Greek Contributions to Civilization: The Hellenistic Period

Alexander the Great and Hellenistic Culture

The Hellenistic Period starts with the conquests of Alexander the Great and ends late in the 1st century B.C. Hellenistic culture fused Greek with Egyptian, Middle Eastern and Eastern cultures.

Alexander and Hellenistic Culture

In the lands he conquered, Alexander

- introduced Greek language, literature and art;
- founded many cities to serve as centers of Greek culture;
- In Egypt, he founded Alexandria. Famed for its marble buildings, museum and library, it was the greatest Hellenistic city.

Philosophy

Discontented with the old ideas and old gods, Hellenistic peoples sought new philosophies to guide them in their daily living.

Diogenes (412-323 B.C.) the leading Cynic, taught that, to achieve contentment, individuals should practice self-control and independence. He rejected society's accepted values – wealth, power, pleasure, social position, and patriotism. Our word cynic describes one who sneeringly distrusts people's motives, attributing their actions wholly to self interest.

Philosophy

 Zeno (342-270 B.C.), the founder of Stoicism, urged individuals to live according to reason and be indifferent to pleasure or pain. Our word stoic means :one who calmly accepts pleasure without rejoicing and endures pain without flinching."

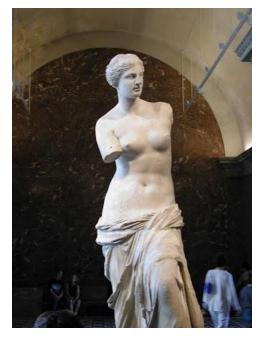
Philosophy

• **Epicurus** (341-270 B.C.) believed that people should seek pleasure and happiness. However, he emphasized that pleasures should be temperately chosen to attain a balanced, moral life. (Today, an epicure is "one who displays a highly refined taste in eating, drinking and other pleasures.")

Sculpture

Hellenistic sculptors carved realistic statues, including the Venus de Milo, the Death of Laocoon, the Dying Gaul and the Winged Victory

of Samothrace.







Science and Mathematics

- Aristarchus (310-230 B.C.), and astronomer, concluded that the earth revolves around the sun.
- **Euclid** (about 300 B.C), a mathematician, systematized the subject matter of geometry.
- Archimedes (287-212 B.C.), a mathematician and physicist, discovered important principles regarding the lever, the pulley, and specific gravity.
- **Eratosthenes** (276-195 B.C.), a geographer, believed the earth to be round and accurately estimated its circumference.