

Transcript

Introduction to Classical Studies festivals

Dr Jess Hughes:

Hello from us all in the Department of Classical Studies at the Open University. We've put together a series of short videos all about Ancient Greek and Roman festivals.

Now when we hear the word festival today certain things might come to mind. Things like music and dancing and eating and drinking and lots of people coming together to have fun. And that did happen at ancient festivals as well. But in antiquity the gods were at the centre of everything. So, most of the festivals that we'll be telling you about are about honouring particular deities and asking them for protection. And we'll also see how ancient festivals had important social and political functions as well.

Our evidence for ancient festivals includes things like ritual calendars which show us how festivals were distributed throughout the calendar year. We also have hundreds of literary texts. So, things like Ovid's *Fasti* which is a long poem about festivals in Ancient Roman times and Pausanias' *Guide to Greece* which takes us on a journey through the sanctuaries of Ancient Greece.

And we have lots of painting and sculpted reliefs and other artistic depictions which give us idealised representations of what it was like to attend an ancient festival.

Now, what all of this evidence shows us is that no two ancient festivals were ever the same. And your experience of an ancient festival depended entirely on who you were and where you lived and when you lived as well. Although there were things that many festivals had in common. So, things like processions and sacrifices and prayers and sometimes games as well.

And also, there's the fact that all these events brought people together, but they simultaneously reinforced social hierarchies.

We hope that you enjoy this tour around some of our favourite ancient festivals and that this series of videos gives you a small insight into what it was like to attend a festival in the ancient world.