

# Art: The Timeless Treasure

By Tammie Bairen

Since the beginning of time, art has been part of our world through painting, drawing, sculpture, dance, theater, architecture, and more. Though the style has changed dramatically over the centuries, artists have created beautiful and interesting works of art. This course will cover the major periods in art from the fifth century BC (ancient Greece) to 1870 (the years directly preceding Impressionism). Discussion of each style will include painting and sculpture as well as architecture, since buildings were created to exemplify the prominent style at the time. Students will be introduced to artists, where applicable, and will have an opportunity to practice each style on their own. Additional activities will be provided for further learning.

- Classical
- Romanesque
- Gothic
- Renaissance
- Baroque
- Rococo
- Neoclassical
- Romantic
- Realism

Note: the dates of each movement are approximate as different sources use different dates.

*Parents' Note: It is recommended students not be permitted to search on their own for artwork. Various images will be provided in this lesson. If students would like to search for more, consider searching for them and allowing them to look once you have found an image that is acceptable.*



*Pieta, Michelangelo,  
1498-1499*

## Week 1: Classical

(Fifth and Fourth Century BC)



*Interior of a kylix depicting Herakles and Athena by Phoinix (potter) and Douris (painter), c. 480-470 BC*

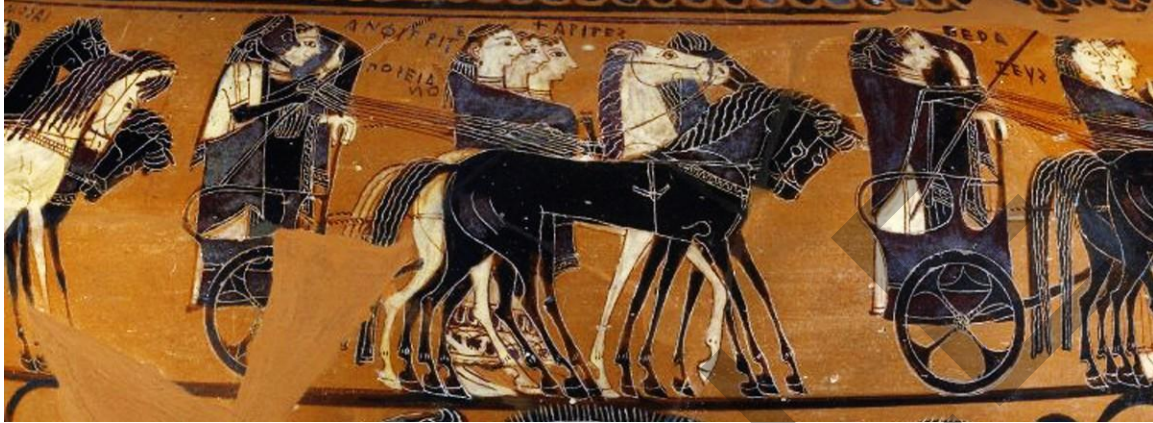
What comes to mind when you think of ancient Greece? Perhaps you think of the Greek gods and the temples built to them. Maybe you think of people wearing togas. How about the Olympics? Do you think much about the importance of art or what art looked like in ancient Greece?



Compared to modern art, ancient Greek art seems relatively simplistic. Based on the artifacts unearthed and the ruins that remain, we sometimes tend to believe Greek art was rather dull or lacked imagination. This could not be further from the truth.

Ancient Greek art has been divided into four periods: 1) Geometric, 2) Archaic, 3) Classical, and 4) Hellenistic. The classical period of ancient Greece spanned the fourth and fifth centuries BC and included pottery, sculpture, paintings, and architecture. During the Archaic period,

human figures appeared somewhat unrealistic, and the images on pottery were black on a background of red/orange. During the Classical period, Greeks felt the human form was the most important subject for its art so humans were more realistic, Greek gods were shown in human form, and physical imperfections were never shown.

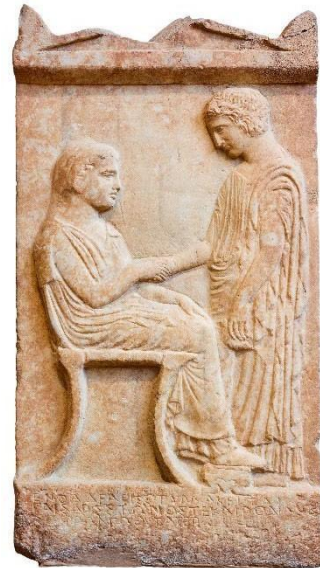


The best surviving works of art from ancient Greece are the sculptures and pottery. Paintings were created, but they were most often painted on wood and walls that no longer exist or have decayed over the centuries.

During the early part of the Classical period, the painting of pottery was an art form. Designs and depictions were painstakingly crafted. The color scheme changed from the Archaic period of black on red (as seen above) to red on black (to the left). The colors used in pottery in ancient times were limited to black, white, red, and

yellow because of the firing process that prepared the pottery for use. As the period wore on, however, less pride was taken in the painting done on pottery. It was mass produced and traded all over the known Greek world.

Sculpture also changed as the Archaic made way for the Classical. Sculptors learned better methods (lost-wax casting), and their improved skill was evident in their creations. Humans were shown in more natural poses; they were seen relaxing and fighting. Not only were statues freestanding, but they were placed in **friezes** and on **pediments** of buildings. They served a utilitarian function as public memorials, offerings to the Greek gods and goddesses for their temples, and grave markers.



Ancient Grave Marker



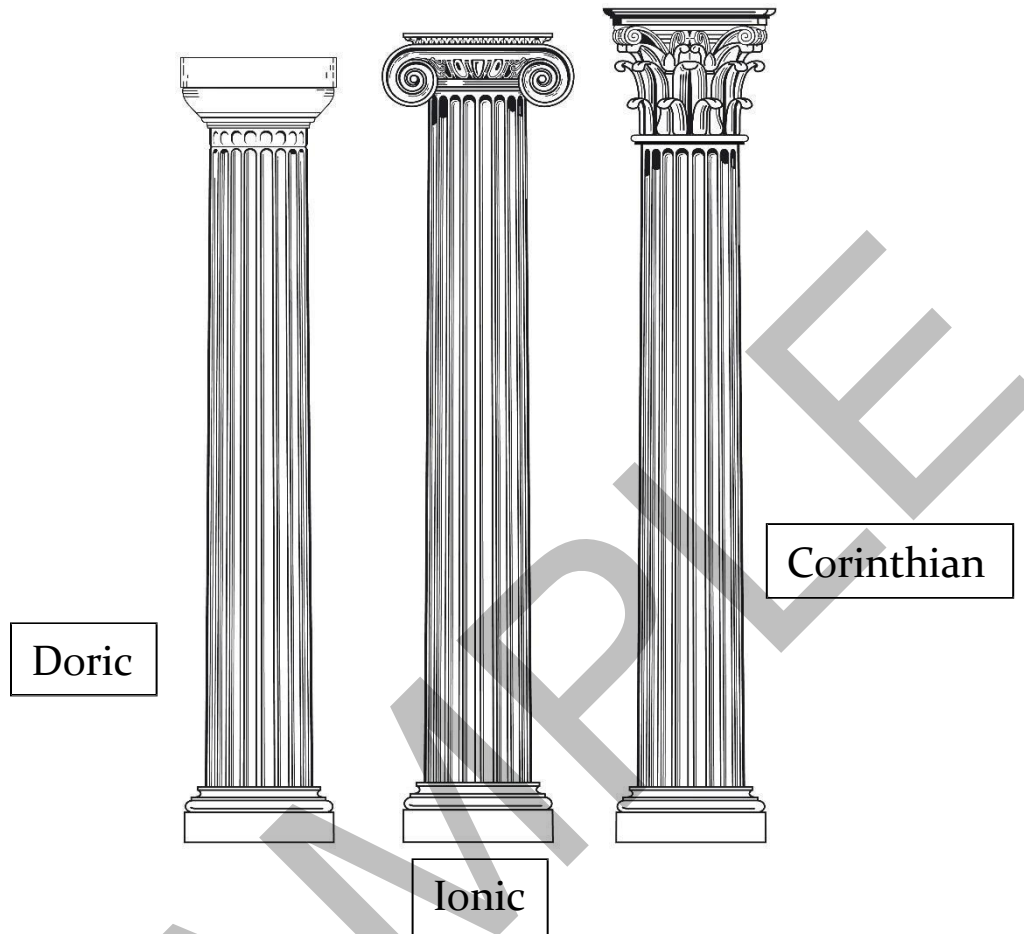
*A model representation of what the Parthenon might have looked like when first built.  
Notice the statues in the pediment and the frieze.*

It was during this time that individual sculptors were identified. Phidias was responsible for the Parthenon. Praxiteles created the Statue of Zeus and Statue of Athena. Both statues were stolen by the emperor of the Byzantine Empire and taken to Constantinople where they were, unfortunately, destroyed by fire.

It would probably be safe to say that when most people think of Ancient Greece, they think of either the mythology or the Parthenon. The Parthenon sits atop the Acropolis so it is an obvious example of the architecture, but there are, or were, many structures built in the same style. Particular elements of this style still exist today in our buildings. One of the predominant features is the columns.



In Greek architecture, there are three different types of columns: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian.



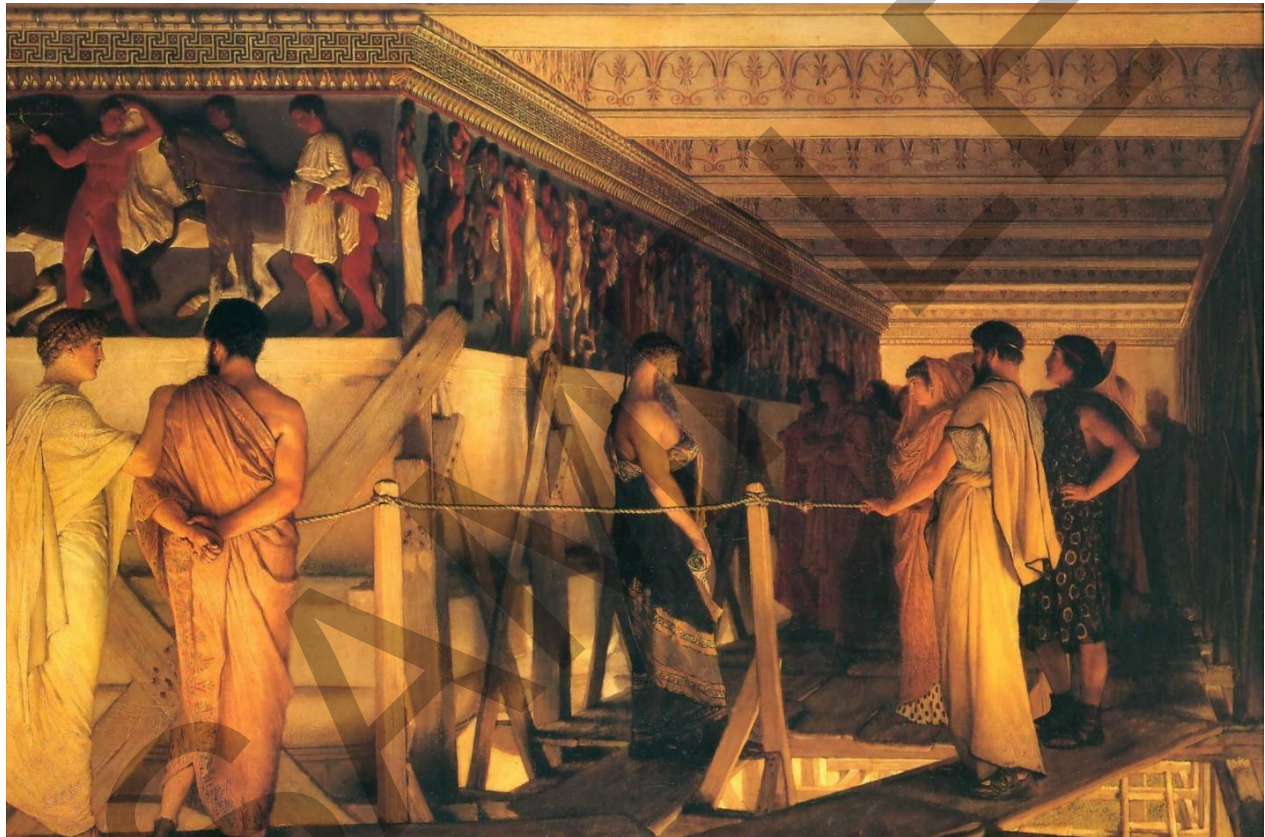
What do you notice about these different columns? Their capitals (tops) are different—Corinthian being the most elaborate. A website is included in the activities that explains the differences between the columns further.

There is one last thing to discuss in this lesson, that is, the use of color. From what we've seen so far, you might be led to believe the only colors used by the ancient Greeks were black, red, white, and yellow. Statues and buildings appear white. There couldn't possibly be any other color, could there? Excavations have unearthed



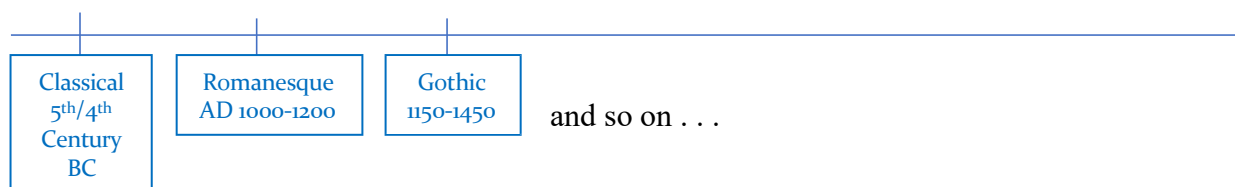
fragments of statues and buildings that have specks of color. More is seen through the use of ultraviolet light. Thanks to these windows into the past, so to speak, archaeologists and artists have been able to piece together what ancient Greek statues and buildings might have looked like in their original state. Did you notice the coloring of the recreation of the pediment? Did you see the red?

Here is a painting from 1868 by Lawrence Alma-Tadema depicting Phidias showing the frieze of the Parthenon to his friends. Even in 1868, it was believed a variety of colors would have been used.



**Choose any or all of the following activities.**

1. Create a timeline beginning with the period of Classical art and extending to Realism. Because each artistic style, until Rococo, existed for more than a hundred years, which would make this timeline extremely long, you can place 5<sup>th</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century BC close to 1000, 1000 close to 2000, etc. Here is an example.



2. Define *frieze* and *pediment*.
3. Lost-wax casting process (modern technique): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPgEIM-NbhQ>
4. Read about the method ancient Greeks used to obtain color pigments: <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/artist-paints/classical-colour-palette.htm>
5. Read more about the Doric and Ionic orders, as well as Corinthian, here: <https://beebreeders.com/the-3-orders-of-ancient-greek-architecture>.
6. Read an article about the discovery of colors in ancient Greek art: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/true-colors-17888/>.
7. Choose one or all the different forms of art we discussed—painting, architecture, pottery, or sculpture—and create your own piece. Remember to use a variety of colors if you are doing anything besides pottery. Pottery retained those four basic colors because of the firing method used at the time. So, purchase some clay and create a sculpture of a human doing something. Draw a frieze and color it. Maybe you know someone who has a pottery wheel you could use to create your own pottery. If you do, be sure to take your time painting it.
8. Enjoy the lesson on The Parthenon in the [Introduction to Architecture course](#) on SchoolhouseTeachers.com.
9. You can also learn more by accessing Ancient Greeks in the World Book eBook library available on SchoolhouseTeachers.com.
  - a. Begin here: <https://schoolhouseteachers.com/world-book/>.
  - b. World Book Resources by Library
  - c. Sign into World Book Online.
  - d. Choose eBooks, Cultures of the World, Ancient Greeks.

\*You should not read the entire book, but there are examples of ancient Greek art throughout. Pages 36–39 discuss architecture, pottery, painting, and sculpture. (Note: Page 38 contains the entirety of the figure shown on page 1 of this lesson. Use discretion.)

*SchoolhouseTeachers.com note: Parents should closely monitor children's use of YouTube and Wikipedia if you navigate away from the videos and articles cited in these lessons. We also recommend viewing the videos on a full screen setting in order to minimize your students' exposure to potentially offensive ads and inappropriate comments beside or beneath the video.*