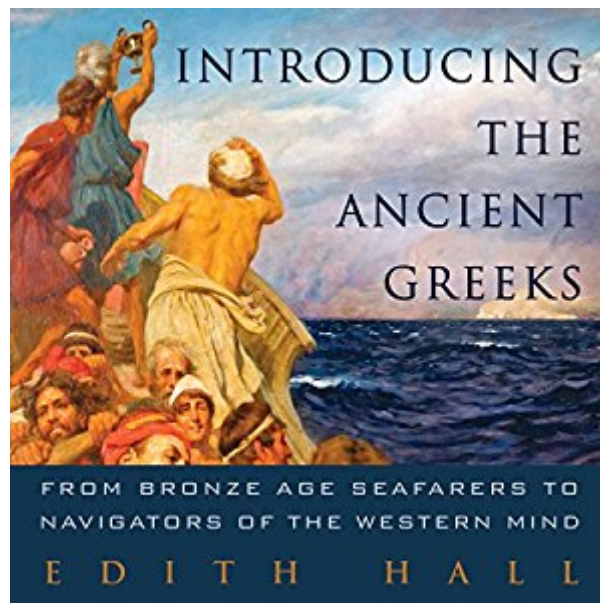




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Introducing The Ancient Greeks: From Bronze Age Seafarers To Navigators Of The Western Mind



Synopsis

Acclaimed classics scholar Edith Hall's *Introducing the Ancient Greeks* is the first book to offer a synthesis of the entire ancient Greek experience, from the rise of the Mycenaean kingdoms of the sixteenth century BC to the final victory of Christianity over paganism in AD 391. Each of the ten chapters visits a different Greek community at a different moment during the twenty centuries of ancient Greek history. In the process, the book makes a powerful original argument: A cluster of unique qualities made the Greeks special and made them the right people, at the right time, to take up the baton of human progress. According to Herodotus, the father of history, what made all Greeks identifiably Greek was their common descent from the same heroes, the way they sacrificed to their gods, their rules of decent behavior, and their beautiful language. Edith Hall argues, however, that their mind-set was just as important as their awe-inspiring achievements. They were rebellious, individualistic, inquisitive, open-minded, witty, rivalrous, admiring of excellence, articulate, and addicted to pleasure. But most important was their continuing identity as mariners, the restless seagoing lifestyle that brought them into contact with ethnically diverse peoples in countless new settlements, and the constant stimulus to technological innovation provided by their intense relationship with the sea. Expertly researched and elegantly told, *Introducing the Ancient Greeks* is an indispensable contribution to our understanding of the Greeks.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Very good survey introduction, just as advertised. I found it fun to read. After I had read many more, increasingly detailed books on the subject, I went back and was surprised at how useful this book

had been and continues to be. It is arranged in chapters based on her "ten main characteristics of the Ancient Greeks." (For example, because Greece is small and early Hellenic settlements were almost all on the sea, the Greeks were excellent seafarers and (mostly) had excellent navies. This was an important factor in how Mediterranean culture developed. If you want a good introduction that will encourage you to learn more, I recommend this.

Best book on the Greeks -- history, philosophy, social mores-- ever written. Scholarly, but fascinating

The author has made what could be a very dry subject informative

This book does exactly what it promises: it tells the reader about the full sweep of Classical Greek history. Hall connects the dots between many familiar names from Ancient Greece, showing the historical settings of all the names we often hear out of context. She speaks with real affection about the period, and her enthusiasm often catches with the reader. What I liked most about the book is that she has a literary scholar's eye for symbolism, connecting motifs from texts in the period to common experiences. I think she could have gotten away without the ten characteristics, though. She would often come back to them briefly at the end of a chapter, and sometimes it felt forced. Her qualification about the characteristics that they are true for "most ancient Greeks, most of the time" shows that the generalizations are shaky to begin with, and she might be better off with the real strength of the book: relating the wide range of fascinating and varied experiences, lives, and events from the period. All in all, I would definitely recommend this book to those who want to know more about Classical Greece.

Great work and understanding of a period in human history that has influenced our thinking, culture and daily lives today

Book was exactly what I expected.

I gained a better understanding of the ancient world and its people. The interaction between the population around the Mediterranean, including the Romans was interesting. So was the spread of culture that was part of it

This could be used as a college intro class on Greek civilization. Wonderful overview with a lot of wry comments. Easy to jump in and out of as long as you stay within each chapter.

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