

Athens vs. Sparta



Overview

In reality Athens and Sparta were both fairly militaristic, and at times 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. Even as we acknowledge this, it is important to note that these generalities are based on some truth and fact. How should nations focus their development: Knowledge or Strength? Brains or Brawn?

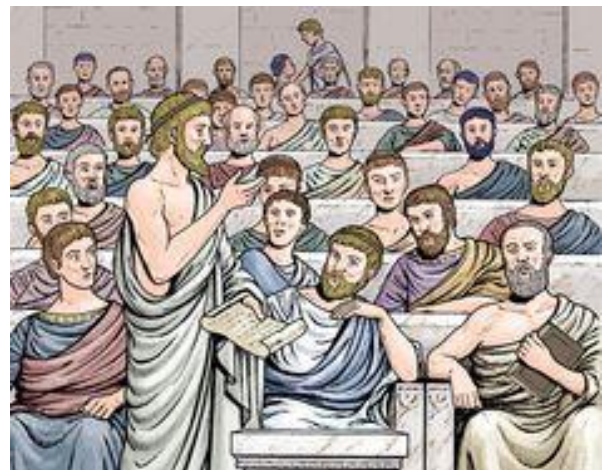


Take a side – Brains or Brawn?

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 B.C. 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 developed a direct democracy where citizens chose the members of a powerful Assembly. Athenian youth were encouraged to develop artistic and intellectual talents to such a degree that historians refer to this time as Athens’s ‘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.



Task #1

Both of the quotations below were made by very famous people in world history (neither is from the ancient period). First, read through both quotes, and then decide whether you think the quote best represents the government model of **Ancient Sparta** or **Ancient Athens**. **Write out one line from the quote which best shows 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? Sentence and Explanation – on you page for turn-in.

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? Sentence and Explanation – on you page for turn-in.

Who said it?

Task #2

Research and find the pros and cons of both Athenian and Spartan life. Create a full page chart with 4 boxes, labeling the top two boxes: Pros of Spartan Society, and Cons of Spartan Society. Label the bottom two boxes: Pros of Athenian Society and Cons of Athenian Society.

'Pros' are the good and positive thing about their society and life. 'Cons' are the bad and destructive thing about their society and life.

A minimum of 4 bullet points per square is required

Task #3

Recruitment Poster:

Sparta and Athens was constantly in a struggle to become the most powerful city-state in Greece. Your final task will be to construct an appealing, informative recruitment poster in order 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 and cons from task #2 to create your poster.

A quality poster will include:

- An engaging and appealing title
- Pros and cons throughout which support one side and is critical of the other
- Illustrations to support your material
- One half page written explanation supporting the type of government you chose.

Use front and back of a computer sheet of paper for your poster!