**http://www.historyforkids.net/slavery-in-ancient-greece.html**

**Slavery in Ancient Greece**

The ancient Greeks loved their democracy. They were also proud of themselves for being very civilized people. They often looked down on their barbarian neighbors to the north. But even though they valued ideas like freedom, they still owned slaves. Owning slaves gave Greek men time to work on the government.  There were times when slaves in Athens probably outnumbered free people.

There were different kinds of slavery in ancient Greece. Not all slaves were treated alike. In Sparta, there were state-owned slaves called helots. Helots were assigned to work a certain piece of land. They were also forced to give part of what they grew to the state. At times, helots outnumbered the free Spartans by twenty to one. Some people believe that Sparta’s military began because of the need to control the large number of helots.  Helots were sometimes freed, especially if they fought bravely in a war. But their lives were mostly miserable. They were even forced to wear humiliating clothing to identify them as slaves!

In Athens, the lives of slaves were somewhat better. Slaves were privately owned in Athens, and each new slave was welcomed into the family with a ceremony. Slaves in Athens often worked with free citizens, although they were not paid.  They could also live outside their master’s home. It was illegal to mistreat slaves in Athens, and they don’t seem to have suffered the same kind of public shame that slaves in Sparta endured. In Athens, slaves usually worked in better conditions. There were also more chances for slaves to become free than in Sparta. It seems that most slaves in Athens worked in their master’s households and were treated fairly.

Most female slaves in Athens did things like bake bread, cook, and weave. Sometimes they grew close to the woman of the house. This was because in Athens, women did not have much of a life outside the home. They often became attached to their slaves. Male slaves usually worked in the fields, as craftsmen, or as assistants to soldiers. Some served (not by choice) in the Athenian navy. Athens also had several thousand slaves who served as policemen.

In Athens, slaves who had a certain skill were allowed to work outside the master’s home. They were allowed to earn a small income, but a small part of the money they earned had to be paid to the master. Sometimes, slaves earned enough money to buy their freedom.

Most citizens of Athens did not own slaves. Slaves cost too much for most Athenians. If a person were wealthy, they might own a few slaves, but usually did not own large numbers of them.

**There were several ways a person might become a slave:**

* They could be kidnapped.
* They could be enemy soldiers captured in war.
* They could be captured by pirates and sold into slavery.
* They could be born into slavery.

Not all slaves in Athens were treated well. Slaves who worked in the silver mines south of the city lived terrible lives. They were often beaten and starved. On top of that, they spent most of their lives underground in darkness!