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## FROM THE PERSIAN WAR TO THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

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In 480 BC the Persians, with their king Xerxes (ZERK-sees) attacked Greece. Most of the cities in Greece banded together and formed a league to fight the Persians, known as the Delian League. Despite the valiant efforts of the 300 Spartans led by Leonidas, the Greeks lost the Battle of Thermopylae (thur-MOP-uh-lee), but Themistocles proved that the Greek navy was effective against Persia. The Greeks used their navy to win decisive victories at Salamis and again at Plataea (plah-TAY-ah). Although Athens was sacked, the Persian War eventually ended with Xerxes and his troops returning to Persia in defeat.

The Athenians, led by Themistocles (the-MIST-oh-klees), convinced the other Greek cities that they needed to keep the strong Greek navy together in case the Persians came back again. At first everyone thought this was a good idea, except the Spartans, who refused. Then the Athenians said to the other cities, "Don't bother sending ships and men for the navy anymore; that is too hard. Just send money to Athens, and we will build ships and defend you against the Persians." So a lot of cities sent money.

But the Persians did not come back. After a while, some cities said, "We don't want to send any more money to Athens. We don't think the Persians are going to come back anymore." But the Athenians used their big navy to MAKE the other cities keep sending money. When Miletus (my-LEE-tuss), a prominent Ionian city in Asia Minor, refused to pay more money, the Athenians took their city and wrecked it.

The Athenians, now led by Pericles (PAIR-uh-klees), also spent some of the money on their own city. No Athenians had to pay taxes anymore. They used the money from the other cities to build great temples like the Parthenon.

Visit <http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/pericles.html> for more about Pericles.



The other cities in Greece were angry and asked the Spartans to help stop Athens. Some cities took sides with Athens, others with Sparta. There was a big war, from 431 BC to 404 BC (almost thirty years!). This is called the Peloponnesian War, after the Peloponnesian Peninsula that makes up the southern part of Greece and that includes the city of Sparta and its allies (Athens is on the Attica Peninsula).

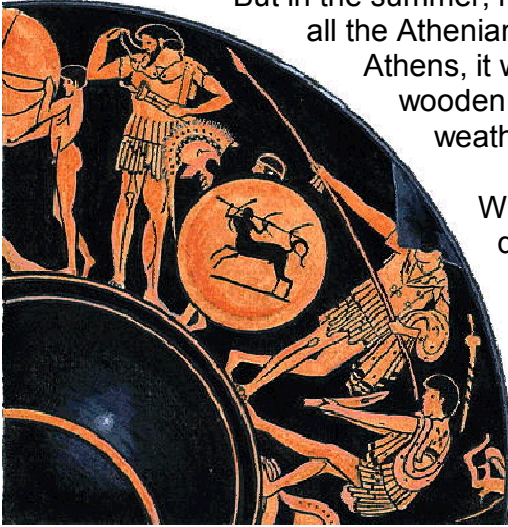
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## PELOPONNESIAN WAR – 431-404 BC

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The Athenian historian Thucydides (thoo-SID-uh-dees), who lived through the Peloponnesian War and wrote the history of it, began by asking, why did the war start? He answered that basically the war started because Athens was too greedy, and tried to take over all of Greece. So the Spartans decided to stop the Athenians, and help all the cities of Greece become free and independent. The Spartans formed an alliance with Corinth and some other smaller Greek cities and brought an army to march to the walls of Athens in 431 BC.

In the first years of the war, it must have seemed pretty hopeless. The Athenians had a lot of money, and a lot of power, and they were the only Greek city that had a good navy. Even though the Spartans could attack the countryside around Athens, the Athenians were safe inside their walls since the Spartans could not break through. The Athenians could get food, and come and go as they pleased, by sailing out of their port in their ships. The Spartans didn't have a navy, so they couldn't stop the Athenians.



But in the summer, many of the Athenians began to die from a terrible plague. Because all the Athenian farmers had to leave the countryside and move inside the walls of Athens, it was very crowded inside the walls. A lot of poor people were living in wooden shacks, a lot of people in one room, with no real protection from the weather, and not enough good food to eat. So the plague easily spread.

We don't know exactly what this plague was. Even though Thucydides described it, it doesn't sound exactly like any modern disease. Some people think it might be a stronger form of measles. But thousands of people died. One of them was the Athenian general Pericles, who had been leading the war. Without his leadership and the plague's death toll, Athens gradually began to lose some battles against Sparta.

Visit <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7142/7142-h/7142-h.htm#2HCH0007> for more about the Plague of Athens.

## THE SICILIAN EXPEDITION AND ALCIBIADES

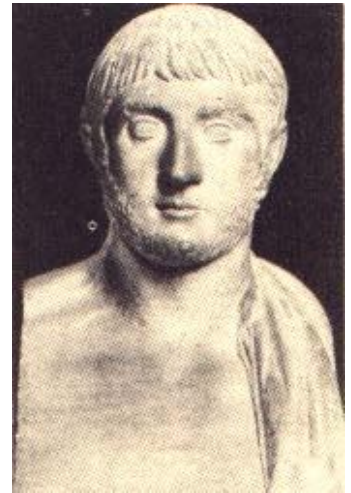
The Athenians decided that, since the war was not going so well due to the plague, they would try a really dramatic, aggressive move. A young Athenian general named Alcibiades (al-suh-BUY-uh-dees) convinced the Athenian Assembly to send nearly the whole Athenian army and navy to the island of Sicily. Sicily was where the Spartans were getting their food. So if the Athenians could capture Sicily, they could cut off the supplies of the Spartans and make them stop fighting. The Athenians agreed to send the young Alcibiades and a very old general named Nicias (NICK-ee-us) to lead the army in Sicily.

But a few days before they were supposed to leave, somebody broke a whole lot of good-luck statues all over Athens. People were very upset. Some people thought it was Alcibiades and his friends who did it. There was a lot of discussion, but finally they decided to let Alcibiades lead the army anyway. So they all sailed off to Sicily.

But once Alcibiades and Nicias had sailed off to Sicily, the Athenians began to think about it again, and this time they decided to make Alcibiades stand trial for breaking the statues. They sent a ship to bring him back to Athens. Alcibiades pretended to go along, but half-way home, when the ships put in for the night in southern Italy, Alcibiades ran away in the middle of the night and joined the Spartans!

Without Alcibiades, the Athenians couldn't fight very well. And Alcibiades gave the Spartans good advice about how to fight the Athenians. When Alcibiades got to Sparta, he made a deal with the Spartans. If they would let him stay in Sparta, he would help them win the Peloponnesian War by giving them good advice. They agreed, and the first thing Alcibiades told the Spartans was that they should build a navy and use it to destroy the "Sicilian Expedition" of Athenian ships that he had previously sent to Sicily back when he still sided with Athens!

In the end, the Spartans defeated the Athenian army in Sicily, and almost all of the Athenian men were killed. The Athenians who were taken prisoner were forced to work as slaves in stone quarries, where



Alcibiades was born in Athens around 450 BC. His mother was an Alcmaeonid. He was from one of the wealthiest families in Athens, and he grew up with the best of everything. After his father was killed in battle, Pericles, another Alcmaeonid, was Alcibiades' guardian. When he was a teenager, during the early years of the Peloponnesian War, he was a student of Socrates.

By the time Alcibiades grew up, Athens was beginning to lose the Peloponnesian War. Alcibiades became a very good general. The Sicilian Expedition was his idea.

many of them died. When this plan worked, the Spartans thought Alcibiades was really smart. He also advised them to lay a permanent siege to Athens, instead of only in the summertime. That worked too.

After they defeated the Sicilian Expedition in 415 BC, and with the help of the formerly-Athenian general Alcibiades, the Spartans began to win more battles against Athens. Alcibiades taught them how to fight naval battles. But by 412 BC Alcibiades had gotten very unpopular in Sparta as well as Athens. An author and biographer named Plutarch (PLOOR-tark) wrote that Alcibiades was suspected of sleeping with the Spartan queen, but we don't know whether that is true. Either way, Alcibiades had to leave Sparta quickly.

In any case, Alcibiades left the Spartans and fled to Anatolia (modern Turkey) under the protection of a Persian satrap (SAT-rap) (ruler), named Tissaphernes (tiss-uh-FUR-nees). Alcibiades gave the Persians good advice about how to manage the Peloponnesian War. He convinced Tissaphernes to give money to the Athenians, if the Athenians would let him be a general again and end the democracy, putting in an oligarchy instead run by the generals.

Near the end of the Peloponnesian War, the Athenians were so desperate to beat the Spartans that they let Alcibiades come back to Athens. The oligarchs took power and ended the democracy, but in the end Tissaphernes didn't give the money he had promised, so Alcibiades didn't get to be a general. Some of the Athenian allies went over to the other side, and the Athenian oligarchy began negotiating with the Spartans for surrender.

But just at this point, the Athenian navy, which was anchored off the island of Samos, heard about the oligarchs' attempt to gain power in Athens, and their plan to surrender to Sparta. The Athenian sailors and soldiers were very angry about losing their democracy and about the plan to surrender to Sparta. So they forgave Alcibiades for being a traitor and re-elected him as their general, hoping that he could force the oligarchs out of power and put the democracy back in power in Athens.

The oligarchs in Athens protested, but the negotiations to surrender to Sparta failed, and the Spartans attacked, destroying the Athenian fleet off the coast of Athens. So the oligarchs in Athens agreed to do what the fleet at Samos wanted: they restored the democracy, let Alcibiades be their general, and stopped trying to surrender to Sparta. The Persians, knowing that Athens was going to remain a democracy unfriendly to them, began to give money to Sparta instead of Athens.

Now the Spartans had a smart idea: they used their navy to block the Hellespont, where ships came through bringing food to Athens. Alcibiades, who now led the Athenians, tried to get the Spartans out, and he did win some minor victories; but in the end, thanks to Persian money, the Spartans got control of the Hellespont and choked off the Athenian food supply.

As the Athenian food supply ran out, they started to fight among themselves; and by 407 BC they fired Alcibiades for failing to stop the Spartans from taking the Hellespont. Alcibiades was angry, washed his hands of the whole war, and retired to Persian-controlled Asia Minor.

In 404 BC, as he was about to visit the Persian king, his home was surrounded and set on fire. Seeing no chance of escape he struck out against his assassins, dagger in hand, and was killed by a shower of arrows.

Visit <http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/alcibiad.html> for more about Alcibiades.

Slowly the Athenians began to starve, as the Spartans stopped their food ships from getting through. By 404 BC, with many Athenians already dead of starvation, the Athenians surrendered unconditionally, and the Spartans made them pull down their city walls.

Visit <http://classics.mit.edu/Thucydides/pelopwar.html> for more about the Peloponnesian War.

## TIMELINE OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

480	Hellenic forces defeat the Persians at the Battle of Salamis	425	Athenian occupation of Pylos; Capture of Spartan force on Sphacteria
479	Hellenic forces defeat the Persians at the Battle of Plataea <b>Age of Cimon (479-461)</b>	422	Battle of Amphipolis <b>Peloponnesian War, Phase II: Peace of Nicias (421-415)</b>
477	Foundation of the Confederacy of Delos (Delian League)	416	Athenian conquest of Melos <b>Peloponnesian War, Phase III: Sicilian Expeditions (415-13)</b>
470	Revolt and reduction of Naxos <b>Age of Pericles (461-431)</b>	415	1st Sicilian Expedition Recall of Alcibiades
454	Delian Treasury transferred to Athens Delian League becomes, de facto, the Athenian Empire Building of the monuments on the Acropolis Culture (Philosophy, Drama, Architecture, etc.) flourishes	414	Siege of Syracuse
440-439	Revolt and reduction of Samos	413	2nd Sicilian Expedition The Battle and Disaster in the Syracusan Harbor <b>Peloponnesian War, Phase IV: Last Gasp of Athens (412-404)</b>
436-435	Sedition and unrest at Epidamnus	412	Revolt of Athenian Allies
435	Naval victory of Corcyra over Corinth	411	Internal Athenian Struggles: Council of 400; Polity of 5000
433	Corcyrean and Athenian naval forces fight Corinthian naval forces	410	Alcibiades back on Athenian side Restoration of Athenian Democracy
432	Revolt of Potidaea <b>Peloponnesian War, Phase I: Archidamian War (431-421)</b>	406	Alcibiades loses Battle of Notion, deposed Athenian victory(?) at Arginusae Trial and execution of Athenian generals
431	Thebes attacks Plataea (March) Spartan invasion of Attica (May)	405	Athens loses Battle of Aegispotami
430	Plague at Athens	405-404	Blockade of Athens
429	Death of Pericles; Ascension of Cleon	404	<b>Athens surrenders</b> Long Walls pulled down Spartan garrison established on the Acropolis
428	Revolt of Mytilene		
427	Surrender of Mytilene Surrender of Plataea Corcyrean Civil War		