

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Period \_\_\_\_\_

## SPARTA

Ancient Greece wasn't one large empire but a collection of smaller city-states. The term the Greeks used was *polis*, which means "city-state". A *polis* was bigger than a city but smaller than a state. They were scattered throughout the Mediterranean area. Some were sea-ports while others were more inland. The two most famous city-states were Athens and Sparta. Although the people living in these city-states were all Greek, each city-state did different things and had different beliefs. Lets examine these differences by looking at two city-states.

**Directions:** Read the following excerpt about Sparta and answer the questions that follow.

*"I recall the astonishment with which I first noted the unique position of Sparta among the states of Hellas, the relatively sparse population, and at the same time the extraordinary powers and prestige of the community. I was puzzled to account for the fact. It was only when I came to consider the peculiar institutions of the Spartans, that my wonderment ceased.*

*When we turn to Lycurgos [Sparta's legendary lawgiver], instead of leaving it to each member of the state privately to appoint a slave to be his son's tutor, he set over the young Spartans a public guardian . . . with omplete authority over them. This guardian was elected from those who filled the highest magistracies. He had authority to hold musters of the bys, and as their guardian, in case of any misbehavior, to chastise severely. Lycurgos further provided the guardian with a body of youths in the prime of life and bearing whips to inflict punishment when necessary, with this happy result, that in Sparta modesty and obedience ever go handin hand, nor is there lack of either. Instead of softening their feet with shoe or sandal, his rule was to make them hardy through going barefoot. This habit, if practiced, would, as he believed, enable them to scale heights more easily and clamber down precipices with less danger. In fact, with his feet so trained the young Spartan would leap and spring and run faster unshod than another in the ordinary way. Instead of making them effeminate with a variety of clothes, his rule was to habituate them to a single garment the whole year through, thinking that so they would be better prepared to withstand the variations of heat and cold."*

1. Who do you think defended Sparta?
2. How did they treat their soldiers? Describe the training of soldiers.
3. How does their treatment of soldiers depict what life was like in Sparta?

## **ROLE OF WOMEN IN SPARTA:**



1. What do you see?
2. What does this picture tell us about the role of women in Spartan society?

*“For it was not by imitating other states, but by devising a system utterly different from that of most others, that he [Lycurgus] made his country prosperous...he insisted on physical training for the female no less than for the male sex: moreover, he instituted races and trials of strength for women competitors as for men, believing that if both parents are strong they produce more vigorous offspring...”*  
*(Xenophon, 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Constitution of the Lacedaemonians 1.3-1.4 translation provided in Fantham, 1994, 61)*

1. What does this primary source tell us about the women in Spartan society?
2. Why did they want Spartan women to be in good shape?

*“The father did not decide whether to raise a baby; rather he took it and carried it to some place called Lesche where the elders of the tribes sat and examined the infant, and if it was well built and sturdy, they ordered the father to rear it, and assigned it one of the nine thousand lots of land; but if it was ill born and misshapen, they sent it to the so-called ‘Apothetae,’ a chasm-like place at the foot of Mount Taygetus, thinking that any baby which was not naturally created at the very beginning to be healthy and strong was of no good either to itself or the state. Therefore the women used to bathe their newborn babies not with water but with wine, thus making a sort of test of their constitutions. For it is said that epileptic and sickly infants are thrown into convulsions by the unmixed wine and lose their senses, while the healthy ones are rather hardened by it, and given a strong constitution.”*  
*(Plutarch, Life of Lycurgus, 16.1-2 translated in Pomeroy, 2002, 34-35)*

1. What would happen to a baby that was deemed “unfit”?
2. What does this tell us about Spartan society?