

Station A: Architecture (The Parthenon)

- 1. Learn about this site.** You are at the Parthenon, a beautiful temple built in honor of Athena, the Greek Goddess of wisdom and war.
- 2. Read the information about architecture, and take notes.** Carefully read and discuss the information below about Greek architecture. Then, list three important facts about Greek architecture in the Station A section of **Student Handout 2.2A**.

The Greeks were among the most talented architects of the ancient world. They built their most famous structure, the Parthenon, during the rule of the statesman Pericles. The Parthenon, a temple in honor of the Goddess Athena, was built to celebrate the end of Athens' war with Persia. Although only partially intact, the Parthenon is considered the most glorious building from the ancient world—a stunning reminder of Athens' cultural achievements. It stands atop the Athenian Acropolis overlooking the city. Constructed almost completely out of marble from a nearby mountain, the Parthenon is 237 feet long, 110 feet wide, and 60 feet high. It features 8 columns in front and back, and 17 columns along each side. The architects and sculptors who created the building spent more than 12 million units of Greek currency, called *drachmas* (pronounced DRAHK-mahs), on its construction, over four times the annual budget for all of Athens. This huge, marble-columned structure—part of which is still standing today—has survived for nearly 2,500 years because of its superior workmanship.

The architects designed the Parthenon to allow for optical illusions. The height of each column was five times its diameter so that the columns appeared slender. Builders also slanted the roof of the building, creating a triangular piece on either end of the building called a *pediment*. The east pediment showed a scene of the birth of Athena. The west pediment depicted the contest between Athena and Poseidon, the God of the Sea, which determined who would be the patron of Athens. Another distinctive feature of the Parthenon was a 525-foot band of sculpture, or *frieze*, which surrounded the top of the temple. This frieze depicted the Panathenaic Procession, an annual Athenian festival that celebrated the birthday of Athena.

The Parthenon also contained a 35-foot-high gold and ivory statue of the Goddess Athena. Athenians believed that worshipping and leaving offerings at the foot of the statue would ensure Athena's protection of Athens and its people.