

Candidate 1 evidence

What is the function of state religion in Ancient Greece?

In Ancient Greece, religion had a multitude of functions, for example, it brought people/communities together and it made people feel safe knowing that not only were the gods watching over them, but the gods were controlling their actions. Most of how the Greeks lived their lives was in a way in which they honoured the gods every single day. Religion played a huge part in Ancient Greek culture, and was a centre point of theatre, politics and how the city was ran. However, in today's society, religion still has important functions, such as bringing communities together and making people feel safe, however due to the lack of societal pressure to believe in the state religion, it no longer has as strong of an influence on modern people. But, for those who do believe, it can give them faith and hope for the people around them and for their own future.

In Ancient Greece, state religious festivals had many functions. For example, honouring the gods' birthdays – this is seen in the Panathenaia when the people of Greece place a gold dress on the statue of Athena, which is in the Parthenon, every 4 years. However, in modern day state religious festivals, such as Christmas, honouring the gods is shown by midnight church services to commemorate the birth of Christ. These are different as there was more participation in Ancient Greece; the whole city came together to celebrate the gods' birthdays by giving them gifts and hosting a city-wide festival to celebrate, whereas in modern day church services, only those who are Christian typically attend the services. Another example of a function of state religious festivals was to have fun. In the City Dionysia (a festival to celebrate the god Dionysus), fun was had through playwriting competitions, and in the Panathenaia (a festival to celebrate the god Athena), fun was had through poetry competitions and "manliest man" competitions. The prize for all of these was a jar of olive oil (which was seen as prestigious at the time, and had multiple uses). This is similar to modern day state religious festivals such as Christmas, in which fun is had through riddles in Christmas crackers and games of charades, and a prize is relieved – a small colourful paper crown.

Ancient Greek rituals had many functions. One of these is to honour the gods, which is seen in every single ritual: for example in a blood sacrifice, the animal chosen for the sacrifice corresponded with the favourite animal of whatever god you were trying to appeal to, and dark-coloured animals were used to appeal to gods of the underworld. This is similar to modern religious rituals, for example when praying in Christianity, you thank God for what he has blessed you with in your life up until this point. As we can see in source 2, two athletes are roasting meat from a sacrificed animal over an altar, and we can see the god Nike flying above them (presumably who they are sacrificing to). We know that it is from an "Olympics closing ceremony", and so these men probably won races and are now thanking Nike, the goddess of victory, for her help. An important function of Greek religion was to thank the gods for their help, which we can still see today throughout many different events in which people will thank gods for winning races, competitions, doing well in exams etc. Another way of honouring the gods (the main function of ancient religious rituals) in both Ancient and modern times is by saying a prayer or a set of special phrases in the correct order, and you can't mess it up. In Ancient Greece, prayers had a set format and, if you got it wrong, you would have to restart the entire prayer from the

beginning. In modern day religious rituals special phrases also have to be said in certain orders: for example in marriage, the vows have to be said correctly and including the right phrases in order for the wedding to be "official". Another function of religious rituals was to ask for favours from the gods; whilst most rituals were done to honour the gods, some rituals such as prayer were used to ask the gods for favours. This was done through yelling the god's full name and titles, favourite places, things they have already done for you, and then asking for your favour. Sometimes, people promised to make votive offerings if the gods fulfilled their wish, such as votive tablets or statues, which were an extra way to thank the gods for helping you out.

Modern and Ancient Greek religious temples have similar functions, but are quite different. In Ancient Greece, temples were placed as a reminder to honour the gods, with huge statues within them to remind people what gods to worship. In modern times, churches are used to remind people to worship, and large crosses are usually the focal point of the inside of a church. However, people can enter modern churches and carry out their prayers and rituals inside of it, whereas in Ancient times people were not permitted to enter temples; it was seen as "polluting" if someone died in a temple and, since we can't control when we naturally die, people were banned from entering temples all together – unless you were a priest who helped to maintain the wellbeing of the temple. In modern times, religious temples such as churches and mosques are seen as a safe place for people to practice their religion, and these places of worship had the materials to carry out rituals, such as prayers.

This was not the case in Ancient Greece as people were not permitted inside temples, and worship was expected to take place regardless of whether or not you were near/in a temple.

State religious priests have similar functions both in Ancient Greece and in modern times. In Ancient Greece, priests were used to lead public processions (processions were large outdoor parades which usually ended in a sacrifice, and were open to the public), and could give help in leading religious rituals, such as sacrifices, for a price.



However, in modern day, modern priests, such as ministers, feel it is their duty to help lead people in worship, and they encourage participation in services.

They regularly lead prayers and can help people if they want help in leading their own prayers, or any other religious rituals. The priests are different as ancient priests were seen as a figurehead who had authority and power, as they were the ones who could enter a temple, and would occasionally give out advice for a price, whereas modern priests feel obliged to help people worship since they love their god and want others to love them too – unlike Greek priests who feared their gods due to how much power they were believed to have. Modern priests also take more of a role in the community, by helping to host events at the church, and even going to local schools to discuss religion and the benefits of having faith in a religion. This is similar to the Ancient Greek priests leading processions – however they did not need to go to schools to preach about their religion as almost everyone believed in the state religion (Hellenic polytheism).

The functions of modern and Ancient Greek divination are very different. Ancient Greek divination focused on prophecies and communicating to the gods, for example in Source 1 where we can see King Aegeus visiting Themis, a prophetic goddess at

Delphi – the most reliable oracle in the ancient world. The main function of divination was to communicate to the gods (and potentially find out your future), and this could be done through oracles. Oracles were used by all different kinds of people for various different reasons; some people went to Dodona (oracle for Zeus) to find out about personal matters, whereas others went to Delphi (oracle for Apollo, god of prophecies) for more serious, even state matters. As we can see in source 3, the Greek people respected the gods, and so they trusted oracles strongly as they were a way of communicating to the gods. What the oracle said was believed and taken very seriously, which is very different from modern day, Modern divination focuses on fortune telling, and this can be done in a multitude of ways, such as via fortune tellers, fortune cookies, horoscopes and tarot cards. The main function of modern divination is to not only find out about the future, but to have fun. Fortune tellers are usually not trusted, but people still go to have their fortunes read for a bit of fun. However, there are some people who take fortune telling, such as horoscopes and tarot card readings, as seriously as the Greeks did, and will base their mood, plans and even outfit choices around what they are told.

In conclusion, the main function of state religion was to worship the gods, which is the main function of modern state religion. However, Ancient Greek state religion focused more on honouring the gods – whether that be through sacrifices attended by the whole city or huge temples erected to remind people to honour the gods – than anything else, whereas modern state religion has a more lax approach in terms of worshipping the gods – less sacrifices and rituals and more communal worshipping, along with a reduced pressure to believe in the state religion- and focused more on having fun and being part of a safe community with similar beliefs, whilst still celebrating the gods.

Classical Studies Higher Resource Sheet		
Candidate Name		Scottish Candidate Number
INTRO	<p>Important as: feel safe, bring people together</p> <p>Not as important as: no strong influence</p>	<p>"They viewed the gods as all knowing, so if gods gave them information they could greatly benefit from it"</p> <p>Source 3 Class Notes</p>
FESTIVALS	<p>City Dionysia, Panathenaia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Honour gods & birthdays - Have fun → competitions - Bring people together 	<p>Christmas, Chinese New Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To exchange gifts - To have fun - To celebrate your religion
RITUALS	<p>Sacrifice, libations, processions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To honour the gods - To ask for favours 	<p>Prayers, weddings, funerals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To honour the gods - To ask for favours - To celebrate/be thankful
TEMPLES	<p>Temple of Olympian Zeus, Panathenaia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To honour the gods (as a reminder to) - To show appreciation 	<p>Church, mosque, synagogue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To give people a safe place to practice their religion - To give people the resources needed to carry out rituals
PRIESTS	<p>Prests, seers, Purifiers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help honour gods - Guide people in worship (processions) 	<p>Minister, Pope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage participation in services - Help/lead worship
DIVINATION	<p>Delphi, Dodona, seers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicate with gods - Find out future - Honour gods - Cryptic 	<p>Fortune tellers, horoscopes, fortune cookies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find out future - Have fun - Find out about yourself
		 <p>Source 1 Themis, prophetic goddess, and Hephaestus at Delphi (470-430 BC)</p>
CONCLUSION	<p>Similar:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - worship gods - come together - Temples = worship <p>Different:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - modern = free - Rituals less sacrifice 	 <p>Source 2 At the closing ceremony of the Olympics, two athletes race at mid-avenue on a altar</p>
Word Count - 215		