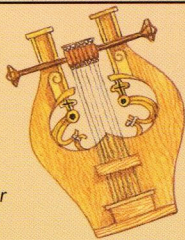


WINE AND DISCUSSION

The most stimulating part of a dinner party was called a *symposium*. This was when the food was cleared away and the guests concentrated on serious conversation. The discussions usually covered weighty topics, such as politics, philosophy or morals. They drank wine, which was mixed with water in a large vase called a *krater* and then ladled into cups. Three offerings of wine, known as *libations*, were made to the gods before the guests themselves began drinking.

A kithara, an elaborate stringed instrument rather like a lyre, and a timpanon, an early tambourine



MUSIC, POETRY AND DANCING

The symposium was usually a solemn occasion, but at some dinner parties this part of the evening was much more relaxed. Guests sometimes played musical instruments, sang songs, recited poems or told jokes. At some parties, professional dancers, musicians and acrobats were hired to amuse the guests.

This scene showing after-dinner activities comes from a 5th century BC drinking cup. One musician is playing the double pipes, an instrument seen in many Greek paintings.



GAMES

Although most Greeks worked very hard, they seem to have had time to play games. Several board games, similar to chess, were popular. Apart from the athletic competitions (see page 228), the Greeks also played more informal sports, including a type of hockey, using a ball and sticks.

Some people also enjoyed cruel sports, such as cat or dog fights. Games such as dice, or knuckle-bones, in which small animal bones were thrown like dice, were played at home or in special gaming houses.



These pottery figures show two women playing a game called knuckle-bones.



INTERNET LINK

For links where you can watch a movie about Greek parties and listen to a poem, go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com