

War and Conflict in Ancient Greece

Ancient Greece was made up of independent city-states, each governing itself and maintaining its own army. This independence meant that war was common — both against foreign invaders and between the city-states themselves.

Sparta was Greece's greatest military power. Spartan boys were taken from their families at age seven to begin a tough training programme called the agoge. They learned to fight, endure hardship and work as a team. Spartan soldiers were considered almost unbeatable in battle.

Athens relied on a different kind of strength. Its soldiers, called hoplites, fought in a formation called a phalanx — a wall of shields and spears that was extremely difficult to break through. Athens also had a powerful navy, which proved vital in the wars against Persia.

The Persian Wars were two major conflicts in which Greece faced invasion from the enormous Persian Empire. At the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC, the Athenians won a remarkable victory against a much larger force. Ten years later, the Persian King Xerxes returned with an even bigger army. A small band of Spartan warriors, led by King Leonidas, famously delayed the Persian advance at the narrow pass of Thermopylae, buying time for the rest of Greece to prepare.

Questions

1. What does the word "independent" mean in the phrase "independent city-states"?
2. Why was war common in Ancient Greece?
3. What was the name of the Spartan training programme?
4. At what age were Spartan boys taken from their families?
5. What was the phalanx formation?
6. What other military strength did Athens have besides its hoplite soldiers?
7. What were the Persian Wars?
8. What happened at the Battle of Marathon?
9. Who was King Leonidas?
10. Why do you think the narrow pass of Thermopylae was a good location for a smaller army to hold back a much larger one?



Text C Quiz



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