

GREEK TEMPLES

The temple was the dwelling place of the god or goddess to whom it was dedicated and housed his or her statue.

Temples were thought to represent the architectural ideal and merged structural simplicity with harmonious proportions. The proportions were governed by the module – the average radius¹ of the column – which determined the height of the temple. The horizontal entablatures were slightly bowed making the centre slightly higher than the ends.

The sculpted figures, which often had a didactic purpose, were placed on the secondary architectural features: the tympanum on the pediment and the metopes on the architrave.

The temples were painted: the background was generally red with the prominent features in blue to form a contrast.

The chief building material was stone: limestone tufa (often shell limestone) and marble from the quarries of Pentelikon, Thassos and Naxos. The stone blocks

were quarried with a pickax² and extracted with the aid of metal or wooden wedges³. These blocks were often shaped on the spot into architectural elements: columns, capitals, models of statues.

In large scale construction the blocks of stone were cut and placed in various ways according to the purpose of the building and the means and time available. No bonding material was added.

The temple was intended as a sculptural unit. Its small interior was not a place for public worship but housed the cult statue of a deity. Ceremonies took place outside.



GLOSSARY

- 1 straight line from the centre of a circle to any point on its circumference
- 2 a pick, especially with one end of the head pointed and the other end with a chisel edge
- 3 pieces of wood or metal that is thick at one end and narrows at the other to a sharp edge, used to split wood or rock



DEFINITIONS

● The following terms are all related to the semantic field “Greek temples”. Match each term with the correct definition, then find the English equivalents.

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|--------------|--|
| ① Fregio | Ⓐ Parte superiore della colonna, su cui poggia l’architrave, avente funzione decorativa |
| ② Architrave | Ⓑ Fusto della colonna |
| ③ Metopa | Ⓒ Fascia orizzontale ornamentale compresa fra l’architrave e la cornice |
| ④ Timpano | Ⓓ Decorazione del fregio nell’ordine dorico, posta tra metopa e metopa |
| ⑤ Capitello | Ⓔ Spazio compreso tra i triglifi del fregio generalmente decorato |
| ⑥ Fusto | Ⓕ Spazio triangolare compreso tra la cornice e i due spioventi del frontone di un tempio |
| ⑦ Triglifo | Ⓖ Elemento della trabeazione che poggia sopra i capitelli delle colonne |

ACTIVITIES



TEXT COMPLETION

ACTIVITIES



- Complete the following text about the Parthenon with the words given: long – roof – opened – ivory – mosque – enemies – gods – painted – hill – church – marble – details.

The Doric style reached its zenith in the Parthenon, a ① temple dedicated to Athena, the patron goddess of Athens. This building, completed in 432 BC, was erected at the highest point on the Acropolis, the ② overlooking the city of Athens, and became the symbol of the enlightened city-state under its famous statesman, Pericles.

Eight columns wide and seventeen columns ③ the Parthenon's structure embodies the Greek ideals of harmony and balance. Made of 20,000 tons of marble, the Parthenon was designed by the architects Ictinus and Callicrates to house a huge ④ statue of Athena, adorned with more than a ton of gold, the work of the sculptor Phidias. The ceiling was of wood, with ⑤ and gilded decoration. Light was admitted, as normally in Greek temples, only through the doorway when the great doors were ⑥.

Originally, sculpted figures formed a continuous marble frieze depicting the procession of horsemen and maidens to honour Athena. Sculpted panels in 92 metopes showed serene, idealized figures of ⑦ struggling with various ⑧ like centaurs.

In temple design the Greeks stuck to a basic format developed in wood structures. Yet they constantly refined the ⑨ until, in the Parthenon, they achieved a golden mean that has never been surpassed. In the late sixth century, the Parthenon was converted into a Christian ⑩, and from about 1204, under the Frankish Dukes of Athens, it served as a Latin church, until in 1458 it was converted by the Turkish conquerors into a ⑪.

Today, only its skeleton remains. In 1687 an explosion caused by the Venetian army brought down the ⑫ and much of the structure. Then, more than a century later, Lord Elgin moved most of the relief sculptures to the British Museum.

(Adapted from *The Annotated Arch*, by Carole Strickland, Andrews McMeel, 2001)

FILL IN THE CHART

- Fill in the following chart with information about the Parthenon.

①	BUILDING TYPE	
②	LOCATION	
③	DATE	
④	ARCHITECTS	
⑤	MATERIALS	
⑥	STYLE	
⑦	SCULPTURES	
⑧	LATER USES	
⑨	REMAINS	