Background of Ancient Greece

- 1100 B.C. to 323 B.C.
- Refers to areas of Hellenic culture.

Four periods:
- Greek Dark Ages - Social structures and hierarchy were forgotten and oral traditions were developed.
- Archaic Years - Republics were introduced.
- Classical Years - Only men were allowed to participate in events.
- Hellenistic Years - Development of cities led to women gaining more rights.

- Only men were allowed to participate in certain activities such as politics, law, or the military.
- Women were to stay within the house, as stated in the poem "The Good Woman": "Good women must abide within the house; those whom we meet abroad are nothing worth."
- Divided into states with their own ways of ruling; each had its own government and laws but shared the same religion and language.

Gender Roles (Women)

1. Gender roles in ancient Greece were extremely different back then. Women and men had their respective roles in their societies.
2. Women were supposed to have kids and stay home to take care of the family and the household. Everywhere they went, they were accompanied by men because if they weren't, the women were seen as a lower, less respected class.
3. Women didn't really have any rights. The men had all the power over them. In fact, this system is called a patriarchy, when the father of the oldest male figure is the head of the household. Women were not even allowed to eat and sleep in the same room with men.
4. Rich women often had to take care of their slaves as well as their own children and the household chores.

How did Greek Men and Women Worship Their Gods?

- Ancient Greeks' religious practice was largely based on a give-and-take approach; people believed that gods and goddesses would provide them with protection in return for their worship and sacrifices.
- Greek societies were strictly male-dominant. Their belief in gender separation derives from their belief of human bodies and that men and women are physically (biologically) different. Thus, women were largely restricted, but they did have a voice in religion.
- Women had special roles in ancient ritual ceremonies. Because their voices were higher in tone than men's, women whispered a cry called ologe when an animal or a person was sacrificed by the priest’s knife.
- Usually, men prayed to their gods by standing straight and raising their hands up high, but women prayed by kneeling down in order to express a close relationship with gods and goddesses.

Gender Roles (Men)

1. Men's role in society was to keep the family stable, both financially and in general. For example, he had to teach his wife how to properly take care of the household so that she could keep the house in order when he wasn't around.
2. Men usually worked as farmers or businessmen or for the high officials. At a young age, men were educated and trained for their future careers, while girls stayed home with their mothers and learned how to cook and clean.
3. Patriarchy and misogyny go together, for they both show the subordination and dominance towards women (Katz, p. 72). Women in ancient Greece were (1) regarded with contempt, (2) secluded, and (3) uneducated (Katz, p. 74). These were the ways in which men and women were supposed to act and behave according to society at the time.
4. Only men were allowed to participate in the Olympic Games, while women had their own games in honor of their goddess Hera.

Religion

- Religion was extremely important for Ancient Greeks. People believed that it was their duty and moral responsibility to worship gods and goddesses, for if they didn’t, they feared that their gods might cause natural catastrophes or spread diseases to punish people. Thus, the citizens built temples at the heart of their towns to worship their gods and sacrificed animals for the well-being of their families and communities.
- However, in Homer’s The Iliad, he wrote, “...they did sacrifice each man to one of the everlasting gods, praying for escape from death and the tumult of battle.”
- Men and women each had special roles in their ritual ceremonies. Women learned special dances that they had to perform in festivals at a young age, while men went to school.
- Although women had basically no rights, they were not segregated by gender in religion.

References

Gale Virtual Reference Library. Web. 23 Nov. 2014. Ancient Greek Religion