

## Station J: Women (Home of a Wealthy Family)

- 1. Learn about this site.** You are at the home of a wealthy Athenian family, a place where men and women are rarely allowed to interact with each other.
- 2. Read the information about women, and take notes.** Carefully read and discuss the information below about the lives of Greek women. Then, list three important facts about the lives of Athenian women in the Station J section of **Student Handout 2.2A**.

Women had very specific roles in Athenian society. It was believed that all women were under the protection of *Hera*, the queen of the Gods, and *Hestia*, the Goddess of home and hearth. An Athenian woman was also under the guardianship of a man—either her father, her husband, or her brother.

Young girls were often raised together, apart from the male members of the household. Most Athenian women married at a young age—as early as 14—in marriages arranged by their parents. They bore several children, and were often trained as midwives and nurses to help their sisters, cousins, or female servants give birth. Married women were expected to wear more loose-fitting clothing than unmarried women. They also wore their long hair pinned up with elaborate hairpieces, while unmarried women often wore their hair loose in long curls.

According to Athenian society, a respectable woman's main responsibility was overseeing the household. Wealthy wives were responsible for the care and education of their children, tending to their husbands, supervising and nursing the servants, spinning wool, and weaving cloth for the family's use. Wealthy women often had female slaves to gather produce from the garden as well as to buy food from the marketplace. These slaves were also responsible for cooking and cleaning in the household. Women in less wealthy households often worked at humble jobs outside the home, in addition to performing household tasks themselves. They sold goods at the market or baked loaves of bread. Few skilled trades were open to women, but there were female potters and leatherworkers.

Athenian women from all classes participated in the religious celebrations in the city. Some women were religious figures, or *priestesses*. These priestesses conducted religious rituals, recited prayers, and looked after the sacred objects stored in the sanctuaries. Priestesses had high social and legal status, and were not under the guardianship of their fathers, husbands, or brothers.