

Lasting Achievements

A classical age usually has two important characteristics:

- The society reaches a high level of cultural achievement, with advances in technology and science and the creation of impressive works of art.
- The society leaves a strong legacy for future ages, not only in the region where it is located but also in other parts of the world.

In this feature, you will study similarities and differences among five classical ages that you learned about in Unit 2.



◀ Greece

Pericles, shown at left, led the city-state of Athens during its golden age. The ancient Greeks of Athens and other cities created art, literature, philosophy, and political institutions that have influenced the world for thousands of years.

Greece
750–300 B.C.

Rome
500 B.C.–A.D. 476

1200 B.C.

1000

800

600

400

200

Olmec
1200–400 B.C.

Olmec ▶

Some scholars theorize that the sculpture at right shows the face of an **Olmec ruler**. The Olmec people left no written records. Even so, their civilization influenced the art, religion, architecture, and political structure of peoples who followed them in Mesoamerica.



Han China ▶

Liu Bang, shown at right, seized control of China and founded the Han Dynasty. He and his successors ruled a vast empire, which saw the growth and spread of Chinese culture. Even today, many Chinese call themselves “the people of Han,” a tribute to the lasting cultural impact of this period.



Han China
202 B.C.–A.D. 220



◀ Rome

The emperor **Augustus**, whose statue is shown at left, ruled for about 40 years during Rome's 200-year golden age. First a republic and then an empire, Rome controlled the Mediterranean region and a large part of Europe. Roman government, law, society, art, literature, and language still influence much of the world, as does the Christian religion Rome eventually adopted.

A.D. 200

400

600

Gupta India
A.D. 320–535



◀ Gupta India

Chandragupta II, shown on this coin, was one of the rulers of India's Gupta Empire. They oversaw an age of peace, prosperity, and artistic creativity. During this time, Hinduism and Buddhism took full form in India and spread through trade to other regions.







Comparing & Contrasting

1. Which of these societies controlled the most territory? the least? Explain how the size of a society's territory might affect its ability to leave a legacy.
2. Which classical ages had religion as an important part of their legacy? Why does religion have such an impact on societies?



Cultural Achievements

These five classical ages had impressive cultural achievements. Their beliefs are still studied—and in some cases followed—today. Their art and architecture are counted among the world’s treasures. Their advances in science and technology paved the way for later discoveries.

	Greece	Rome	Gupta India
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Greeks worshiped many gods who behaved in very human ways. • Philosophers used reason to understand the world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rome adopted many of the Greek gods, but usually changed and added to them. • Later, Rome adopted Christianity and helped spread it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hinduism became a more personal religion and gained followers. • A more popular form of Buddhism developed and spread.
Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sculpture portrayed ideal beauty, and at a later period, moved toward realism—as shown by this Roman copy of a later Greek statue. <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romans modeled sculpture after Greek statues and developed more realistic sculpture. They also made beautiful mosaics. <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gupta statues were of Hindu gods and the Buddha, such as this figure. <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>
Science and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientists made advances in astronomy and mathematics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineers developed domes and arches and built superb roads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholars made discoveries in astronomy, mathematics, and medicine.
Architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greek buildings show balance and symmetry; columns and pedestals were often used. <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roman advances include domes and arches, such as those in the Colosseum. <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hindu temples like this temple of Vishnu at Deogarh began to have pyramidal roofs. <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>

Han China	Olmec
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Han adopted the ethical system of Confucius as the basis for government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Olmec worshiped a jaguar spirit. They built religious centers with pyramids.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Han made intricate bronzes like this figure of a galloping horse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Olmec carved giant stone heads and small figurines like this ceremonial object. 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Han invented paper, various farming tools, and watermills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Olmec moved heavy stone for monuments without use of the wheel.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Han buildings were wooden and none survive. This ceramic model of a three-story wooden tower shows Han styles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This step pyramid at the Zapotec site in Monte Albán reflects Olmec architectural influence. 

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts

- Drawing Conclusions** Which of the art pieces shown here are religious in subject and which are not?
- Contrasting** How were the beliefs of Han China different from the other societies that had classical ages?

“... to the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome”

Edgar Allan Poe, from “To Helen”

“The inhabitants [of the Gupta Empire] are rich and prosperous, and vie with one another in the practice of benevolence and righteousness.”

Fa Xian, from *The Travels of Fa Xian*

Comparing & Contrasting

- Which of the societies seemed to be more interested in mathematical and scientific theories? Which seemed to be more interested in practical technology?
- What functions did monumental buildings fill for these societies? Explain whether the functions were similar or different.



Legacy of Classical Ages

The societies of the classical ages lasted for many centuries. In the end, though, they faded from the world scene. Still, some of their achievements have had an enduring impact on later societies.

Architecture

The Smolny Institute (below left) built in the early 1800s in St. Petersburg, Russia, reflects Greek and Roman architectural ideas. A modern hotel in South Africa (below right) recalls Olmec style.



DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

Compare these buildings to the Greek, Roman, and Olmec structures on pages 254–255. What similarities do you see?

Religion

Buddhism and Roman Catholicism are still widely practiced today, with millions of followers in countries far from the lands where the religions originated. The Buddhist monks (below left) are praying in Seoul, South Korea. Pope John Paul II (below right), head of the Catholic Church, greets nuns and other believers who visit Rome from around the world.



DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

What similarity do you see in the religious legacies of Rome and Gupta India?

Government

The classical ages studied in Unit 2 laid foundations for government that influenced later times—even today. Read about three examples of their contributions.

PRIMARY SOURCE

Pericles

In a famous speech known as the Funeral Oration, the Athenian leader Pericles described the advantages of democracy.

[Our government] favors the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all; . . . if no social standing, advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity [ability], class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition.

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

According to Pericles, what values did Athens stand for?

INTERACTIVE

SECONDARY SOURCE

Rhoads Murphey

In this passage from *A History of Asia*, historian Rhoads Murphey examines the lasting impact of the government of Han China.

Confucianism was more firmly established as the official orthodoxy and state ideology, and the famous Chinese imperial civil service system recruited men of talent, schooled in classical Confucian learning, to hold office through competitive examination regardless of their birth. . . . In China, the original Han ideal endured through the rise and fall of successive dynasties and, with all its imperfections, built a long and proud tradition of power combined with service that is still very much alive in China.

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

What qualities of Han government still influence China today?

INTERACTIVE

SECONDARY SOURCE

INTERACTIVE

Henry C. Boren

In this excerpt from his book *Roman Society*, historian Henry C. Boren discusses the permanent legacy of Roman law.

The most imitated and studied code of law in history is the formulation by a group of lawyers . . . under the eastern Roman emperor Justinian. . . . This code served as a model for many of the nations of western Europe in the modern age and also for South Africa, Japan, and portions of Canada and the United States. Indirectly the principles of the Roman law, though perhaps not the procedures, have also strongly affected the development of the Anglo-Saxon common law, which is the basis of the legal systems in most English-speaking nations.

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

According to this historian, how has Roman law affected the world?

Comparing & Contrasting

1. How did the idea of merit play a part in the governments of both Athens and Han China?
2. How is the U.S. government similar to each of the governments described in the excerpts?
3. What were some of the different forces that spread the ideas of these classical ages to many regions of the world?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

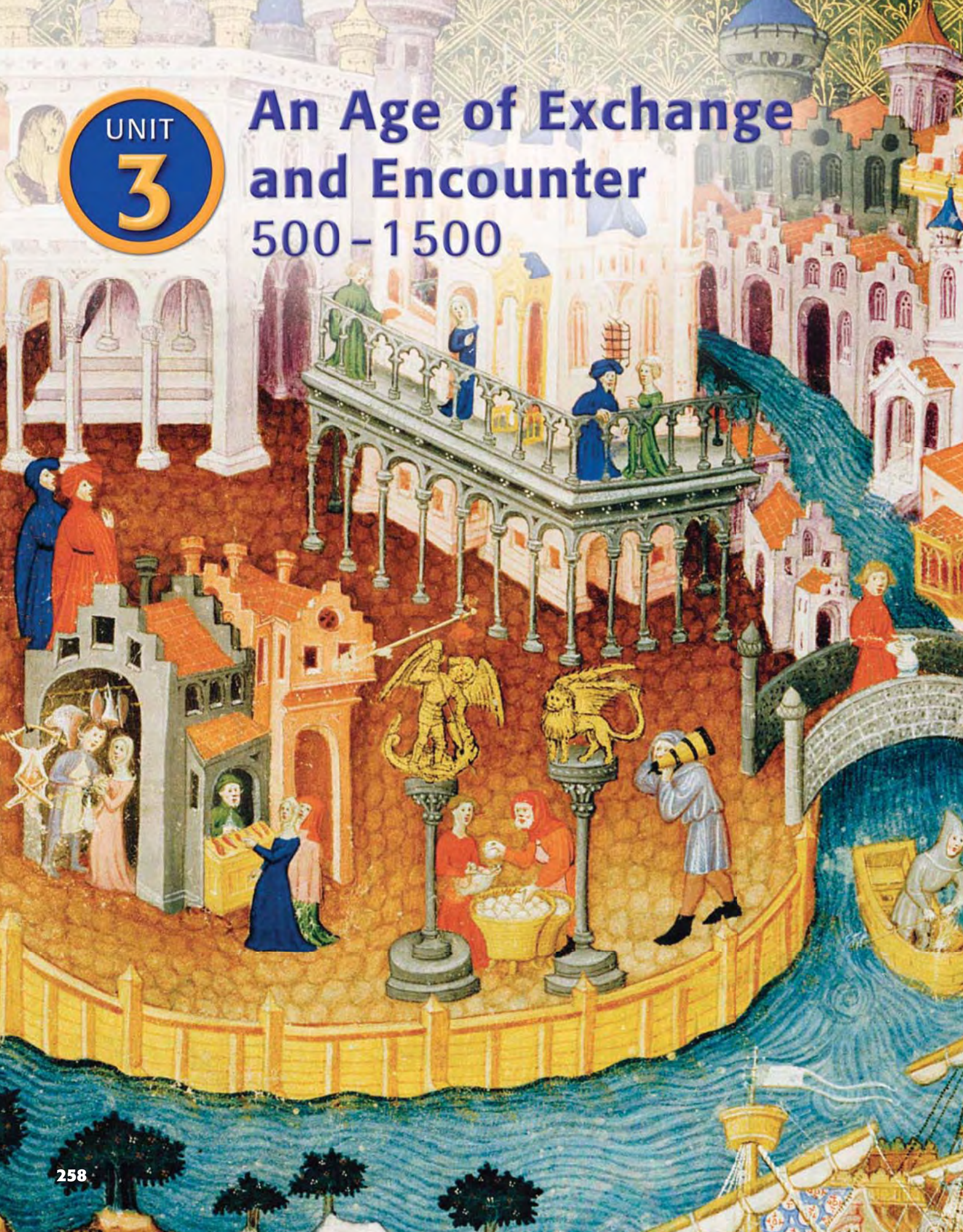
Another Mesoamerican society that had a classical age was the Maya, which you will study in Chapter 16. Read about the Classic Age of the Maya either in this textbook or an encyclopedia. Then create a chart or a poster listing Maya beliefs and their achievements in the arts, science, technology, and architecture.

UNIT

3

An Age of Exchange and Encounter

500 – 1500





Venice at the time of Marco Polo was a vibrant, bustling city. This depiction of the city comes from the *Romance of Alexander*, a 14th-century illuminated manuscript that included a French account of Polo's travels.

Comparing & Contrasting

Trade Networks

In Unit 3, you will learn how trade began to connect regions of the world and how it made the exchange of goods and ideas easier. At the end of the unit, you will have a chance to compare and contrast five different trade networks. (See pages 430–435.)