

Glossary

DATES AND PERIODS

Bronze Age: the (prehistoric) period, ca. 3200-1100 BC, in which ancient cultures learned to use bronze for tools and weapons

predynastic: time before the historic pharaohs (kings) and dynasties (their families) ruled Egypt

prehistoric: time before recorded (written) history: before 3100 BC in Egypt; before ca. 700 BC in Greece

Coptic: the period in which Christianity was dominant in Egypt, ca. AD 100-600

Roman: the period in which the Roman's controlled Greece (from 144 BC) and Egypt (from 31 BC)

GODS, GODDESSES AND MYTHIC CHARACTERS

(all names follow Greek spelling)

Achilles: the greatest Greek hero who fought at Troy; son of Peleus (king of Thessaly) and Thetis (a sea nymph)

Amazons: warrior women who lived in the East

Aphrodite: Greek goddess of love, sex and reproduction

Apollo: Greek god of reason, philosophy and music, often shown playing the kithara

Athena: Greek goddess of knowledge and crafts; patron goddess of Athens, where she was also a warrior goddess (and is shown with weapons)

Bes: Egyptian protector god against misfortune, especially in childbirth; shown as a dwarf

Dionysos: Greek god of the theatre fertility, wine; often shown with ivy and drinking cups (especially the kantharos)

Eros: 'love'; the Greek god of love; a son of Aphrodite; usually nude and winged, and often shown with a bow and arrow

griffin: winged creature with a bird's head and lion's body

(Gorgon) Medusa: the most scary of the three Gorgon sisters, with snakes for hair, who can turn one to stone at a glance; Perseus cut off her head, with the help of the gods

Herakles: the strongest Greek hero; son of Zeus and Alkmene, who became a god after accomplishing 12 (or more) tasks in service to King Eurystheus; often shown with a lion-scalp helmet and a club

Mnemosyne: 'memory'; the Greek goddess of memory; mother of the Muses, who inspire poets

Pegasus: winged horse

Ptah-Sokar: Egyptian god who protected the dead in transition to the afterlife

Sphinx: winged creature with the head of a woman (in Greece) and the body of a lion

Siren: sea creature with the head of a woman and the body of a bird, whose song lures sailors to their death (on the rocks)

Theseus: Greek hero who was a younger cousin (and imitator) of Herakles; son of King Aigeus (of Athens) and Aithra

Thoth: bird-headed Egyptian god who gave knowledge to humans and taught them to write; patron of scribes

Trojans: enemies of the Greeks who lived east of Greece and defended their homeland, Troy, in the Trojan War (as reported by Homer); usually shown in eastern dress, including pointed hats and shoes

Tyche: 'fortune'; the Greek goddess of fortune and luck, who became a city goddess (and therefore wears the city walls as a crown on her head)

Zeus: Greek king of the gods, always bearded and usually seated with a sceptre; god of the sky (he often holds a thunderbolt)

VASE SHAPES

alabastron (alabastra): tall cylindrical jar with a thin neck/mouth, used for oil and perfumes

amphora (amphorai): two-handled jug, sometimes with lid, used for liquids, including wine

aryballos (aryballoi): short jar with a thin neck/mouth and a small handle, used for oil and perfumes; usually suspended from strings to be attached at the wrists of athletes

hydria (hydriai): water jar, with three handles (two on the sides for carrying, and one at the back for pouring)

kylix (kylikes): shallow cup with two-handles, for drinking wine

kantharos (kantharoi): deep cup with two large loopy handles, for drinking wine

kothon (kothones): small bowl with incurving lip, for holding oil

krater (krateres): large bowl with two handles at the top, for mixing and serving wine and water

lekythos (lekythoi): slender jar with thin neck/mouth and a handle, used for oil and perfumes

oinochoe (oinochoai): jar with one-handle, used for serving wine

Panathenaic amphora: type of amphora (storage jar) awarded as a prize at the Panathenaic games at Athens

pyxis (pyxides): small container, usually with lid, used like a box, to hold things

OTHER

afterlife: a type of existence that follows life, whether in a spiritual or other capacity

agora: ancient Greek marketplace

amulet: lucky charm, usually in the form of a god or other sacred image, that would protect the wearer

andron: 'men's room', which was used as a reception and dining room in ancient Greek homes

aristocrat: person born into a position of wealth and power

astragaloi (a.k.a. knucklebones): bones from the joints of sheep and goats, used in Greece for games and to prophesy the future; symbols of luck

aulos: wind instrument played with a reed (like a modern oboe)

barbitos: stringed musical instrument from Lydia (the mountainous region of western Turkey), like a lyre with longer strings.

black-figure: technique of decorating pottery, in which the figures are painted in slip (dilute clay) fired black

bucchero: fine-grained black pottery made especially by the Etruscans in the 7th-5th centuries BC; technique in which pottery is fired without oxygen, which changes from the light colour of the clay to gray/black

burnish: technique involving smoothing the surface of a pot, before firing, with a stone or rag.

(archaeological) context: the physical location in which an artefact was found and the things found with it that tell us something about how it was used

cremate / cremation: method of disposal of a dead body through burning

delta: mouth of a river

deme: (Athenian) neighbourhood

democracy: a form of government in which the power is divided among the people; the Greek word 'demokratia' is derived from the words for power (kratos) and people (demos)

demotic: adjective meaning 'of the people'. With reference to a language, it indicates the language spoken by the (average) people.

dowry: financial and other resources (cloths, vessels and tools) given to a groom along with a bride by her family as part of the marriage agreement

drought: period of time when there is no rain and everything dries out

epigraphy / epigrapher: the study of words and letters inscribed or scratched into stone / a person who studies these words and letters

fabric: a term used by pottery scholars to refer to the particular material out of which a vase is made, whose characteristics (colour and texture as well as form of decoration) usually indicate where it was made

faience: a substance between glass and terracotta, white on the inside and bluish-green on the outside (when fired), that was widely used in Egypt, where it was symbolic of rebirth

heroic: about legendary heroes (whose powers and status are between those of gods and humans)

hieroglyphs: sacred Egyptian writing system which combines many small pictures

hoplite: Greek foot soldier, usually identifiable by his round shield

incise / incision: scratching in the surface of a pot or stone to create letters or decorations

inhume / inhumation: method of disposal of a dead body by burying it in the ground

kiln: oven in which pottery is fired or 'cooked'

kithara: Greek stringed musical instrument capable of playing at least two octaves

kline (klinai): couches on which ancient Greeks ate and drank, while lying down, especially at the symposion

knucklebones (a.k.a. astragaloi): bones from joints of sheep and goats, used in Greece for games and to prophesy the future; symbols of luck

kohl: black makeup made of ground lead, soot, and oil; used (in Egypt) to protect and emphasise the shape of eyes

loomweight: lump of stone or clay, pierced with a hole, that weighs down one or several threads on a loom, so that they can be woven (other threads laid across them)

lyre: the simplest Greek stringed musical instrument, capable of playing one octave; usually made with a tortoise shell as a sound box

necropolis (necropoleis): 'city of the dead', a burial ground, usually located on the outskirts of a city

Panhellenic: 'all Greek', referring to events, heroes, or gods that are shared by all groups of Greeks

pantheon: 'all gods'; the family of (Greek) gods

papyrus (papyri): sheets on which Egyptians and Greeks wrote; these were made by drying and flattening the papyrus reeds that grew in the rivers. The name papyrus is remembered in the English word 'paper'.

Parthenos: 'virgin'; an epithet (nickname) used for Athena at Athens, where she was worshipped in the Temple of Athena Parthenos (Parthenon)

Promachos: 'ready for war', an epithet (nickname) used for Athena

polis (poleis): city state; the basic unit of a self-governing Greek community

red-figure: technique of decorating pottery in which the figures are left the colour of the clay (usually red) and the background is painted in slip (dilute clay) fired black

Sam Wide: cartoonish style of Corinthian pottery from the 4th century BC decorated in an outline technique; named after the Dutch scholar who first identified this distinctive style

scribe: official writers who kept accounts and wrote letters

scarab: Egyptian sacred beetle, of which images were worn as amulets, used as a symbol of rebirth

slip: dilute fine-grained clay used to 'paint' the surface of the clay

Spartiate: warrior from Sparta's upper class

spindle whorl: ball or disk with a hole through it that is placed at the end of a spindle (rod on which thread is spun to make fabric)

strigil: metal instrument used to scrape oil, sweat and dirt off of the body, as a form of cleaning

symposium (symposia): formal social event where male Greek aristocrats met with (political) friends

temenos: sacred space or sanctuary in which a Greek god is worshipped; usually the area around a Greek temple

terracotta: 'cooked earth' or clay, a material out of which pottery and tiles, among other objects, were made in the Mediterranean

thymiaterion: incense burner

trireme: Greek warship

(u)shabti: human figurines buried with mummies, which substituted as servants to attend to the dead in Egypt

votive: gift to the gods, usually placed by worshipper(s) in the place (temple or temenos / sanctuary) where the god is worshipped