

Knowledge Map: Homeric World: Life in the Mycenaean Age (1)

This component is based around life in ancient Greece just over three thousand years ago. The Culture half of the topic covers the ancient civilisation known as the Mycenaean Age. You will study some of the main Mycenaean sites and the items that made these places so remarkable. From tiny objects like rings, to huge, city walls, you will study a variety of source material to find out what life was like at the time.

Palaces			Armour and Weapons		
1	Size of Palaces	All Mycenaean cities were ruled by kings, and as such they had palaces. By modern standards, these palaces were small, but they did occupy a large percentage of the city.	12	Changing Nature of Warfare	Undoubtedly, war and battles were a part of Mycenaean life judging by the evidence we have, but it also shows that the nature of warfare was changing during this period, especially the types of weapons and armour used.
2	Political Centres	There is clear evidence that palaces contained rooms for official documents, for meetings to take place, shrines, potteries, oil presses, armouries, and storerooms.	13	Shields	At the beginning of the Mycenaean Age, shields were large. They were either a figure of eight shape or a tower shield. A tower shield usually went from neck to ankles. These were replaced by smaller shields during the Mycenaean age.
3	The Megaron	The single most important room in the palace. This was often on the highest part of the city. It looked out over the whole of the city. It was a central part of the palace which was used for feasts, amongst many other things.	14	Evidence of Shields	In the <i>Iliad</i> Homer describes the hero Ajax's shield as being made of eight layers of leather and one of bronze. Also, Agamemnon's shield is described as being able to cover a man it is so big. Frescoes and the Lion Hunt Dagger show tower shields that reach to people's ankles.
4	Design of Megaron	The Megaron was similar in shape to a Greek temple, in that it was rectangular, it had an entrance porch with two columns, with a further room called a vestibule . The megaron usually contained one or more courtyards.	15	Helmets	The earliest helmets are described in the <i>Iliad</i> , as being made of a leather cap, covered with felt, onto which boars' tusks were put on as they were extremely strong. Each cap would need at least ten wild boars to make it.
5	Hearth	The most important feature of the megaron was the hearth . The hearth was a stone area on which a fire could be lit for religious purposes or cooking. Around this would have been the famous four pillars which supported the roof. The smoke would have escaped through a hole in the roof.	16	Evidence of Helmets	A number of helmets have been found. A boar's tusk helmet has been found from Mycenae, and a further one from Dendra, near Argos which even has bronze cheek pieces in it. Mycenaean wall paintings show plumed helmets as well.
6	King's Throne	The megaron would also have housed the king's throne.		The Warrior Vase	The Warrior Vase is from Mycenae and shows the development of helmets and shields over time. It depicts a series of soldiers in a line. It is one of our prescribed sources.
Hunting			17		
7	Animal Hunting	It was an important activity in the Mycenaean Age. As most of Greece was unsuitable for farmland, and flat land was used to grow crops, hunting animals was essential if people were to eat meat.			
8	Evidence of Hunting	The best evidence of hunting comes from frescoes . The frescoes found in megarons showed hunting scenes.	18	Spears	Spears were a common type of weapon used in this age. They consisted of a wooden handle into which a bronze spearhead would be fitted. As the period went on, spears became shorter and more throwable.
	The Lion Hunt Dagger	The most famous piece of evidence comes from a dagger blade showing a lion hunt. It was found in Grave Circle A. The detailed artwork on it suggests it was an ornamental dagger. The scene depicts the hunting of a lion. It is one of our Prescribed Sources.	19	Swords	Many swords have been found in Mycenaean tombs, some with very elaborately carved handles. Early swords were made of a wooden handle covered in gold. They also became shorter as the period progressed.
9			20	Armour	The earliest suit of armour in Europe comes from the Mycenaean Age. A breastplate made from bronze that covers the back as well, was found at Dendra, near Argos. Armour at this point generally consisted of bronze plates held together or hinged using leather straps.
10	Cups from Vapheio	Two cups from Vapheio, near Sparta, are further evidence of hunting. They show the capture of bulls.	21	Bows and Arrows	Bows and arrows were certainly used in the Mycenaean period, but mainly for hunting. Homer even describes the bow as a cowardly weapon in the <i>Iliad</i> .
11	Signet Ring	A signet ring found in Grave Circle A in Mycenae shows a miniature scene of a hunter and driver on a chariot, armed with a bow, and chasing deer.	Chariots		
Tier 3 Vocabulary			22	Use of Chariots	Chariots were used for a variety of reasons in the Mycenaean Age: for hunting purposes, warriors were driven to the centre of fighting in battle, and for sporting races.
Megaron	The central hall of a palace used for banquets, worship, and meetings.		23	Earliest Chariots	The earliest representation of a chariot is from the stelai of Grave Circle A at Mycenae. It shows a man on a simple two-wheeled box chariot in a race.
Vestibule	Room that follows the entrance/porch to the megaron.		24	Fresco at Tiryns	One of the frescoes at Tiryns shows a chariot being used simply for transport and is different from the chariot shown in the signet ring found (X). The chariot is more spacious and covered in red fabric or animal hide.
Fresco	A painting originally made on damp plaster in which the colours become fixed as the plaster dries.				