

ELEMENTARY ANCIENT GREEK
UNIT 1

by Christopher Marchetti

et discipulis et magistris meis

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Unit One

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PREFACE

The genius of the ancient Greeks is uniquely captured in their language and literature. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer, our earliest poems of Western Literature, still cast their perennially stunning spell. The tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides pose haunting questions, as yet unanswered. The comedies of Aristophanes and Menander are peopled with characters you'll recognize as friends and neighbors, though Aristophanes is a bit outrageous.

Herodotus, called the "Father of History," tells how the Greeks united under the leadership of Athens to defeat the invasions of the Persian emperors Darius and Xerxes at the beginning of the 5th century B.C. Thucydides, who wrote his account of the Peloponnesian War to be "an everlasting possession," tells how Athens squandered her glory in a war against her rival, the Greek city-state of Sparta, at the end of that century.

Plato's philosophical dialogues preserve the inquisitive method of his teacher, Socrates; his overriding concern is with how people come to experience and recognize that which is truly good. The philosopher Aristotle established the rules of rigorous logical investigation, seeking to understand what it means to be. His wide-ranging studies also included science, politics, ethics, and literature.

Learning the language of the ancient Greeks is the best way we can vividly experience their unparalleled contribution to our culture and civilization.