

# Lesson 5: Athens vs. Sparta

## Teacher Instructions

### Overview

The slight differences between classical Athens and Sparta are magnified in this lesson because it provides for good issue-based discussion. In reality Athens and Sparta were both fairly militaristic, and at other times both were fairly democratic. Contrary to the way they are commonly portrayed, Athens had a powerful army and navy, and Sparta had an Assembly of elected members. But as we deal with discussing the early development of civilizations, it is useful to portray Sparta as simplistically militaristic and Athens as sophisticated and modern. Not that this is not true to any extent, but it is purposely exaggerated because the overarching principle in this lesson is not the study of Sparta or Athens, but how nations should focus their development: Knowledge or strength? Brains or brawn?

### Lesson Objectives

- Students will compare and contrast the development of Spartan culture with the development of Athenian culture

### Materials

- Handout: Take a Side
- Textbooks or Internet access
- Construction paper
- Markers, glue, scissors
- Computers (if possible)

### Activity

We always start with a freewrite – we put a prompt on the board and give students about 4-5 minutes to jot down their thoughts. To start this lesson write the following question on the board: *If a nation only had one option, to either train all of its citizens to become great warriors, or educate all of its citizens to become great learners, which do you think it should choose and why?* This always gets a great class discussion going. Then tell them that we'll be learning about two different Greek city-states, each which took a markedly different approach to development.

This lesson is perfectly differentiated to include a thought-based introduction, independent study, group work, creativity and artistic effort, while concluding with a presentation. Task 1 is fairly easy but it gets students thinking about the fact that these distinctions are in fact real.

For Task 2, virtually all textbooks we reviewed have a section which compares Athens and Sparta. Students will have to examine each aspect of Spartan and Athenian life and make their own determination as to whether it is a pro or con.

For Task 3 we allow them to pair up with someone who has come to a similar conclusion: that either brains wins over brawn or vice versa. We start to deal with hypothetical's here, so it is important to tell

them that most city-states had already adopted either a Spartan or Athenian model (usually unwillingly). For purposes of this assignment though, they will imagine that their job is to persuade other city-states to adopt one of the models of development. Students love Task 3 because it allows them to show off their creative side – it is always a good idea, however, to remind students that the bulk of the grade is in the information, rather than the artwork. This will help them budget their time most appropriately.

### **Wrap Up**

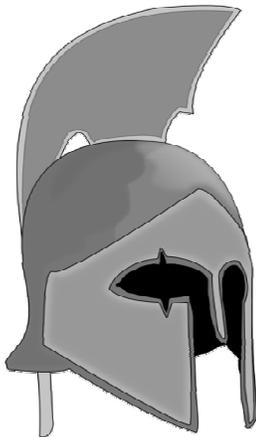
Presentations get repetitive, so you should put constraints on them: no reading, no more than 3-4 minutes, hit the main points on the assignment and move on. Without strict constraints you'll spend much of the time quieting the class down during the mid and later presentations. The requirements are in the assignment, but we usually emphasize three points to the presentations: explain your artwork, highlight your main points, and tell us why brains are superior to brawn or vice versa. This will ensure the presentations move with maximum efficiency.

## Take a Side

# Brains or Brawn?

## Comparing Spartan and Athenian Society

**Authoritarian rule** is a political system where power is concentrated in the hands of a very few people. The Greek philosopher Aristotle described Sparta this way; as "a kind of unlimited and perpetual generalship..." Within Sparta there existed three groups: 1) slaves, known as Helots, 2) Spartan females, who were taught to be fit and patriotic, and 3) Spartan males, who were trained to become warriors. None of these groups enjoyed a great deal of freedom. At the age of seven, boys were forced from home to live in barracks and receive military training from older boys. The Helots slaved to provide the necessary food and labor for Sparta. While women enjoyed some freedom relative to other Greek city-states, overall, free-will was very limited in Spartan society and control was often harsh and ruthless.



**Democracy** is a political system popularized by the citizens of Athens, Greece. In 510 BC the unpopular dictator Hippias was overthrown, and all citizens were allowed to participate in Athenian governmental activities. All citizens were equal before the law, although slaves and women were not allowed citizenship. Athenians eventually abolished slavery and developed a direct democracy where citizens chose the members of the powerful Assembly. Athenian youth were encouraged to develop artistic and intellectual talents to such a degree that historians refer to this time period as Athens' "Golden Age." Citizens in Athens also had to complete military training, but Athens never exercised the same strict and brutal control over its people as Sparta.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Task #1

Both of the quotations below were made by very famous people in world history (*Hint: Neither is from the ancient period*). First, read through both quotes, and decide whether you think the quote best represents the government model of Ancient Sparta or Ancient Athens. Underline one line from the quote which best exemplifies either Spartan or Athenian values and explain why that sentence is important. Finally take a guess at which historical figure said it.

### Quotation 1:

“The fundamental theme through all the centuries has been the principle that force and power are the determining factors. All development is struggle. Only force rules. Force is the first law. . . . Only through struggle have countries and the world become great. If one should ask whether this struggle is gruesome, then the only answer could be—for the weak, yes, for humanity as a whole, no. Instead of everlasting struggle, the world preaches cowardly, and everlasting peace. These three things, considered in the light of their ultimate consequences, are the causes of the downfall of all humanity.”

Sparta or Athens? Explain.

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Who said it? \_\_\_\_\_

### Quotation 2:

“We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain undeniable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the people over whom they govern.”

Sparta or Athens? Explain

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Who said it? \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Task #2

Using your textbook or the Internet, find the pros and cons of both Athenian and Spartan life. List them in the chart below (a minimum of 3 bullets per square is required)

Pros of Spartan Society	Cons of Spartan Society
Pros of Athenian Society	Cons of Athenian Society

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Task #3

**Recruitment Brochure:** Sparta and Athens are in a struggle to become the most powerful city-state in Greece. Your final task will be to construct an appealing, informative recruitment brochure to lure all other Greeks to organize under either an Athenian or Spartan model of rule. Choose which model you think is better and use the pros from task #2 (as well as the cons from the opposing model) to create your brochure. A quality brochure will include:

- An engaging and appealing title page
- Pros and cons throughout the brochure which favor one model and contest the other
- Photos or illustrations to supplement your material
- A one page written explanation of why military strength is better than educational development (Sparta), or educational development is better than military strength (Athens).

### Task #4

**Presentation:** You will give a brief (3-5 minute) presentation to the class explaining which model you choose and why you think it is a superior model for other Greek city-states to follow. Highlight the key points from your brochure (DO NOT read your brochure), and explain your illustrations. Lastly, explain why you think brains will rule brawn, or vice versa.