

# Architecture - The Parthenon

by ReadWorks



Architecture, like painting, literature, and other forms of art, reflects the ideals of the people who build it. The Parthenon is the best example of ancient Greek architecture. The structure, created between 447 B.C.E. and 432 B.C.E., tells us a lot about the Greek way of thinking.

In Greece, balance and order were important principles. The Greeks believed that everything around them happened for a reason. They wanted to find out this reason and discover the order of the world around them. Their buildings were beautiful, but they do not overflow with frivolity or emotion. Instead, Greek buildings define order.

Columns are one hallmark of classical structure that we associate with Greece and Rome. The Parthenon was built with eight columns on the front and 17 on each side. The building is symmetrical and balanced. Mathematical principles make the design stable. Almost the entire structure is made of marble.

The balance and order that we see in the Parthenon echo the principles of Greek government. In Greece, the *polis*, or "city-state", was ruled by the people in a democracy. Greek citizens debated the actions to be taken by the government. This was very different from a monarchy where kings, queens, or emperors ruled the people. The citizens

within the city-state ran their own government. This system of government would require balance-no one person could become too powerful. It would also require order so that the government would not crumble. These ideas from ancient Greece about balance and order made their way to America. They are the very things that the founding fathers of the United States, such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, thought about when they prepared the outline for democracy in the United States.

Can you think of any buildings in the United States with columns that look like the Greek columns on the Parthenon? What do you think of when you see the columns?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The Parthenon is made up almost entirely of what material?

- A. granite
- B. marble
- C. wood
- D. adobe

2. Why does the author discuss the founding fathers of the United States?

- A. to explain why the founding fathers hated Greek architecture
- B. to contrast the cultures of ancient Greece and modern America
- C. to illustrate the fact that architects can become politicians
- D. to describe something that Greek ideas influenced

3. Which of these statements best explains why an American government building would be designed like classical Greek architecture?

- A. to show the influence of Greece's balance and order
- B. to try to be very original in its design
- C. to make visitors from Greece feel very welcome
- D. to pretend that the buildings are much older than they are

4. Read the following sentence: "Their buildings were beautiful, but they do not overflow with frivolity or emotion."

The word **overflow** means

- A. to fail to meet expectations
- B. to be made of liquid
- C. to be used for entertainment
- D. to have too much of something

5. The main idea of this passage is that

- A. the Parthenon was unlike the vast majority of buildings in ancient Greece.
- B. ancient Greece had government buildings that were very unusual.
- C. the Parthenon represents the balance and order that the ancient Greeks valued.
- D. the United States copied their architecture style from the Greeks.

6. How did the Parthenon show the ideals of balance and order?

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7. Based on the passage, explain why a building would be used to show a culture's ideals.

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

The Parthenon was built with eight columns on the front and seventeen on each side, \_\_\_\_\_ it is symmetrical and balanced.

- A. because
- B. so
- C. but
- D. instead