

Knowledge Map: Homeric World: Tombs, Graves, and Burial (Types of Graves)

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.

Burial Customs			Grave Types: Tholos and Chamber Tombs		
1	Burial Customs	We know a lot about death and burial from Topic 7 on the Myth and Religion Paper. The preparation of the body and the funeral processions did not differ greatly in Mycenae but there are some additional things to be aware of.	15	Tumulus Tombs	These pre-dated tholos tombs and were what tholos tombs were developed from. A tumulus tomb is a raised mound of earth under which bodies were buried.
2	Jewellery	The body, if wealthy, would have been adorned with jewellery. We know this as evidence clearly shows skeletons adorned with all manner of jewellery. The body was almost definitely clothed.	16	Tholos Tombs: Structure	Tholos tombs differ greatly in structure to cist and shaft tombs in that they are built out of stone rather dug out of the earth.
3	Drink Offering	A drink offering to the gods would almost certainly have been made as cups have been found at the entrance to tholos tombs . This is known as a libation .	17		The domed roof is the most distinctive aspect of the tomb. The ones in Mycenae were the highest domes in the world for over a thousand years.
4	Animal Bones	Animal bones and shellfish shells have also been found suggesting a meal may have been had in honour of the dead. It may also suggest an element of animal sacrifice.	18		The walls of the tomb were built of stone (usually from the excavated site, and the earth that was dug out to form the tomb was then placed on top of the roof.
5	Grave and Burial	The body would have been buried and then a raised mound would have covered the area so it is visible from distance. A stele could well have been placed on top. The mound would have been dug up again for another burial.	19		These tombs were for the most important members of society and may have even been built during their lifetime.
6	Burial Caskets	There is evidence that some people were buried in clay caskets. These caskets would have been painted and these offer an insight into the customs surrounding a funeral procession as many depict these scenes.	20		The dromos is the long passageway that forms the entrance to the tomb and is built from stone as well. Large stones would have been placed at the entrance to block the entrance.
7	Role of Women	The evidence from the burial caskets show women playing the more prominent role in burials. It is they who are depicted near the body with their arms raised in grief and in elaborate clothing.	21		The entrance to any tholos tomb would have been richly decorated. The Treasury of Atreus at Mycenae has survived and has two green limestone columns with a zigzag pattern framing the entrance. Above the entrance would be a large stone and a triangle above that to relieve the pressure on the stone.
Grave Types: Cist and Shaft Graves			22	Chamber Tombs	From the fourteenth century BC, less important Mycenaean nobles were buried in chamber tombs .
8	Cist and Shaft Graves	In Mycenae, two types of graves have been discovered: Cist and Shaft graves . They are different in structure and use.	23		A chamber tomb is dug from rock in which more than one body was buried in a chamber – usually a family tomb. They were similar in structure to tholos tombs with a dromos, but differed in that they were dug from rock.
9	Cist Grave: Structure	Cist graves are the most common type of grave found in Mycenaean Age. It is a shallow grave dug in the earth, and the sides were covered in slabs of stone. A pile of stones was then placed at the bottom for the body to lie in.			
10	Cist Grave: Body	The body was usually laid in a curved position rather than laid out flat like in modern day graves. This was due to the size of the grave.			
11	Cist Graves: Use	Cist graves were intended for single use only. A series of cist graves may be covered in one mound, and it would be this mound that is opened up for a further grave to be added.			
12	Shaft Grave: Structure	Shaft graves have also been discovered. It is larger and deeper than a cist grave, usually being 2.5m deep and graves were stacked on top of each other. Low rubble walls were built at the bottom with a roof support above each grave.			
13	Shaft Grave: Body	In shaft graves , bodies were usually laid on their backs and at full length due to the bigger size of the grave.			
14	Shaft Grave: Use	Multiple bodies could be buried in a shaft grave . Each grave is essentially stacked on top of another, but there are examples of multiple bodies sharing one grave within the shaft.			

Tier 3 Vocabulary

Tholos Tomb	A large domed tomb in the shape of an igloo, roughly circular in its floor space – also known as a beehive tomb.
Libation	A drink offering poured in honour of the gods.
Stele	Stone slabs often with patterns or images carved on them most commonly used as tombstones.
Cist Grave	A grave in the form of a stone-lined pit, dug into the earth, and covered up.
Shaft Grave	A grave in which a deep shaft was dug and a space created at the bottom for a body, often re-used for later burials.
Tumulus Tombs	A raised mound of earth under which bodies were buried.
Dromos	A passageway leading to the tholos tomb.
Chamber Tombs	A tomb, dug from rock, in which a body or bodies would be buried in a chamber.