During the 800s and 700s BCE, the Greeks formed a number of independent city-states. Polis is the Greek word for “city-state.” A polis is usually developed around a fort. As a city grew up around the fort, the idea of the polis came to mean the fort, its city, and the small farming villages that surrounded the city and supplied its food.

Ancient Greeks were very connected to their polis. Over time, the polis came to represent the center of Greek identity, and its inhabitants were intensely loyal to it. If the city-state was unsuccessful, they saw themselves as unsuccessful. If the polis was thriving, they felt like they had “bragging rights” over other city-states. The Greeks also understood the polis as an absolutely independent and self-sufficient community. Frequently, economic or political competition would separate one polis from another.

However different one polis was from another, the Greek city-states shared several characteristics. First, they covered a small area of land. For example, Athens was no larger than the state of Rhode Island and Sparta was smaller than Connecticut. Yet these city-states were very large compared to the others. Second, most city-states had a population of fewer than 10,000 people, most of whom were either slaves or other non-citizens. Only free adult males had citizenship rights. Third, in most city-states the original fort was built on an acropolis, or hill. Temples to worship the many gods and other public buildings also stood on the acropolis. Finally, each city-state had an agora, or marketplace.

The agora also served as the main public meeting place. Citizens met in the agora to discuss common issues and debate matters facing the city-state.

The polis gave ancient Greeks a sense of identity. Greek citizens believed that they owed loyalty to their polis. They loved their city-state and were often willing to die for it.

The Greeks placed great value on the political independence of each polis. Each city-state formed its own kind of government and laws. Each city-state also had its own calendar, money, and system of weights and measurements.

However, all ancient Greeks had certain things in common. They spoke the same language. They also tended to regard people who did not speak Greek as barbarians, or people who were wild, uncivilized, or savage-like. Lastly, many shared the same religious ideas, worshipped the same Gods, celebrated the same holidays, and participated in festivals together.
“Polis” means __________________, they were originally settled around a
__________, and Greeks were intensely ________________ to their polis.

Each polis had an ________________, which was the
location of the original ____________, and where ________
were built to __________ the gods.

The _______________ was typically built upon
a ______ and was well protected!

Non-Greeks were considered _________________. all city-states
were very ____________, and all Greeks spoke the same
__________.

Only adult __________ had ______________ rights.

Non-Greeks were considered _________________, all city-states
were very ____________, and all Greeks spoke the same
__________.

Each polis had around ________________, but that included
_________ and other _________________.

Each polis had a different _________________, set of
__________, and its own ________________ and money!

Each polis had an ________________, which was also known as a
_______________________. Here, citizens ________ to discuss
______________, shop, and ____________.