



## 1. 'TWO FACES OF GREECE: ATHENS & SPARTA'

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### Introduction

During the 5th century BC, Greece was dominated by two main powers: democratic Athens and the military oligarchy of Sparta. These city-states were very different. Sparta was traditionally the great land power of the Greek world and controlled many neighboring territories whose populations were tied to the land as slaves. Athens' power was based upon its command of the sea, and though it was officially only head of a naval alliance (the Delian League), in practice this amounted to an empire in all but name. This exercise encourages students to compare and contrast Athens and Sparta.

### Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to

- locate Sparta and Athens on a map of Greece
- locate information from this Web site and other resources to complete a chart showing differences between Sparta and Athens
- categorize statements about the two city-states into the appropriate category (see blank chart, below)
- determine in which city-state they would rather live in and give reasons why; assess the advantages and disadvantages of the lifestyle and government of each city-state for different social roles.

### Tools & Materials

The table below is the primary tool for these exercises, though students will also need access to the Web pages from this site listed in the [Extensions, Adaptations, Further Resources](#) section below.

The following parts of the documentary will also be useful for this exercise:

### Sparta

Starts: 10.44 'But there was one city-state which had military power... '

Ends: 12.36 'For the rest of the Greeks the Spartans were a threat always on the horizon.'

### Athens (under Cleisthenes):

Starts: 40.51 'In this new dawn... '

Ends: 45.24 'A new generation of Athenians would take up his legacy'.

### Athens (under Pericles):

Starts: 1.20.10 'The Athenians were now looking for a leader...'

Ends: 1.34.11 '...echo around the world.'

### Time Needed

Students will need approximately an hour to absorb the initial information about the differences between Athens and Sparta. Each of the exercises should take between half and a full hour.

### Relevant National Standards

This activity addresses the [Standards in Historical Thinking for Grades 5-12](#) developed by the National Center for History in the Schools.

### Teaching Strategy

The main focus for comparing Athens and Sparta is the comparative table (below). At the end of this section are a number of [Suggested Activities](#).

	ATHENS	SPARTA
Population & Map	Approximately 140,000; Approximately 40,000 men were citizens; and slaves (about 40,000). By 432 BC, Athens had become the most populous city-state in Hellas. In Athens and Attica, there were at least 150,000 Athenians, around 50,000 aliens, and more than 100,000 slaves.	Approximately 8,000 Spartiates (adult male citizens) ruled over a population of 100,000 enslaved and semi-enslaved people.
Government & Political organizations	<p><a href="#">Athenian Government</a> Usually classified as a "direct democracy" (because everyone, not just politicians attended the Assembly), Athens claims to be the "birthplace of democracy".</p> <p><b>Elected officials</b> including 10 <b>generals</b> (strategos), <b>magistrates</b> (archons), and others.</p> <p><b>Council of 500</b> was charged with administering decisions made by the Assembly.</p> <p><b>The Assembly</b> open to all citizens (all citizens were eligible to attend such meetings and speak up). They passed laws and made policy decisions. The Assembly met on the Hill of the Pnyx at the foot of the Acropolis.</p> <p>During time of Pericles citizens were paid for <b>jury service</b> so not only the wealthy could participate.</p> <p>Women did not participate in the political life of Athens.</p>	<p><a href="#">Spartan Government:</a> Usually classified as an "oligarchy" (rule by a few), but it had elements of monarchy (rule by kings), democracy (through the election of council/senators), and aristocracy (rule by the upper class or land owning class).</p> <p><b>Two kings</b> who were generals in command of the armies and with some religious duties.</p> <p><b>Five overseers</b> (ephors) elected annually ran the day-to-day operations of Sparta. They could veto rulings made by the council or assembly.</p> <p><b>Council or Senate</b> (apella) of 28 councilmen (men over 60 and elected for life by the citizens) and the 2 kings. They acted as judges and proposed laws to the citizens' assembly.</p> <p>The <b>Assembly</b> of all Spartan males aged 30 or</p>

		<p>over could support or veto the council's recommendations by shouting out their votes.</p> <p>Women did not participate in the political life of Sparta.</p>
<b>Social Structure</b>	<p>Social Structure of Athens: <b>Freemen</b> were all male citizens: divided into numerous classes: <b>at the top</b> were <b>aristocrats</b> who had large estates and made up the cavalry or captained triremes; <b>middle</b> ranks were <b>small farmers</b>; <b>lowest</b> class was the <b>thetes</b> (urban craftsmen and trireme rowers). <b>Metics</b> - those who came from outside the city; they were not allowed to own land, but could run industries and businesses. <b>Slaves</b> were lowest class, but less harshly treated than in most other Greek cities. Slaves had no rights, and an owner could kill a slave. Slaves varied in status: some were given important roles in Athens, like policemen. Women were rarely seen outside the home and had no rights in the Athenian democracy.</p>	<p>Social Structure of Sparta:</p> <p>Three classes: <b>Spartiates</b> (military professionals who lived mostly in barracks and whose land was farmed by serfs; they served in the army and could vote).</p> <p><b>Perioeci</b> or "neighbors/outside" who were freemen; they included artisans, craftsmen, merchants; they could not vote or serve in the army; foreigners could be in this class.</p> <p><b>Helots</b> (serfs descended from those peoples who had resisted subjugation by Sparta and who were constantly rebelling. They were treated like slaves and gave 1/2 of their produce to the Spartiate citizens who owned the land.</p> <p>Women had few rights, but were more independent in Sparta than elsewhere in Greece.</p>
<b>Allies</b>	Delian League (with Athens clearly the most powerful); Athens taxed and protected other city-states.	a Peloponnesian League (with Sparta clearly the most powerful).
<b>Military strength</b>	Strong navy.	Strong army, best and most feared fighters on land.
<b>Life style and values</b>	Democratic values for citizens. They believed in participation in government as a civic responsibility. Athenians believed in their cultural superiority and in their role in an empire and benefiting from	<b>Spartan culture:</b> Militaristic values. Children of citizens were raised to be "Spartan", taught to get along with almost nothing. Spartiate citizens were not permitted to

	<p>trade. (See <b>Pericles' Funeral Oration</b> showing these values.) "Further, we provide many ways to refresh the mind from the burdens of business. We hold contests and offer sacrifices all the year round, and the elegance of our private establishments forms a daily source of pleasure and helps to drive away sorrow. The magnitude of our city draws the produce of the world into our harbor, so that to the Athenian the fruits of other countries are as familiar a luxury as those of his own."</p>	<p>own gold or silver or luxuries. Spartan children were taught to respect elderly, women, and warriors. [The strict separation of classes and militaristic system was put into place by <b>Lycurgus</b> in the 7th century BC.]</p> <p>Spartan mothers would say to their sons, "Either come back with your shield or on it" (meaning return victorious or die fighting).</p> <p>This lifestyle was praised by <b>Xenophon</b>, an ancient historian c. 375 BCE.</p>
<b>Education</b>	<p><b>Boys:</b> Schools taught reading, writing and mathematics, music, poetry, sport and gymnastics. Based upon their birth and the wealth of their parents, the length of education was from the age of 5 to 14, for the wealthier 5 - 18 and sometimes into a student's mid-twenties in an academy where they would also study philosophy, ethics, and rhetoric (the skill of persuasive public speaking). Finally, the citizen boys entered a military training camp for two years, until the age of twenty. Foreign metics and slaves were not expected to attain anything but a basic education in Greece, but were not excluded from it either.</p> <p><b>Girls:</b> Girls received little formal education (except perhaps in the aristocrats' homes through tutors); they were generally kept at home and had no political power in Athens. The education of a girl involved spinning, weaving, and other domestic art.</p>	<p><b>Boys:</b> Boys were taken from parents at age seven and trained in the art of warfare. They were only give a cloak - no shoes or other clothes, and not enough food so they had to steal (to learn survival skills). At <b>age 20</b> they were placed into higher ranks of the military. To age 30 they were dedicated to the state; then they could marry but still lived in barracks with other soldiers. They were educated in choral dance, reading and writing, but athletics and military training were emphasized.</p> <p><b>Girls:</b> Girls were educated at age 7 in reading and writing, gymnastics, athletics and survival skills. Could participate in sports; treated more as equals.</p>
<b>Role of women</b>	<p><b>Athenian women:</b> Athenian women and girls were kept at home with no</p>	<p><b>Spartan women and the role of Spartan women:</b> Girls were educated in</p>

	<p>participation in sports or politics. Wives were considered property of their husbands. They were responsible for spinning, weaving and other domestic arts.</p> <p>Some women held high posts in the ritual events and religious life of Athens (where the goddess Athena was the patron). Prostitutes and courtesans were not confined to the house. Some became influential such as Aspasia (see the 'Character Stories' section of this Web site).</p>	<p>reading and writing and could participate in sports; they were treated more as equals to men. The goal was to produce women who would produce strong healthy babies. At age 18 she would be assigned a husband and return home. Citizen women were free to move around and enjoyed a great deal of freedom. Domestic arts (weaving, spinning, etc.) were usually left to the other classes. Spartan women could own and control their own property. In times of war the wife was expected to oversee her husband's property and to guard it against invaders and revolts until her husband returned.</p>
<b>Cultural achievements and legacy</b>	Art, architecture, drama and literature, philosophy, science, medicine, etc. Government (democracy, trial by jury)	Military supremacy and simple lifestyle are the major inspiration behind the philosopher Plato's book 'The Republic' - the first attempt to formulate an 'ideal' community.
<b>Other</b>	<b>Food:</b> Athenians enjoyed luxuries and foods from all over their empire. Wealthy Athenian <b>homes</b> were quite nice with an inner courtyard.	<b>Food:</b> Spartan Broth consisted of pork, blood, salt and vinegar. Spartans were trained to dislike luxuries and fancy foods. The men lived most of their lives in <b>military barracks</b> .

### Suggested Activities:

#### Exercise 1:

Begin by asking students to spend a few minutes briefly listing some terms other people would use to describe their state. Then, compare that with the way they might describe people in another U.S. state. How do different states and regions in the U.S. vary? How accurate are the student's perceptions?

Next, move on to a discussion of the differences between a modern U.S. state and an ancient Greek city-state. Teacher may want to lead into the chart by introducing words such as 'spartan' and 'laconic' (derived from Laconia, the region where the Spartans lived) and explaining how language influences our understanding of what a place was like.

Host a brief quiz based on popular representations and misrepresentations of ancient Greece, asking such questions as:

1. Did the ancient Greeks own slaves? [True - even democratic Athens had no compunction about owning slaves]
2. Could women vote in democratic Athens? [False - in fact, arguably, women had more power over their lives in Sparta]
3. Were most city-states actually cities? [False - the vast majority were only small towns of a few hundred citizens]
4. Did the ancient Greeks have nobles and aristocrats? [True - even in democratic Athens the aristocrats remained a force to be reckoned with]
5. Was the secret of ancient Greece's success its rich, fertile land? [False - the mountainous terrain was only suitable for a few select crops like olives]
6. Did the ancient Greeks value wealth above all else? [False - fame and honor meant much more to the average Greek citizen than wealth].

Having given the class a flavor of ancient Greece you might want to show the video clips listed in Tools and Materials above. Then use the information provided above and additional information found in this Web site (and other resources) to answer the following questions:

Put the answers in the blanks. Note: Some may be found in <b>both</b> .	<b>ATHENS</b>	<b>SPARTA</b>
Which had the largest <b>Population</b> ?		
<b>Government</b>		
Which was a limited democracy?		
Which was a military oligarchy?		
Which had two kings?		
Which had an assembly?		
<b>Social Structure</b>		
Which had citizens as the upper class?		
Which had foreigners as a working class?		
Which had slaves?		
<b>Allies</b>		
Which was the leader of the Delian League?		
Which was the leader of the Peloponnesian League?		
<b>Military strengths</b>		
Which had the strongest navy? Which had the strongest army on land?		
<b>Life style and values</b>		
Which had militaristic values? Which had democratic values?		
<b>Role of women</b>		

Which limited women's role in politics? Which gave the most freedom to women?		
<b>Education</b>		
Which valued choral dance and music?		
Which valued athletics?		
Which gave more education to girls?		
Which gave the most education to boys?		
<b>Cultural achievements and legacy</b> - what are the achievements and the legacy of each?		
Other		

## Exercise 2:

After reading the information about Sparta and Athens, and looking at the chart above, tell students they should be prepared to tell in which city-state they would rather live and why. They should decide for different social roles. To guide students in this, teachers may solicit the advantages and disadvantages for each city-state according to social roles, and list them in a compare-contrast chart on the blackboard. Then have the students determine their choice and give reasons. As an optional extension, perhaps as homework or an in-class "Quick-Write" or journal entry, have students write about their choices according to one or two social roles giving specific reasons. For example:

- If you were a young teenage girl of the citizen class, in which city-state would you rather live? Why?
- If you were a slave, in which would you rather live? Why?
- If you were a boy of the citizen class, in which would you rather live? Why?
- If you were a young soldier, in which would you rather live? Why?
- If you were a very wealthy person of the citizen class, in which would you rather live? Why?
- Finally, students can decide to represent either Athens or Sparta and debate which is the best place to live. Using the chart above, representatives can find criticisms of the other city-state while praising their own. Bear in mind this debate is not a foregone conclusion since for soldiers and women, Sparta really might be a better place to choose to live.

## Exercise 3:

### Travel Brochures or Real Estate Ads

After reading the information about Sparta and Athens, and looking at the chart above, prepare a poster or travel brochure or real estate ad extolling your city-state (choose between Sparta and Athens). Tell about its advantages to the prospective visitors or potential home owners. Highlights may include: cultural activities (such as drama, music and arts); recreation, athletics and sports; architecture and famous sites; schools; accommodations (like homes where the tourists can stay with some of the locals or homes for sale); transportation; and food. Include a map showing where your city-state is located. In another smaller section you

may want to add "travel alerts" which warn the tourist of some of the dangers he/she might encounter while staying in your city-state.

### **Assessment Recommendations**

Exercise One: students will be assessed as to the completion of the blank chart according to correct answers (as presented in the filled-in chart and various Web page links). Students should be able to compare the two city-states and identify similarities and differences orally (in class discussion) and optionally in a short composition.

Exercise Two: student's opinions of where they would rather live according to social roles will vary. However, students should be able to analyze the advantages and disadvantages from the differing social roles. They should use the information about the way of life in each of the city-states to back up their opinions and choices of a place to live. As an extension, students may present their choices and reasons in a short composition.

Exercise Three: assessment of the travel brochures, posters, or real estate ads should be based on the following criteria

- the product should demonstrate student's knowledge of a city-state in terms of its strengths and weaknesses (including its cultural activities, recreation, athletics, architecture, famous sites, school system, accommodation, transport, food, etc.);
- be complete in terms of the requested information (map, advantages or selling points, and optional travel alert);
- be visually attractive and convey a message.

### **Extensions, Adaptations, Further Resources**

The following sections of this Web site provide further information on these subjects. Check out:

#### **Sparta**

[Sparta: Origins \(Event Page: c.650: Sparta refounded\)](#)

[Sparta: Government and classes](#)

[Sparta: Famous quotes about Spartan life](#)

#### **Athens**

[The Reforms of Cleisthenes - the tribes](#)

[The Reforms of Cleisthenes - the Council of Five Hundred](#)

[The Populace of Athens](#)

[The Populace of Athens - Slaves](#)

[The Populace of Athens - Metics](#)

[The Populace of Athens - Women](#)

[The Populace of Athens - Freeman](#)

[Pericles' Funeral Oration in depth](#)

#### **General**

[Greek Women: Marriage and Divorce](#)

[Hetaira and Courtesans](#)

Please see the [Research Links & Resources](#) page for additional material.

The 'Interactive Map of Athens' might also provide additional useful information on the city itself.





