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Subject: Year 5 History  
Sheet: Who were the Ancient Greeks?

## The Greek Theatre

Plays in Ancient Greece were part of many religious festivals. Nearly every city had a theatre because the Greeks enjoyed dancing and singing.

The theatres in Greece had no rooves. They were open air and built in a semi-circular shape. The audience sat on tiered stone which meant that each person had an excellent view of the circular dancing floor and could hear the actors well too.

There were two major types of Greek plays. There was tragedy which came from the word **tragos** meaning goat. Actors who performed a tragedy wore goat skins and danced like goats. A kid goat was given as a prize to the best performer.

The other type of play was comedy which came from the word **odé** meaning song.

Theatres in Greece could often hold more than 18,000 people.

The Athenian theatre focused on the God **Dionysus**. Dionysus was the God of fertility, wine and agriculture. In the theatre there was an altar for sacrifices dedicated to Dionysus.

The actors who performed the plays were men. It was necessary for them to play female parts too so they wore female costumes. To make the actors look taller and more impressive they wore wooden shoes with tall heels called **cothornus**. Costumes allowed the audience to know whether the actor was male, female, rich, poor, a priest or any other occupations.

The masks that the actors wore had large holes for the mouth and the eyes. This is so their voices could be amplified around the theatre.

If actors were performing in comedies they wore bright colours and if actors were performing in tragedies they wore dark colours.

