

# Life in Sparta

While Athens and other Greek city-states made great strides in such areas as art, literature, and philosophy, Sparta, another Greek city-state, developed into a military camp. Because of their emphasis on the military and their rejection of luxuries, the Spartans made no major cultural contributions.

The Spartans ruled over a huge slave population known as helots. Partly because there were twenty times as many helots as citizens, the Spartans maintained a powerful army to reduce any chance of rebellion. In time, their army became the most powerful one in Greece.

All aspects of Spartan life centered around physical conditioning. Weak or deformed babies were taken from their parents and left on a mountainside to die of exposure. Boys were removed from the home at age seven and underwent "basic training" in the army until they were twenty. From age twenty to sixty, men were on active duty in the military. They were allowed to marry when they were thirty, but they were required to spend the better part of their time in army barracks.

Girls likewise received vigorous physical training. They did not serve in the military, but Spartan authorities believed that rigorous exercise aided girls in producing healthy children for the state.

Spartan government was controlled by two kings and five elders with total power. A government such as this one, whose leaders are all powerful and are backed by the military, is described as totalitarian.

Circle the letter of each correct answer.

- Helots were Spartan  
a. citizens                      b. soldiers                      c. slaves
- Spartan men served on active duty in the army until the age of  
a. thirty                      b. sixty                      c. twenty
- Which of the following is an example of a totalitarian government?  
a. dictatorship                      b. limited monarchy                      c. republic
- With regard to civilization, the Spartans contributed  
a. much                      b. almost nothing                      c. mostly in the field of literature
- How did the helots influence the Spartan development of a strong military?



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- The adjective *spartan* can mean "marked by great self-discipline or self-denial." Why is this an appropriate meaning for this word derived from *Sparta*?

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# Life in Athens

Athens was one of the most important Greek city-states. It developed a democratic society and became the cultural leader of Greece.

The kind of democracy practiced in Athens was a pure, or direct, democracy. This meant that all citizens assembled and made the laws themselves. However, Athens was not a complete democracy. Citizenship was limited to males who owned land. This excluded those men who were not landowners, as well as women, slaves, and outsiders. In spite of the shortcomings of Athenian democracy, many of our modern democratic ideas originated there.

Women in Athens were treated well but had few rights. They were expected to stay home and concern themselves with domestic chores and raising children. Even the task of going to the market was reserved for the husband of the family. When the man of the house entertained male friends at home, his wife stayed out of sight.

Only boys in Athens received an education. Girls stayed home and were taught household duties and domestic skills by their mothers. Boys were trained to become good citizens, and their schooling stressed development of both the mind and the body. When boys turned eighteen, they were required to participate in two years of military training. Emphasis on education and good citizenship helped make Athens a leader among the Greek city-states for many years.

1. In today's world, a direct democracy is only workable at the smallest local level. Why is such a government not possible at the state and national levels?

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2. Our form of democracy is an indirect, or representative, democracy. How does it differ from the kind of democracy practiced in Athens?

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3. In what ways was Athens not a true democracy?

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4. Is the United States a true democracy? Why or why not?

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# COMPARSION OF ATHENS AND SPARTA

ATHENS

SPARTA

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