

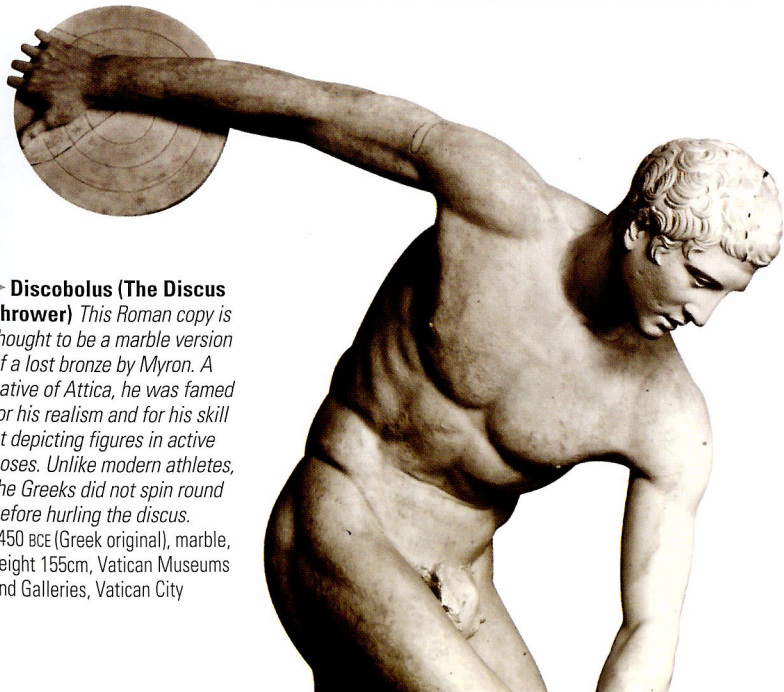
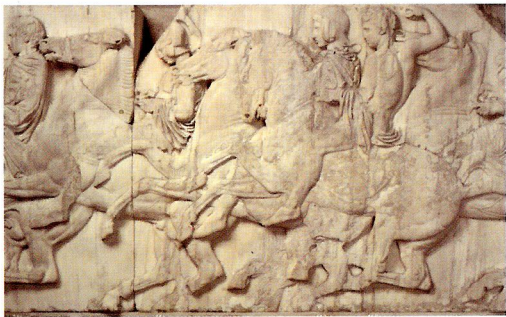
# Greek Classical

480–323 BCE

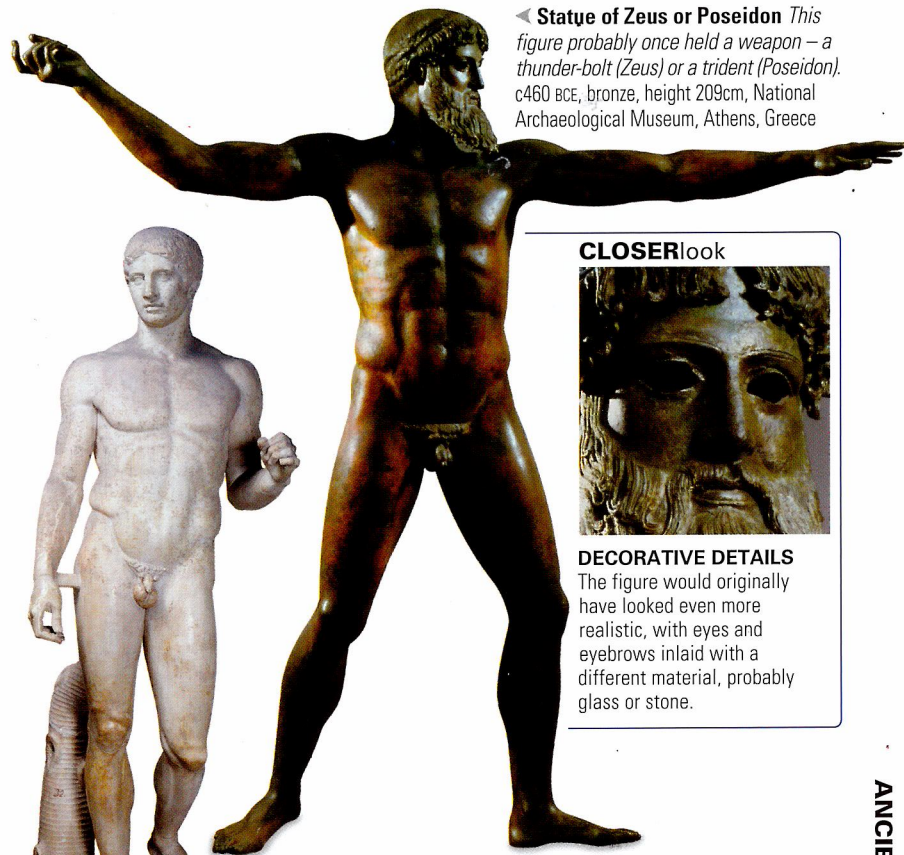
Greek culture reached new heights during the Classical Period, from 480 to 323 BCE, when victory over the Persians ushered in an era of prosperity and self-confidence. In Athens, democracy took root, literature flourished, and the study of history and philosophy became established. National and civic pride increased, particularly in Athens, which became dominant in Greece up to c413 BCE. The Parthenon, with its magnificent sculptures of Greek triumphs, was designed to embody this new mood.

In the visual arts, sculptors gained a fine understanding of the structure of the body and how it moved, and achieved a new blend of realism and the ideal. This was particularly evident in the work of Polyclitus, who liked to contrast the taut, straining muscles of one limb with the relaxed pose of another. Classical sculptors were not satisfied, however, with mere anatomical accuracy: their concept of beauty entailed both ideal proportions and a serene nobility of expression. In pursuit of this goal, they produced statues of mortals that are barely distinguishable from those of their gods.

► **Cavalcade** Taken from the frieze that was on the Parthenon, these horsemen form part of a procession. Even though the carving is in very shallow relief, the overlapping horses provide a sense of depth and movement. 447–432 BCE, marble, height 106cm, British Museum, London, UK

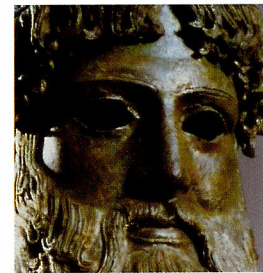


► **Discobolus (The Discus Thrower)** This Roman copy is thought to be a marble version of a lost bronze by Myron. A native of Attica, he was famed for his realism and for his skill at depicting figures in active poses. Unlike modern athletes, the Greeks did not spin round before hurling the discus. c450 BCE (Greek original), marble, height 155cm, Vatican Museums and Galleries, Vatican City



◀ **Statue of Zeus or Poseidon** This figure probably once held a weapon – a thunder-bolt (Zeus) or a trident (Poseidon). c460 BCE, bronze, height 209cm, National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Greece

## CLOSER look



## DECORATIVE DETAILS

The figure would originally have looked even more realistic, with eyes and eyebrows inlaid with a different material, probably glass or stone.

◀ **The Spear Carrier** This is a Roman copy of a lost bronze statue by Polyclitus of Argos, one of the greatest sculptors of antiquity. The impassive gaze is typically classical, as are the harmonious proportions of the figure and the perfect balance of the pose. c440 BCE (Greek original), marble, height 212cm, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, Italy

