Earliest Greek Civilizations: The Mycenaean and Minoans

Directions: Read the following passage and complete the prompt.

Many cultures settled and developed in Greece. Two of the earliest were the Minoans and Mycenaean. By 2000 BCE the Minoans had built an advanced society on the island of Crete. Crete lay south of the Aegean in the eastern Mediterranean. Later, the Mycenaean built towns on the Greek mainland. These two civilizations influenced the entire Aegean region and helped shape later cultures in Greece.

The Minoans

Because they lived on an island, the Minoans spent much of their time at sea. They were among the best shipbuilders of their time. Minoan ships carried goods such as wood, olive oil, and pottery all around the eastern Mediterranean. They traded these goods for copper, gold, silver, and jewels.

Although Crete’s location was excellent for Minoan traders, its geography had its dangers. Sometime in the 1600s BCE a huge volcano erupted just north of Crete. This eruption created a giant wave that flooded much of Crete. In addition, the eruption threw up huge clouds of ash, ruining crops and burying cities. This eruption may have led to the end of the Minoan civilization.

The Mycenaean

Although they lived in what is now Greece and influenced Greek society, historians don’t consider the Minoans to be Greek. This is because the Minoans did not speak the Greek language. The first people to speak Greek, and therefore the first to be considered Greek, were the Mycenaean.

While the Minoans were sailing the Mediterranean, the Mycenaean were building fortresses all over the Greek mainland. The largest and most powerful fortress was Mycenae, after which the Mycenaean are named.

By the mid-1400s, Minoan society had declined. That decline allowed the Mycenaean to take over Crete and become the major traders in the eastern Mediterranean. They set up colonies in northern Greece and Italy from which they shipped goods to markets from around the Mediterranean and Black seas.

The Mycenaean didn’t think trade had to be conducted peacefully. They often attacked other kingdoms. Some historians think the Mycenaean attacked the city of Troy, possibly starting the legendary Trojan War.

Mycenaean society began to fall apart in the 1200s BCE when invaders from Europe swept into Greece. At the same time, earthquakes destroyed many cities. As Mycenaean civilization crumbled, Greece slid into a period of war and disorder.
Which civilization, Minoan or Mycenaean, would you rather be a part of?

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<th>Reasons you want to be part of that civilization</th>
<th>Reasons you do NOT want to be part of the other civilization</th>
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Answer the above prompt question in a paragraph. Explain at least three reasons for your choice. Don’t just list your reasons, explain them. Use your lists above to help you. Be sure to pick one or the other. **DO NOT GIVE REASONS BOTH WOULD BE GOOD CHOICES.**