

# Literature and History

Did you know that the word *alphabet* comes from the first two letters of the Greek alphabet, *alpha* and *beta*? Our alphabet grew out of the one that ancient Greeks used. In addition, many English words have Greek roots. For example, the word *telephone* is made up of the Greek words *tel*, meaning “far off,” and *phone*, meaning “voice.”

Even the way we write sentences comes from the language of ancient Greece. The rules of English grammar, punctuation, and paragraphing are all based on Greek writing. And don't forget literature. The Greeks created drama, including both tragedy and comedy. They also developed historical writing. Modern historians follow in the footsteps of great Greek writers such as Herodotus (huh-ROD-uh-tuhs), known as the “father of history,” and Thucydides (thoo-SID-ih-deez).

Thucydides was one of the greatest historians of ancient Greece. He wrote *History of the Peloponnesian War*, an account of the conflict between Athens and Sparta in the 400s B.C.E. Thucydides himself took part in the war, serving in the Athenian army. Although he was an eyewitness to history, he was careful to present facts rather than his own viewpoint or opinion. He is remembered today as one of the founders of historical writing.

