

Segesta

On land | Italy (Sicily) | 5th century BCE | Grades 3-5

Name _____

Date _____

Segesta's temple was never finished, yet it has stood almost whole for about 2,400 years.

Read the story

Segesta was a city of the Elymians, one of the native peoples of Sicily. They were rivals of the Greek city of Selinunte, but they admired Greek culture.

Around 420 BCE, the people of Segesta began building a large temple in the Greek Doric style. They set up 36 columns and the beams on top, but the columns were never smoothed and no inner rooms or roof were added. Wars with neighbors may have stopped the work.

Higher up the hill, they built a theater looking out over the valleys toward the sea. Segesta later sided with Rome, which helped it survive for a while. In the 400s CE, Vandals damaged it, and by the Middle Ages, it was abandoned.

How it ended

Segesta was damaged by Vandal raids in the 400s CE. People stayed on in small numbers, and a castle and mosque were built later, but by the 1200s the hill was empty.

Key words

- Doric: a simple, strong style of Greek column
- column: a tall post that holds up part of a building
- rival: someone you compete against

Wow facts

- The temple columns were never smoothed, so you can see the knobs builders left for lifting.
- The theater looks out over valleys all the way toward the sea.
- Segesta asked Athens for help in a war, which led to a famous Athenian invasion of Sicily.

Talk about it

1. Why do you think people stopped building the temple?

2. What could an unfinished building teach us about how it was made?

Try this

Draw a map of Segesta as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. What is unusual about Segesta's temple?

- A. It was never finished
- B. It is underwater
- C. It is made of gold
- D. It floats

2. On which island is Segesta?

- A. Crete
- B. Sicily
- C. Malta
- D. Cyprus

3. Who were the people of Segesta?

- A. Elymians
- B. Vikings
- C. Maya
- D. Persians

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/segesta/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. A. It has columns and beams but no roof or inner rooms.
2. B. Segesta is in western Sicily.
3. A. The Elymians were a native people of Sicily.