

## Magnetic Debate: Athens vs. Sparta

# STANDARDS

### I. Culture

- b. Explain how information and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.
- c. Explain and give examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture.
- d. Explain why individuals and groups respond differently to their physical and social environments and/or changes to them on the basis of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs.

### IV. Individual Development and Identity

- h. Work independently and cooperatively to accomplish goals.

### V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

- a. Demonstrate an understanding of concepts such as role, status, and social class in describing the interactions of individuals and social groups.
- g. Apply knowledge of how groups and institutions work to meet individual needs and promote the common good.

### VI. Power, Authority, and Governance

- a. Examine persistent issues involving the rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare.

### X. Civic Ideals and Practices

- b. Identify and interpret sources and examples of the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
- c. Locate, access, analyze, organize, and apply information about selected public issues—recognizing and explaining multiple points of views.
- e. Explain and analyze various forms of citizen action that influence public policy decisions.

## Background Information

Undoubtedly, when the Athenians actively supported the Ionian city-states of Asia Minor in their rebellion against the Medes (Persians), they precipitated the events that resulted in the invasion of Greece by the Persian Empire. Otherwise, Darius or Xerxes, the great Persian kings, probably would not have bothered with what they perceived as a minor backwater culture and civilization that was scattered among the isolated scrubby valleys, ridges, and wind-swept mountains of the Balkan Peninsula. Yet the Athenians did give aid and assistance to their fellow Greeks and, inadvertently, issued a challenge that the great Persian rulers could not ignore.

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### Background Information *(cont.)*

Throughout the great wars against Persia during the fifth century B.C., Athens and Sparta had been allies with the other Greek city-states and successfully turned back the invasions of Darius and Xerxes. For more than 300 years, Sparta was the greatest land power among the Greek city-states and exerted a tremendous influence over all of the Hellenes. Yet, the great victory at Marathon belonged to Athenian hoplites (infantry) and phalanx (formation of soldiers). And when the Persians came the second time bent on the destruction of the Greeks, the Athenians annihilated the Persian fleet at Salamis while the Spartans crushed them on the battlefield at Plataea.

The histories of the Persian wars as set down by Herodotus provide a remarkable account, for the narrative clearly indicates how Sparta and Athens aligned together to turn back the invader. The bravery of King Leonidas at Thermopylae, where he and his 300 Spartans made their stand to delay the Persian advance and died to the last man, was as great a sacrifice as any made by the other Greeks, including the Athenians who had to abandon their city and see it torched and destroyed. Yet, within a generation, both Athens and Sparta were locked in a war that would last 30 years and spell the end of Athenian power and its empire.

Following the Persian wars, the Athenians had attained supremacy as the greatest naval power among the Hellenes. Soon after, Athens rapidly developed into a powerful commercial empire, and tension, based to a great degree on fear, envy and jealousy, made Sparta an enemy. The Delian League, the cornerstone of the Athenian Empire, had numerous city-states aligned with Athens. Those who resented Athenian greatness and power, and were mistrustful of the wealth accumulated in the treasure house on the island of Delos, were drawn to Sparta. While these were some of the apparent reasons for the conflict that soon erupted between Athens and Sparta, other issues existed. Another primary reason for the conflict centered on the differences arising between them. Here were two city-states with less than 150 miles (241 km) separating them who evolved into two wholly different communities, societies, and political systems that were worlds apart.

The Peloponnesian War involved not only the poleis of Sparta and Athens, but their allied city-states. Argos was a polis that was literally nestled smack in the middle, in the region of the northern Peloponnesus and close to the isthmus separating the two major contending powers. The citizens of Argos were compelled to make a difficult choice; would they take sides with Athens, the possessors of the great wealth of the Delian League and the mightiest fleet of triremes? Or, would they align themselves with the Spartans, who were the greatest land power among the Greeks with the most feared phalanx?

## Magnetic Debate: Athens vs. Sparta

### Simulation Three: The Magnetic Debate

In order to prepare for this activity, students will first compare and contrast the quality of life and the role of the citizen in both Athens and Sparta, to determine the best and finest attributes of each of the city-states. Students will be assigned different roles, some taking on the task of an advocate for the Athenian or the Spartan side, others forming an interrogation committee of citizens from the polis of Argos. Through the magnetic debate forum, students will deliver persuasive speeches and try to convince the citizens from Argos to take their side. Students who role-play the Argives will have to decide if they want to secure an alliance with either Athens or Sparta.

#### Materials

- one roll of masking tape
- two packages of index cards

*Student Handbook:* Athenian Envoy Speaks to the Argives on the Eve of the War (page EA-18 or EB-18) and Spartan Envoy Speaks to the Argives on the Eve of the War (page EA-19 or EB-19)

*Overhead Section:* The Peloponnesian War and The Peloponnesian War: Navy vs. Infantry

*Reproducibles Section:* Magnetic Debate Between Athens and Sparta Chart (page H-61)

Establish workstations that you will use in the classroom, housing trade books, journals, magazines, etc., on the life of Ancient Greece. If room allows, one can be designated for Athenian life, whereas the other workstation would be designated for Spartan life.

Students will be asked to bring a sheet to school to simulate a toga-like garment. Encourage them to bring other items to enhance their appearance.

A box of large safety pins is needed to help them put the toga-like garment over their clothing.

#### Diagram



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## Magnetic Debate: Athens vs. Sparta

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### Simulation Three: The Magnetic Debate (cont.)

#### Preparation for the Magnetic Debate (cont.)

1. The teacher divides the class into cooperative groups of four students each, with one extra group consisting of 5 students. If the class size is over 30 students, then the extra group should consist of 7 students. This larger group will be assigned to the citizens of Argos called the Argives and must be an odd number. It is their job to thoroughly compare and contrast the two different points of view in order to determine the proper fate of their city-state. They want to make sure that they have enough information in order to determine whether they will align themselves with Athens or with Sparta.
2. Assign one group of four students to sit on the interrogation committee. Once again, if the class size is over 30, then have two groups sit on the interrogation committee.
3. The rest of the cooperative groups are divided evenly; one half needs to prepare their position for Athens while the other half prepares their position for Sparta.
4. Brainstorm the different things they have to discuss in order to give an adequate overview of their way of life or society. Sample topics may be the following:
  - government and politics/citizenship
  - role of men
  - morals and ethics
  - role of women
  - military strength
  - role of boys
  - naval strength
  - role of girls
  - slaves: treatment and population
  - entertainment
  - attitude towards visitors/trade
5. Have each person in the persuasive groups take on one of the items mentioned in #4. Therefore, one person from Athens will prepare to discuss the government, which will be subjected to a rebuttal and followed by a persuasive speech from the opposing side.
6. Have students turn to the worksheets in the student handbook; one addresses the position of the Athenians and the other the Spartans. It is imperative the students use these sheets only as a springboard for their own inquiry-based research. Let students know that they are welcome to use the workstation that you have established in the classroom, housing trade books, journals, magazines, etc., on the life of Ancient Greece. Strongly encourage them to use the Internet and their own libraries as well to further their knowledge of the two nations.

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## **Magnetic Debate: Athens vs. Sparta**

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### **Simulation Three: The Magnetic Debate** *(cont.)*

#### **Preparation for the Magnetic Debate** *(cont.)*

7. In order for students to properly prepare to give a one to two minute persuasive speech, discuss what criteria make up a strong oral presentation. Negotiate the criteria of assessment with your students. Samples may include the following:
  - strong introductory statement that captivates the audience
  - use of primary source quotes to substantiate their position
  - supportive statements that offer specific examples
  - a conclusion that leaves them with something to remember
  - good eye contact that scans the audience
  - clear and succinct language
  - portrays emotions that proves that they really care
8. Students write their rough drafts or “sloppy copies,” and place them aside for a day or two. Since it will only be a one to two minute speech, a one-page type written speech is all that is necessary.
9. Students review their sloppy copies, making editorial changes. It’s recommended that two students exchange their drafts and use an editing checklist to review the one-page speech.
10. Once their persuasive speeches are written in a final draft form, ask students to highlight the key terms in each paragraph.
11. Have students place these key terms on index cards. Let them know that they are not allowed to write down more than four or five words per card. There is nothing worse than students having their heads bent down reading off cards, rather than having their heads upright and using proper body language to captivate an audience. The cards should be numbered properly and be initialed by the teacher. All students must get approval before being allowed to participate in the symposium. This is to insure that few words are placed on each index card.
12. Members of the group may decide on having a multimodal presentation. Using pictures, bar graphs, circle graphs, tapes, or a short selected video empowers a group to reconfirm what it is verbally stating. These modes of presentation should be used to substantiate what the group debates, rather than drive the debate itself.
13. In the meantime, those students who sit on the interrogation committee generate a list of questions for the symposium. The quality of their questions will be graded. Also inform them that they will have to write a one-page response as to what position they would ultimately take after the symposium is over.

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## Magnetic Debate: Athens vs. Sparta

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### Simulation Three: The Magnetic Debate *(cont.)*

#### Preparation for the Magnetic Debate *(cont.)*

14. Allow students the opportunity to practice their speeches. It is not necessary for students to memorize their speeches. They become tense at this age, and worry more about what word comes next in their speech rather than how persuasively they are speaking and whether or not they are conveying the meaning behind their message.
15. Tell students to bring plain white cotton sheets to school on the day of the symposium. It will be wrapped around them to simulate toga-like garments. Inform them that in Ancient Greece, the only ones who would be allowed to participate would be the male citizens. Encourage students to bring sandals along with other peripheral items!
16. Make students aware that they will have to listen very carefully to what is spoken during the magnetic debate. They will be required to fill out a chart in their student handbook that compares and contrasts the differences between the two city-states.
17. To prepare the classroom on the day of the debate, have the interrogation committee sit behind their desks all lined up in a row, facing the rest of the classroom in the front portion of the classroom.
18. Take a piece of masking tape and draw a line down the center of the classroom.
19. Ask the students who will speak for Sparta to sit on one side of the classroom facing the Athenian group, which sits at the opposite wall.
20. The Argives place their chairs on the middle tapeline and sit down. Look at the diagram found in the beginning of this section for further clarification.

#### Activity

1. The teacher sets the stage by calling all male citizens of the Argives and their visitors to order, and states that a decision has to be made to determine if their city-state will align itself to Athens or to Sparta, since tension is high with the onset of the Peloponnesian War.
2. The teacher calls out the first category (i.e., government).
3. The person who is responsible for this item stands up and addresses the symposium. Begin with the person from Athens.
4. After the speech, the interrogation committee is allowed to ask one or two questions, to which the speaker is allowed to respond, for clarification.
5. Now the person responsible for this category from Sparta gives a short rebuttal to what has been said, followed by his or her own address.
6. Once again the interrogation committee is allowed to ask one or two questions, etc.

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## Magnetic Debate: Athens vs. Sparta

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### Simulation Three: The Magnetic Debate (cont.)

#### Activity (cont.)

7. The teacher now calls the next category. This time, the Spartan representative begins, and the Athenians respond. Follow this format by alternating which group goes first.
8. At any time after each category has been completed, Argives can move their chairs over by two tiles on the floor closer to the group that has persuaded them. You may see the chair move in one direction for part of the class and then back in the other direction during the later part of the presentations.
9. After all categories have been called and heard, the side to which the largest number of Argives has moved their chairs, wins.
10. The teacher gives a finishing speech addressing what has been said in the symposium, thanking them for taking their time to come to their government hall, and by stating which way of life the Argives has decided to support.
11. The teacher reminds those who did not prepare speeches that they have to prepare a written response to the debate and to take a stand.
12. All students are required to fill out the Magnetic Debate Between Athens and Sparta Chart found in the reproducible section.
13. The next day the teacher uses an overhead of a primary source document titled The Peloponnesian War found in the overhead section. The teacher calls upon the students who sat on the interrogation committee to read their personal predictions as to what the Argives would say.
14. This is followed by calling on the Argives, who render their decision.
15. The class reflects on the activity and discusses what was learned.
16. The teacher uses the overhead titled, The Peloponnesian War: Navy vs. Infantry, found in Section F. The students discuss the ultimate outcome of the war.