

LIFE IN SPARTA

By the Classical Period, Sparta had become the strongest military power in Greece: its soldiers were celebrated for their bravery throughout the Greek world. But because the Spartans concentrated their efforts on military superiority, the artistic life of the people never had a chance to develop. Artists and philosophers were actively discouraged.



A bronze figure of a Spartan girl, dated around 530BC.

Spartan girls competed in athletic events, wearing short tunics. This shocked the Athenians, who didn't let women take part in sports.

HEALTH AND FITNESS

The Spartans valued good health and physical strength above all else, because all the men were destined to become soldiers. Each new baby was examined by officials and, if it showed signs of weakness, it was left outside to die. Women were expected to keep fit by training in athletic events, so that they would give birth to healthy babies.

This misty and mountainous landscape is at Mistra in Sparta.

A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Until the age of 20, boys were educated by the state. Then they had to join the army and were elected to one of Sparta's military clubs. Soldiers lived, ate and slept at the club's barracks - where life was cold, hard and uncomfortable. Men did not usually marry until they were 30 and, even then, were very rarely allowed to go home to see their families.

Many Spartan sculptures, like this bronze figure, depict warriors.

All soldiers were given land, and helots to work it, by the state. This left them free to devote themselves to the army. Part of the produce that came from their land was kept to support the soldiers' families. The rest went to the barracks to feed the soldiers.

