

Ancient Greece: Athens vs. Sparta

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 you to compare and contrast Athens and Sparta.

	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><i>Athenian Government:</i> Usually classified as a "direct democracy" (because everyone, not just politicians attended the Assembly), Athens claims to be the "birthplace of democracy".</p> <p>Elected officials including 10 generals (strategos), magistrates (archons), and others.</p> <p>Council of 500 was charged with administering decisions made by the Assembly.</p> <p>The Assembly open to all citizens (all citizens were eligible to attend such meetings and speak up). They passed laws and</p>	<p><i>Spartan Government:</i> 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>Two kings who were generals in command of the armies and with some religious duties.</p> <p>Five overseers (ephors) elected annually ran the day-to-day operations of Sparta. They could veto rulings made by the council or assembly.</p> <p>Council or Senate (apella) of 28 councilmen (men over 60 and elected</p>

	<p>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 jury service so not only the wealthy could participate.</p> <p>Women did not participate in the political life of Athens.</p>	<p>for life by the citizens) and the 2 kings. They acted as judges and proposed laws to the citizens' assembly.</p> <p>The Assembly of all Spartan males aged 30 or 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>
Social Structure	<p><i>Social Structure of Athens:</i> Freemen were all male citizens: divided into numerous classes: at the top were aristocrats who had large estates and made up the cavalry or captained triremes; middle ranks were small farmers; lowest class was the thetes (urban craftsmen and trireme rowers). Metics - those who came from outside the city; they were not allowed to own land, but could run industries and businesses. Slaves 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><i>Social Structure of Sparta:</i> Three classes: Spartiates (military professionals who lived mostly in barracks and whose land was farmed by serfs; they served in the army and could vote). Perioeci or "neighbors/outsideers" who were freemen; they included artisans, craftsmen, merchants; they could not vote or serve in the army; foreigners could be in this class. Helots (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. Women had few rights, but were more independent in Sparta than elsewhere in Greece.</p>
Allies	<p>Delian League (with Athens clearly the most powerful); Athens taxed and protected other city-states.</p>	<p>a Peloponnesian League (with Sparta clearly the most powerful).</p>
Military strength	<p>Strong navy.</p>	<p>Strong army, best and most feared fighters on land.</p>
Life style and values	<p>Democratic values for citizens. They believed in participation in government as a civic responsibility. Athenians believed in their cultural</p>	<p>Spartan culture: Militaristic values. Children of citizens were raised to be "Spartan", taught to get along with almost nothing. Spartiate citizens were not permitted to own gold or silver or</p>

	<p>superiority and in their role in an empire and benefiting from trade. (See Pericles' Funeral Oration 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>luxuries. Spartan children were taught to respect elderly, women, and warriors. [The strict separation of classes and militaristic system was put into place by Lycurgus 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 Xenophon, an ancient historian c. 375 BCE.</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>Boys: 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>Girls: 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,</p>	<p>Boys: 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 age 20 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>Girls: Girls were educated at age 7 in reading and writing, gymnastics, athletics and survival skills. Could participate in sports; treated more as equals.</p>

	weaving, and other domestic art.	
Role of women	<p>Athenian women: Athenian women and girls were kept at home with no participation in sports or politics. Wives were considered property of their husbands. They were responsible for spinning, weaving and other domestic arts. 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>Spartan women and their role: Girls were educated in 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>
Cultural achievements and legacy	<p>Art, architecture, drama and literature, philosophy, science, medicine, etc. Government (democracy, trial by jury)</p>	<p>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.</p>
Other	<p>Food: Athenians enjoyed luxuries and foods from all over their empire. Wealthy Athenian homes were quite nice with an inner courtyard.</p>	<p>Food: 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 military barracks.</p>

Name: _____

Directions: Use the information from the chart to answer the following questions. You may need to consult the textbook for additional information. Put a check mark in the appropriate box. Some questions will be true for both Athens and Sparta.

QUESTIONS	ATHENS	SPARTA
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>		
1. Which was a limited democracy?		
2. Which was a military oligarchy?		
3. Which had two kings?		
4. Which had an assembly?		
<u>SOCIAL STRUCTURE</u>		
5. Which had citizens in the upper class?		
6. Which had foreigners as a working class?		
7. Which had slaves?		
8. Which had the largest population?		
<u>MILITARY & ALLIES</u>		
9. Which was the leader of the Delian League?		
10. Which was the leader of the Peloponnesian League?		
11. Which had the strongest navy?		
12. Which had the strongest land army?		
<u>CULTURE & VALUES</u>		
13. Which had militaristic values?		
14. Which had democratic values?		
15. Which limited women's role in politics?		
16. Which gave the most freedom to women?		
17. Which valued choral dance and music?		
18. Which valued athletics?		
19. Which gave more education to girls?		
20. Which gave the most education to boys?		

