called themselves. However, the British archaeologist who unearthed its ruins called them Minoans after Minos, a legendary king of Crete. Minoan civilization reached its height, or greatest success, between 1600 B.C. and 1500 B.C.

The success of the Minoans was based on trade, not conquest. Minoan traders set up outposts throughout the Aegean world. From their island home in the eastern Mediterranean, they crossed the seas to the Nile Valley and the Middle East. Through contact with Egypt and Mesopotamia, they acquired ideas and technology in fields such as writing and architecture that they adapted to their own culture.

**Minoan Art at Knossos** The rulers of this trading empire lived in a vast palace at **Knossos** (NAHS us). It housed rooms for the royal family, banquet halls, and working areas for artisans. It also included religious **shrines**, areas dedicated to the honor of gods and goddesses.



The walls of the palace at Knossos were covered with colorful **frescoes**, watercolor paintings done on wet plaster. These frescoes tell us much about Minoan society. Leaping dolphins reflect the importance of the sea to the Minoan people. Religious images indicate that the Minoans worshiped the bull as well as a mother goddess. Other frescoes show young men and women strolling through gardens or jumping through the horns of a charging bull. The paintings also suggest that women appeared freely in public and may have enjoyed more rights than women in most other ancient civilizations.

**Minoan Civilization Disappears** By about 1400 B.C., Minoan civilization had vanished. Archaeologists are not sure of the reasons for its disappearance. A sudden volcanic eruption on a nearby island may have rained flaming death on Knossos. Or perhaps an earthquake may have destroyed the palace, followed by an immense wave that drowned the inhabitants of the island. However, it is certain that invaders played some role in the destruction of Minoan civilization. These intruders were the Mycenaeans (my suh NEE unz), the first Greek-speaking people of whom we have a written record.

 **Checkpoint** How does the art at Knossos reflect Minoan culture?

## Trade and War in Mycenae

Like the Aryans who spread across India, the Mycenaeans spoke an Indo-European language. They conquered the Greek mainland before overrunning the island of Crete.

**Sea Trade Brings Wealth** Mycenaean civilization dominated the Aegean world from about 1400 B.C. to 1200 B.C. Like the Minoans, the Mycenaeans were sea traders. They reached out beyond the Aegean to Sicily, Italy, Egypt, and Mesopotamia. The Mycenaeans learned many skills from the Minoans, including the art of writing. They, too, absorbed Egyptian and Mesopotamian customs, many of which they passed on to later Greeks.

The Mycenaeans lived in separate city-states on the mainland. In each, a warrior-king built a thick-walled fortress from which he ruled the surrounding villages. Wealthy rulers amassed treasure, including fine gold ornaments that archaeologists have unearthed from their tombs.

### Life Near the Sea

This detail from an ancient Minoan fresco decorates the wall of a house located on the Greek island of Thera. *How do the scene depicted above and the daggers below reflect the importance of the sea to the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations?*

A Mycenaean dagger and sheath with inlaid depictions of sea creatures, c. 1200 B.C.





### The Trojan Horse

The story of the Trojan horse had great significance to ancient Greeks. The image of the horse was often used by Greek artisans to decorate their work, such as this relief on the neck of a seventh-century B.C. amphora. *Why do you think the ancient Greeks would memorialize the Trojan War in their art?*

### Vocabulary Builder

eloquence—(EL uh kwens)

*n.* a manner of speech that is vivid and persuasive

**The Trojan War** The Mycenaeans are best remembered for their part in the **Trojan War**, which took place around 1250 B.C. The conflict may have had its origins in economic rivalry between Mycenae and Troy, a rich trading city in present-day Turkey, that controlled the vital **straits**, or narrow water passages, connecting the Mediterranean and Black seas.

In Greek legend, however, the war had a more romantic cause. When the Trojan prince, Paris, kidnaps Helen, the beautiful wife of a Greek king, the Mycenaeans sail to Troy to rescue her. For the next 10 years, the two sides battle until the Greeks finally seize Troy and burn the city to the ground.

For centuries, most people regarded the Trojan War as pure legend. Then, in the 1870s, a wealthy German businessman, Heinrich Schliemann (HYN rik SCHLEE mahn), set out to prove that the legend was rooted in fact. As Schliemann excavated the site of ancient Troy, he found evidence of fire and war dating

to about 1250 B.C. Though most of the details remain lost in legend, modern scholars now agree that the Trojan War was an actual event.

✔ **Checkpoint** How did trade shape Mycenaean society?

## Homer and the Great Legends of Greece

Not long after their victory over Troy, the Mycenaeans themselves came under attack from sea raiders and also from another Greek-speaking people, the Dorians, invading from the north. As Mycenaean power faded, their people abandoned the cities and trade declined. People forgot many skills, including the art of writing. From the end of the Mycenaean civilization in about 1100 B.C. until about 900 B.C., Greek civilization seemed to step backward.

Much of what we know about the Trojan War and life during this period comes from two great epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These epics may have been the work of many people, but they are credited to the poet **Homer**, who probably lived about 750 B.C. According to tradition, Homer was a blind poet who wandered from village to village, singing of heroic deeds. Like the great Indian epics, Homer's tales were passed on orally for generations before they were finally written down.

The *Iliad*, full as it is of gods, goddesses, and even a talking horse, is our chief source of information about the Trojan War. At the start of the poem, Achilles (uh KIL eez), the mightiest Greek warrior, has withdrawn from battle because he has been unfairly treated and insulted by his commander. The war soon turns against the Greeks, but Achilles stubbornly refuses to listen to pleas that he rejoin the fighting. Only after his best friend is killed does Achilles return to battle.

The *Odyssey* tells of the many struggles of the Greek hero Odysseus (oh DIS ee us) on his return home to his faithful wife, Penelope, after the fall of Troy. On his long voyage, Odysseus encounters a sea monster, a race of one-eyed giants, and a beautiful sorceress who turns men into swine.

The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* reveal much about the values of the ancient Greeks. The heroes display honor, courage, and eloquence, as when Achilles rallies his troops:

### Primary Source

“Every man make up his mind to fight  
And move on his enemy! Strong as I am,  
It’s hard for me to face so many men  
And fight with all at once. . . .  
And yet I will!”  
—Homer, *Iliad*

For almost 3,000 years, the epics of Homer have inspired European writers and artists.

 **Checkpoint** What do Homer’s epics reveal about Greek culture?

## Looking Ahead

After the Dorian invasions, the land of Greece passed several centuries in obscurity. The people lived in small isolated villages and had few contacts with the outside world. Over time they made the stories about Crete and Mycenae a part of their heritage, and they built upon the legacy of those and other civilizations to forge a new, Greek civilization. When it emerged, this Greek civilization would not only dominate the region, it would ultimately extend the influence of Greek culture over most of the Western world.



### Hero of the *Odyssey*

Odysseus was admired for his cleverness. Here, he outwits the siren, whose song lures sailors to their doom. In order to hear their song and yet survive, Odysseus fills his crew’s ears with beeswax. Then, he has himself tied to the ship’s mast so he can hear the siren’s song without endangering the ship or his crew.

SECTION

1

## Assessment

### Terms, People, and Places

1. For each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section, write a sentence explaining its significance.

### Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas**  
Use your completed table to answer the Focus Question: How did the Minoans and Mycenaeans shape early Greek civilizations?

### Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Determine Relevance** How did trade contribute to the development of the Minoan and Mycenaean cultures?
4. **Draw Inferences** What values of the ancient Greeks are found in the poems of Homer?
5. **Demonstrate Reasoned Judgment**  
Do you think the epics of Homer are a reliable source of information about the history of the ancient Greeks? Why or why not?

### Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice  
Web Code: naa-0411

### Writing About History

**Quick Write: Write a Thesis Statement**  
Review the section and think of how early people of the Aegean contributed to Greek civilization. Write a thesis statement that expresses your thought. Remember that a thesis statement should provide the main idea for an essay.