

Information on Education in Constantinople

Directions: The following information will help your group prepare to create a monument and accompanying plaque commemorating education in Constantinople. To prepare to create these, each group member reads a section of the handout and leads a discussion of the questions following that section.

Education in Constantinople was generally free from the control of the church, despite the strong influence of religion in the city. The emperor's children attended St. John of Studion's monastery. There the monks educated the emperor's children and trained men to be copyists of ancient texts, but had little to do with the education of the majority of citizens. Byzantine education was strongly influenced by classical Greek and Roman traditions that emphasized nonreligious study.

*Stop here
and discuss*



- To what extent did the church control education in Constantinople?
- Who attended school at St. John's monastery?
- What tradition of education was considered important in Constantinople?

In Constantinople, there was a great difference between education for the upper classes and education for the lower classes. Artisans and craftsmen were considered to be of a lower class and were discouraged from studying academic subjects. Instead, children of artisans learned a skill or craft as the apprentice (a person who learns a trade or occupation through practical experience) of a master. Even students who wished to study medicine, engineering, or architecture eventually learned their professions as apprentices. Public doctors, engineers, and architects were required by the government to train others to work in their professions. The apprenticeship system had its origins in Greek education, which placed a high value on learning through one-on-one relationships.

*Stop here
and discuss*



- What kind of education did lower class people receive?
- What did apprentices do?
- What did the government require doctors, engineers, and architects to do?

Academic study was reserved specifically for the sons of wealthy parents. Daughters stayed at home and learned how to cook, clean, sew, and perform other duties expected of wives. Girls whose parents had enough money could study at home with a private tutor and learn some of the same subjects as boys. However, girls rarely attended school outside the home and did not have access to a university education. The education received by sons of rich families was primarily theoretical (more concerned with ideas than with practical knowledge) in contrast to the practical, work-related training received by the lower class. Boys from upper-class families usually studied with tutors or at a private school for several years. They then graduated to higher-level studies of rhetoric (the art of effective writing and speaking) and philosophy under a private teacher who was more advanced than the earlier tutors.

Stop here
and discuss



- How were girls educated?
- How did the education of wealthy boys differ from that of lower-class individuals?
- What program of study did upper-class boys usually follow?

Boys who were successful students often went on to study at a university. An education at the University of Constantinople was designed more for the love of learning than for practical purposes. Subjects included Greek and Latin grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, and law. In the Greek tradition, the primary emphasis was on the Greek classics, especially Homer's epic poems, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, and works by the philosopher Aristotle. Science and math were viewed as valuable only to prepare students for the more important study of philosophy. Studies of subjects such as zoology and medicine were taught mostly through stories about strange occurrences. Because technology was considered to be less important than philosophy and other subjects, there were not very many new scientific discoveries. Another reason there was not a strong demand for new inventions was that slaves and cheap labor provided by the poor met most of the city's needs.

Stop here
and discuss



- What subjects were taught at the university?
- What was the attitude towards science?
- Why were there so few scientific discoveries and inventions?