

**Module 4: Ancient Greece**  
**Topic 4 Content: The Hellenistic Age**

**Introduction**

# THE HELLENISTIC AGE



Click the tabs at the bottom of the screen to learn about the Hellenistic Age. Exit the interactivity when you have finished exploring the content.

*Image: The Great Library of Alexandria by O. Von Corven – an artist's rendering based on archaeological evidence*



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**Hellenistic Kingdoms**

## HELLENISTIC KINGDOMS

**Alexander the Great's death was unexpected.**

**No successor was available.**

**Four independent kingdoms were established.**

**This was not a democracy any more.**

**All kingdoms had the commonality of Greek culture.**

*Image: 3rd century B.C. (B.C.E.) statue of Alexander the Great by Menas. Located in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum.*



Alexander the Great's death in 323 B.C. (B.C.E.) surprised the Macedonians, and left them with no clear successor to the empire he built. Several of his generals wanted to control the empire, so four distinct areas were ultimately established and ruled as individual kingdoms rather than democracies. Each kingdom differed greatly from the others, but all still had a distinct Greek culture. None of the kingdoms were strong enough to maintain or achieve the glory of Philip II or Alexander.

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#### Art and Architecture


## ART AND ARCHITECTURE

**New cities were constructed, and architecture and art thrived.**

**Government officials and private citizens funded new works.**

**Art was realistic looking.**

*Image: Head of a realistic-looking woman, possibly a nurse. This Roman copy was of a Hellenistic original from the 3rd or 2nd century B.C. (B.C.E.).*



As kingdoms expanded to empires and new cities were constructed, architecture and art thrived during the Hellenistic Age. Government officials and private citizens provided funding to artists to create new and exciting works, particularly sculptures. Art during the period was more realistic than Classical Art, focusing on everyday appearances of people and events, rather than on physical perfection or representations of the gods.

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#### Philosophy

## PHILOSOPHY

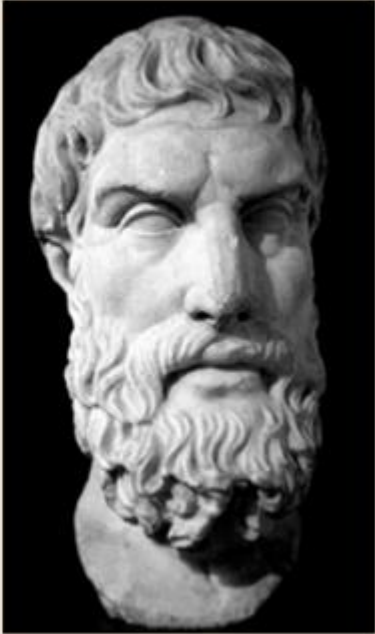
Two philosophical schools were Epicureanism and Stoicism.

Epicurians believed that humans should seek happiness based on self-interest and freedom from upset.

Stoicism was founded by Zeno.

Stoicism asserted that people could be happy if they followed the will of the gods and of nature.

*Image: A bust of the Hellenistic philosopher Epicurus.*



Two of the most important philosophical schools created during the Hellenistic Age included Epicureanism and Stoicism. Epicureans believed that humans should seek happiness based on their own self-interest and freedom from upset. Founded by the philosopher Zeno, the school of Stoicism asserted that people could be happy as long as they followed the will of the gods and of nature. Through this observance, they could endure all things.

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#### Religion

## RELIGION

**Greek religion was introduced throughout the kingdoms.**

**Deities were absorbed from other religions.**

**Gods and goddesses were merged if they had similar characteristics.**



*Image: A terracotta sculpture showing the merged aspects of Aphrodite and Isis from the Hellenistic Age.*

As Greek culture was introduced to Southwest Asia through conquests and trade, the Greek religion was introduced throughout the kingdoms. Greek religion absorbed deities from other religions, particularly the religions of ancient Egypt and Syria. The gods Isis and Serapis were worshipped beyond the borders of Egypt throughout the ancient world. Another religious change common to this age included the merging of gods and goddesses who had similar characteristics.

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#### Science

## SCIENCE

Many scientific advances were made especially in astronomy and medicine.

The stars were catalogued.

The circumference of the Earth was calculated.

Scientists explored the human body.

The nervous system was discovered.

Medical schools were created.



*Image: A portrait of Eratosthenes, the father of geography who first calculated the circumference of the Earth.*

Scientists like Archimedes made advances during the Hellenistic Age, particularly in the areas of astronomy and medicine. They catalogued the stars into formal collections, and calculated the circumference of the Earth. In addition, scientists explored the human body through organized dissection, discovered the nervous system, and created medical schools.

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#### Fighting

### FIGHTING

Constant fighting caused the Greek kingdoms to weaken.

Romans grew stronger and conquered areas around the Mediterranean.

Roman expansion started with Sicily and moved onto the Carthaginians.

The Greeks helped the Carthaginians fight the Romans, but the Romans won.

The Romans took over Greece.

Romans destroyed Corinth and made Greece a province of the Roman Empire.



*Image: Marble statue of the winged Nike of Samothrace, the Greek goddess of victory.*

Due to the constant fighting among the split kingdoms that once were under the rule of Alexander the Great, the regions became weaker and more vulnerable. Simultaneously, Romans became stronger and started to grow outside of Italy, conquering other parts of the Mediterranean. Roman expansion began in the nearby island of Sicily, and moved onto fighting with the Carthaginians. The Greeks feared the Romans, and as a result, helped the Carthaginians in battle. The Romans won against the Carthaginians, and next began to take over the Greeks. Although the Greeks first believed they would maintain their independence, in 146 B.C. (B.C.E.), the Romans destroyed the city-state of Corinth, and made Greece a province of the Roman Empire.

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#### Greeks under Roman Rule

## GREEKS UNDER ROMAN RULE

Romans ruled the Greeks for hundreds of years.

Greeks continued to thrive.

New homes and buildings were built.

They sailed and traded peacefully around the Mediterranean Sea.



*Image: An artist's imagining of the Lighthouse in Ptolemaic Alexandria – it was one of the largest structures in the ancient world.*

Romans ruled the Greeks for hundreds of years. The Greeks did not want to lose their independence, and continued to thrive, as evidenced by archaeological finds of new homes and buildings, and their ability to sail and trade peacefully around the Mediterranean Sea that was ruled by the Romans.