

Persia Attacks the Greeks

The Persian Wars

Both Sparta and Athens played roles in defeating the _____.

As the Greeks set up colonies in the Mediterranean area, they often clashed with the Persians. By mid-500s, Persia controlled the Greek cities inside Asia Minor. 499 – Athenian army helped the Greeks in Asia Minor _____ --- it failed but King Darius decided the mainland Greeks had to be stopped from interfering in the Persian Empire. Have you and a rival ever set aside your differences to work for a common cause? This is an example.

The Battle of Marathon

In 490 B.C. a Persian fleet landed 20,000 soldiers on the plain of _____ (MAR•uh•THAHN), only a short distance from Athens. For several days, the Persians waited there for the Athenians to advance. The Athenians, however, did not take the bait. They had only 10,000 soldiers compared to the Persians' 20,000. They knew that attacking was too dangerous. Instead they held back in the hills overlooking the _____.

Tired of waiting, the Persian commander decided to sail south and attack Athens directly. He ordered his troops back onto the _____, and it was then that he made a big mistake. The first to board, he decided, would be the horsemen in the cavalry, the strongest part of the Persian army.

As soon as the cavalry was out of fighting range, the Greeks charged down from the hills and onto the plain of Marathon. They caught the Persian foot soldiers standing in the water, waiting their turn to board the ships. Unable to defend themselves, the Persians were easily _____.

According to legend, the Athenians sent a messenger named Pheidippides (fy•DIHP•uh•DEEZ) home with the news. The _____ raced nearly 25 miles (40.2 km) from Marathon to Athens. He collapsed from exhaustion and, with his last breath, announced, "Victory." Then he died. Modern marathon races are named for this famous run and are just over 26 miles long.

Another Persian Strike

After _____ died in 486 B.C., his son Xerxes (ZUHRK•SEEZ) became the Persian king. Xerxes vowed revenge against the Athenians. In 480 B.C. he launched a new invasion of Greece, this time with about 180,000 troops and thousands of warships and supply vessels.

To defend themselves, the Greeks _____ forces. Sparta sent the most soldiers, and their king, Leonidas (lee•AH•nuh•duhs), served as commander. Athens provided the navy. An Athenian general, Themistocles (thuh•MIHS•tuh•KLEEZ), created a plan to fight the Persians.

The Greeks knew that as the huge Persian army marched south, it depended on shipments of food brought in by _____. Themistocles argued that the Greeks' best strategy would be to attack the Persians' ships and cut off food supplies to the army.

To ready their fleet for battle, the Greeks needed to stall the Persian army before it reached Athens. The Greeks decided the best place to block the Persians was at Thermopylae (thuhr•MAH•puh•lee). Thermopylae was a narrow pass through the mountains that was easy to defend. About 7,000 Greek soldiers held off the Persians there for _____ days.

The Spartans in the Greek army were especially _____. As one story has it, the Greeks heard that Persian arrows would darken the sky. A Spartan warrior responded, "That is good news. We will fight in the shade!"

Unfortunately for the Greeks, a traitor exposed a mountain path to the Persians that led them around the Greeks. As the Persians mounted a rear attack, King Leonidas sent most of his troops to _____. He and several hundred others, however, stayed behind and fought to the death. The Greeks lost the battle at Thermopylae, but their valiant stand gave Athens enough time to assemble _____ ships.

Salamis

The Greek _____ attacked the Persian fleet in the strait of Salamis (SA•luh •muhs), not far from Athens. A strait is a narrow strip of water between two pieces of land. The Greeks expected to have the upper hand in the battle because their ships could maneuver well in tight spaces. Greek ships were smaller, faster, and easier to steer than the big Persian ships, which became easy targets.

The Greek plan _____ After a ferocious battle, the Greeks destroyed almost the entire Persian fleet. Still, the Persian army marched on. When their troops reached Athens, the Greeks had already fled.

The Persians _____ the city. This only stiffened the resolve of the Greek city-states. In early 479 B.C., they came together to form the largest Greek army ever assembled. With solid body armor, longer spears, and better training, the Greek army crushed the Persian army at Plataea (pluh•TEE•uh), northwest of Athens.

The battle was a turning point for the _____, convincing the Persians to retreat to Asia Minor. By working together, the Greek city-states had saved their homeland from invasion.

Fall of Persian Empire

When the Greeks defeated the Persian army, they helped to _____ it. The empire was already affected by internal problems. As these problems worsened, the empire would gradually lose its strength.

Persia remained intact for almost _____ more years. However, after Darius and Xerxes, other Persian rulers raised taxes to gain more wealth. They spent the gold and silver that flowed into the treasuries on luxuries for the royal court.

The high taxes angered their subjects and caused many rebellions. At the same time, the Persian royal family fought over who was to be king. Many of the later Persian kings were killed by other family members who wanted the _____.

Persian kings had many wives and children. The sons had little, if any, power so they were constantly plotting to take over the throne. As a result of such plots, six of the nine rulers after Darius were _____.

All of these problems made Persia vulnerable to attack. By the time a young Greek conqueror named Alexander invaded the empire in 334 B.C., the Persians were _____ match for his troops.

By 330 B.C., the last Persian king was dead and _____ ruled over all his lands.

Review

- The Persian Empire united its many lands under a single government.
- The Persian Empire attacked Greece several times. Despite their rivalry, Athens and Sparta joined forces to defeat the Persians.

Why was Cyrus considered a fair ruler?

Battle	Action
Marathon	
Thermopylae	
Salamis	
Plataea	