2 Warring City-States

MAIN IDEA

The growth of city-states in Greece led to the development of several political systems, including democracy.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Many political systems in today's world mirror the varied forms of government that evolved in Greece.

SETTING THE STAGE After the sea peoples invaded mainland Greece around 1200 B.C., the Dorians moved into the area. Greek civilization experienced a period of decline during the Dorian period. After many centuries, Dorians and Mycenaeans alike identified less with the culture of their ancestors and more with their local city-state. By 750 B.C. the Greeks saw the rise of powerful city-states.

Rule and Order in Greek City-States

By 750 B.C., the city-state, or **polis,** was the fundamental political unit in ancient Greece. A polis was made up of a city and its surrounding countryside, which included numerous villages. Most city-states controlled between 50 and 500 square miles of territory. They were often home to fewer than 20,000 residents. At the agora (the public center), or on a fortified hilltop called an **acropolis** (uh·KRAHP·uh·lihs), male citizens gathered to conduct business.

Greek Political Structures There were many ways to rule a Greek polis. In some city-states, much like river-valley civilizations, kings or monarchs ruled in a government called a **monarchy.** In time, some city-states adopted an **aristocracy** (AR·uh·STAHK·ruh·see), a government ruled by a small group of noble, land-owning families. These very rich families often gained political power after working in a king's military cavalry.

   Later, as trade expanded, a new class of wealthy merchants and artisans emerged in some cities. When these groups became dissatisfied with aristocratic rule, they sometimes took power or shared it with the nobility. They formed an **oligarchy,** a government ruled by a few powerful people. The idea of representative government also began to take root in many city-states. Regardless of its political structure, each polis enjoyed a close-knit community. Most Greeks looked down on all non-Greek foreigners, whom they considered barbarians.

A New Kind of Army Emerges During the Dorian Age, only the rich could afford bronze spears, shields, breastplates, and chariots. Iron later replaced bronze in the manufacture of weapons. Harder than bronze, iron was more common and therefore cheaper. Soon, ordinary citizens could afford to arm and defend themselves.

   The shift from bronze to iron weapons made possible a new kind of army composed of merchants, artisans, and small landowners. Citizens were expected to defend the polis. Foot soldiers, called hoplites, stood side by side, holding a spear in one hand and a shield in the other. This fearsome formation, or **phalanx** (FAY·lanks), was the most powerful fighting force in the ancient world.

Tyrants Seize Power No ruler could ignore the power of the citizen-soldiers. In many city-states, unemployed farmers and debt-ridden artisans joined in revolt against the

Armed with spears, shields, and protective headgear, Greek foot soldiers marched into battle. Artists often re-created scenes like the one pictured above on Greek pottery.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY
A. Making Inferences How would the ability to own weapons change the outlook of ordinary citizens?

Background
The term *hoplite* comes from the word *hoplon,* a shield that covered half of the soldier's body.

nobles. Powerful individuals, called **tyrants,** gained control of the government by appealing to the poor and the discontented for support.

The rule of some city-states passed from one tyrant to the next as competing groups took power. Other cities, however, found new ways of governing. Among these city-states were two of the most powerful, Sparta and Athens.

Sparta Builds a Military State

Located in the southern part of Greece known as the Peloponnesus (PEHL·uh·puh·NEE·sus), Sparta was nearly cut off from the rest of Greece by the Gulf of Corinth. (See the map on page 112.) Unlike other city-states, Sparta built a military state.

SPOTLIGHT ON

Warrior-Women

Greek myths of an army of fierce warrior-women called Amazons have thrilled readers for centuries. Legend has it that the Amazons fought and governed, while their husbands cooked and cleaned. Skilled archers and swordswomen, Amazons were expected to kill before marrying.

For centuries historians dismissed tales of the Amazons as fantasy. In 1997, however, Russian and American archaeologists unearthed contrary evidence. In Pokrovka, Kazakhstan, they dug up 44 burial mounds. Inside they found the skeletons of women buried with swords and iron daggers.

Scientists think these ancient women may have inspired Greek legend. These finds have also cast new light on the roles of women in societies long ago.

Sparta Dominates Messenians While other city-states founded colonies abroad, Sparta conquered neighboring Messenia around 725 B.C. and took over the land. The Messenians became **helots** (HEHL·uhts), peasants forced to stay on the land they worked. Each year, the Spartans demanded half of the helots' yearly crop. Around 600 B.C., the Messenians, who outnumbered the Spartans eight to one, revolted. The Spartans just barely put down the revolt, and then dedicated themselves to the creation of a strong city-state.

Sparta's Government and Society Two groups governed Sparta. An assembly, composed of all free adult males, elected officials and voted on major issues. The second group was the Council of Elders. It proposed laws on which the assembly voted. Five elected officials called ephors carried out the laws the council passed. These men controlled education and prosecuted court cases. In addition, two kings ruled over Sparta's military.

Like its political structure, Sparta's population was diverse and consisted of several social groups. The first were citizens descended from the original inhabitants of the region. This group included the ruling families who owned the land. A second group, noncitizens but free, worked in commerce and industry. The helots, near the bottom of Spartan society, were a little higher than slaves. Some also served as household servants or worked for the citizen hoplite warriors.

Background
The kings of Sparta were not monarchs in the traditional sense but hereditary military leaders.

Spartan Education For men, daily life centered around military training. Training was rigorous. At the age of seven, boys left home and moved into army barracks. Wearing no shoes, they marched in light tunics during the day and slept on hard benches at night. Trainees gulped down meager meals of coarse black porridge. Such schooling produced tough soldiers.

Spartan girls also led hardy lives. Although they did not receive military training, they ran, wrestled, and played sports. Like the boys, they also learned to put service to Sparta above even love of family. As adults, women managed the family estates while their husbands served the polis. Although Spartan women did not have the right to vote, their roles in Spartan society surprised men from other Greek city-states. This was particularly true in Athens, where citizens expected women to remain out of sight and quietly raise children.

From around 600 until 371 B.C., the Spartans had the most powerful army in Greece, but they paid a high price for that position. All forms of individual expression were discouraged. As a result, Spartans did not value the arts and had practically no time for artistic expression. Spartans valued duty, strength, and discipline over individuality, beauty, and freedom.

Spartan women, such as the runner below, took part in athletic contests.

Athens Builds a Limited Democracy

Located on a rocky hill in eastern Greece, Athens lay to the north of Sparta. (See the map on page 112.) In outlook and values, Athens contrasted sharply with Sparta. An ambassador from the city-state of Corinth once compared the Spartans to the Athenians in a speech to the Spartan assembly. He told the Spartans that though they had the strongest army in Greece, they were too cautious. He also said that the Spartans lacked imagination and curiosity. Athenians, he said, were always eager to learn new ideas because they had been educated to think and act as free people.

Political Developments in Athens Like other city-states, Athens went through a power struggle between rich and poor. However, Athenians avoided civil war by making timely reforms. Athenian reformers tried to create **democracy,** rule by the people. In Athens, citizens participated directly in political decision making.

Not everyone in Athens had a part in this new form of political participation. Only free adult males counted as citizens. Women, slaves, and foreigners living in Athens were excluded from citizenship and had few rights. Slaves formed about one-third of the Athenian population. They worked in mines, farmed fields, and did housework.

In general, Athenian women focused their attention on child rearing, weaving cloth, preparing meals, and managing the household. In this excerpt, a Greek historian describes what a husband expected from his wife:

Forms of Government

Monarchy
- State ruled by a king
- Rule is hereditary
- Some rulers claim divine right
- Practiced in Mycenae (1450 B.C.)

Aristocracy
- State ruled by nobility
- Rule is hereditary and based on land ownership
- Social status and wealth support rulers' authority
- Practiced in Athens (594 B.C.)

Oligarchy
- State ruled by a small group of citizens
- Rule is based on wealth
- Ruling group controls military
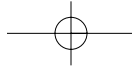- Practiced in Sparta (800–600 B.C.)

Direct Democracy
- State ruled by its citizens
- Rule is based on citizenship
- Majority rule decides vote
- Practiced in Athens (461 B.C.)

For Athenian women, life centered around home and the family.

> **A VOICE FROM THE PAST**
> You will need to stay indoors. . . . The greatest joy of all will be to prove yourself . . . a better helpmate to myself and to the children, a better guardian of our home, so will your honor increase. . . . [By being dutiful] you will enjoy your food, grow vigorous in health, and your complexion will in very truth be lovelier.
> **XENOPHON**, *Oeconomicus*

SKILLBUILDER:
Interpreting Charts
1. *Which forms of government feature rule based on wealth or property ownership?*
2. *In which form of government do citizens have the most power?*

In addition to having no part in government, women had very little to do with the city's intellectual life.

Solon's Political and Economic Reforms Repeated clashes occurred between the aristocrats who governed Athens and the common people. A group of peasants foiled an attempt by an Athenian nobleman named Cylon (SI·luhn) to establish a tyranny. In return, they demanded a written code of laws. In 621 B.C., the Greek lawmaker Draco wrote the first legal code, dealing mainly with contracts and property ownership. Draco's code included such unfair practices as debt slavery, in which small farmers worked as slaves to repay their debts. As a result, conflicts between the aristocrats and the poor continued. To prevent civil war, in 594 B.C. the aristocrats chose a trusted statesman named Solon (SO·luhn) to head the government. Athenians gave him full power to reform the law.

Background
The legal code prepared by Draco was so harsh that the word *draconian* has become a synonym for "extreme cruelty or severity."

Solon outlawed debt slavery. He allowed all citizens to participate and debate policies in the Athenian assembly. In another political move, Solon introduced the legal concept that any citizen could bring charges against wrongdoers. In addition, his economic reforms benefited many. For example, by encouraging the export of grapes and olives, Solon initiated a profitable overseas trade and demand for these products.

Although Solon initiated political and economic changes, he neglected land reforms. At the end of his rule, fighting erupted between wealthy landowners and the poor

farmers. Around 546 B.C., a nobleman and military leader named Pisistratus (py·SIS·truh·tuhs) seized power and became one of Athens' first tyrants. Seeking power at the expense of the nobles, he provided funds to help peasants buy farm equipment. He financed this reform by a tax on agricultural production. Pisistratus also launched a massive building program that gave jobs to the poor and earned him their support.

Reforms of Cleisthenes Beginning in 508 B.C., the Athenian leader Cleisthenes (KLYS·thuh·NEEZ) introduced further reforms. He worked to make Athens a full democracy by reorganizing the assembly to break up the power of the nobility. He also increased the power of the assembly by allowing all citizens to submit laws for debate and passage. Cleisthenes then created the Council of Five Hundred. This body proposed laws and counseled the assembly. Council members were chosen by lot, or at random. While these reforms allowed Athenian citizens to participate in a limited democracy, only one-fifth of Athenian residents were actual citizens.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY
B. Contrasting How would you compare the ideals of Spartan and Athenian society?

The Persian Wars

Danger of a helot revolt led to Sparta becoming a military state. Danger of revolution among poverty-stricken farmers led to Athens becoming a democracy. The greatest danger of all—invasion by Persian armies—moved Sparta and Athens alike to their greatest glory.

Battle at Marathon The **Persian Wars,** between Greece and the Persian Empire, began in Ionia on the coast of Anatolia. Greeks had long been settled there, but around 520 B.C., the Persians conquered the area. When Ionian Greeks revolted, Athens sent ships and soldiers to their aid. The Persian king Darius defeated the rebels and then vowed to destroy Athens in revenge.
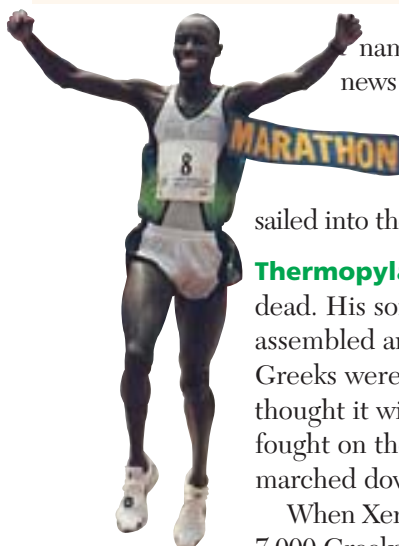
In 490 B.C., a Persian fleet carried 25,000 men across the Aegean Sea and landed northeast of Athens on a plain called Marathon. There, 10,000 Athenians, neatly arranged in phalanxes, waited for them. Vastly outnumbered, the Greek soldiers charged. The Persians, who wore light armor and lacked training in this kind of land combat, were no match for the disciplined Greek phalanx. After several hours, the Persians fled the battlefield. The casualties reportedly numbered 6,400 Persians and only 192 Athenians.

Though the Athenians won the land battle, their city now stood defenseless. According to tradition, army leaders chose a young runner named Pheidippides (fy·DIP·uh·DEEZ) to race back to Athens. He brought news of the Persian defeat so that Athenians would not give up the city without a fight. Sprinting the distance from Marathon to Athens, Pheidippides delivered his message, collapsed, and died. The Greek army soon set off rapidly and were actually waiting in Athens when the Persian ships sailed into the harbor. The Persians quickly sailed away in retreat.

Thermopylae and Salamis Ten years later, in 480 B.C., Darius the Great was dead. His son and successor Xerxes (ZURK·seez) tried to crush Greece. Xerxes assembled an enormous invasion force of ships and men. By then, however, the Greeks were badly divided. Some city-states agreed to fight the Persians. Others thought it wiser to let Xerxes destroy Athens and return home. Some Greeks even fought on the Persian side. Consequently, Xerxes' army met no resistance as it marched down the eastern coast of Greece.

When Xerxes came to a narrow mountain pass at Thermopylae (thur·MAHP·uh·lee), 7,000 Greeks, including 300 Spartans, blocked his way. The Persian king underestimated their power. They fought for three days before a traitor told the Persians about

CONNECT *to* TODAY

Modern Marathons

Today, the word *marathon* refers to a foot race of 26 miles, 385 yards. One of the largest and best known is the Boston Marathon. The history of this grueling race dates back to the Persian Wars and Pheidippides' run from Marathon to Athens.

After running at top speed for approximately 25 miles, Pheidippides arrived in Athens. He gasped "Rejoice, we conquer," and instantly died. His heroic run inspired officials at the 1896 Olympic Games in Athens to add a 26-mile marathon to their competition.

In 1908, officials in London further lengthened the race. King Edward VII decided he wanted it to begin at Windsor Castle—385 yards from the city's Olympic Stadium. The photo below shows Lameck Aquita of Kenya, who won the 1997 Boston Marathon with a time of 2 hours, 10 minutes, 34 seconds.
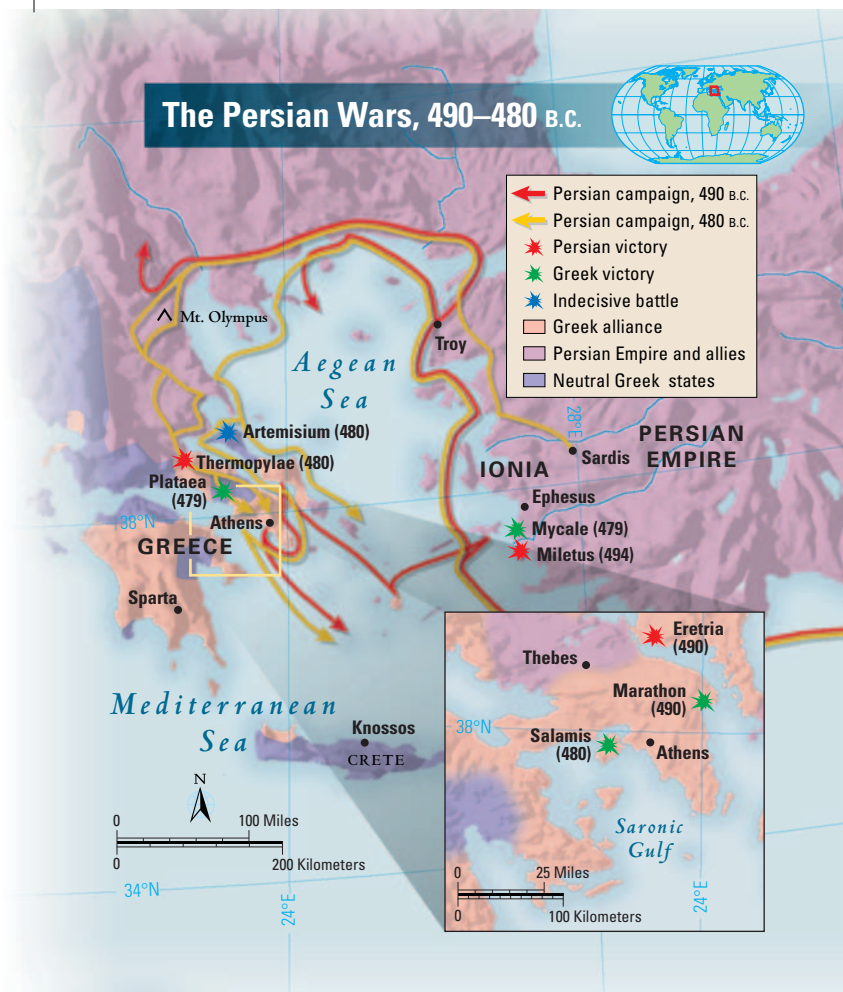
a secret path around the cliffs. Fearing defeat, the Spartans held the pass while the other Greek forces retreated. The Spartans' valiant sacrifice—all were killed—made a great impression on all Greeks.

Meanwhile, in Athens, the citizens debated how best to defend the city. Themistocles, an Athenian statesman, convinced Athenians to evacuate the city and fight at sea. He positioned the Greek fleet in a narrow channel near the island of Salamis (SAL·uh·mihs), a few miles southwest of Athens. After setting fire to Athens, Xerxes sent his warships to block both ends of the channel. However, the channel was too narrow to permit the Persian fleet to maneuver well. Greek ships drove their battering rams straight into the wooden hulls, punching holes in the Persian war-ships. Xerxes watched in horror as more than one-third of his fleet sank. The Spartans defeated the rest of the Persian army at a third battle on the plain of Plataea (pluh·TEE·uh) in 479 B.C.

Consequences of the Persian Wars

With the Persian threat ended, all the Greek city-states felt a new sense of confidence and freedom. Athens, in particular, basked in the glory of the Persian defeat. After the war, Athens became the leader of an alliance of 140 city-states called the Delian (DEE·lee·uhn) League. The league drove the Persians from the territories surrounding Greece and ended the threat of future attacks. Soon there-after, Athens began to use its powerful navy to control the other league members. The prestige of victory and the wealth of the empire set the stage for a dazzling burst of creativity in Athens. The city was entering its brief, golden age.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY
C. Recognizing Effects How did the Persian Wars affect the Greek people, especially the Athenians?

The Persian Wars, 490–480 B.C.

Legend:
→ Persian campaign, 490 B.C.
→ Persian campaign, 480 B.C.
✶ Persian victory
✶ Greek victory
✶ Indecisive battle
▢ Greek alliance
▢ Persian Empire and allies
▢ Neutral Greek states

Mt. Olympus
Troy
Aegean Sea
Artemisium (480)
Thermopylae (480)
Plataea (479)
Athens
GREECE
Sparta
Mediterranean Sea
Knossos
CRETE
N
0   100 Miles
0   200 Kilometers
34°N
38°N
24°E
28°E
IONIA
Sardis
PERSIAN EMPIRE
Ephesus
Mycale (479)
Miletus (494)

Inset:
Eretria (490)
Thebes
Marathon (490)
Salamis (480)
Athens
Saronic Gulf
38°N
24°E
0   25 Miles
0   100 Kilometers

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps
1. **Movement** By what routes did the Persians choose to attack Greece? Explain why.
2. **Location** Where did most of the battles of the Persian Wars occur? How might their citizens be affected?
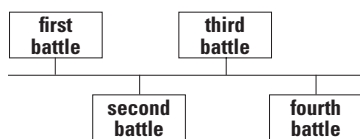

Section 2 Assessment

1. TERMS & NAMES

Identify
- polis
- acropolis
- monarchy
- aristocracy
- oligarchy
- phalanx
- tyrant
- helot
- democracy
- Persian Wars

2. TAKING NOTES

Create a time line of the major battles of the Persian Wars in Greece, using a chart such as the one below. For each battle, include the victor.

first battle		third battle	
	second battle		fourth battle

Pretend that you are a newspaper reporter in ancient Greece. Write appropriate headlines for each battle.

3. CONTRASTING

How was living in Athens different from living in Sparta?

THINK ABOUT
- roles of citizens
- type/form of government
- societal values

4. THEME ACTIVITY

Power and Authority Draw a cartoon or write a political monologue about democracy from an Athenian slave's point of view.

Classical Greece **119**