Cities and Conflict

Compare Greek city-states and the conflicts that changed them

WH.2.2 "Examine the development of Greek civilization, including differing political and social structures and major conflicts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details about how Athens and Sparta were governed, circle details about their social structures, and number the events that show how cooperation turned into conflict.

Independent Cities, Shared Challenges

1 Around 800 BCE, Greek communities began to form independent city-states, called poleis, across the mountainous mainland and nearby islands. Each polis had its own laws and government, but people shared the Greek language, religious festivals, and stories about their gods. Limited farmland pushed some Greeks to establish settlements around the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Trade between these settlements and their parent cities carried grain, pottery, and new ideas. This growth did not create one Greek kingdom. Instead, separate communities built institutions suited to their needs, and their independence sometimes led to cooperation and sometimes to war.

2 By the fifth century BCE, Athens and Sparta offered strikingly different answers to who should rule. In Athens, male citizens could vote in the assembly, although women, enslaved people, and resident foreigners could not. Athens relied on maritime trade and a powerful navy. Sparta had two kings who led armies, while a council of elders and elected officials held important authority. Its male citizens trained as soldiers, and the labor of helots, a population forced to farm, supported that system. Spartan women could control more property than Athenian women, but neither city's women held the same political rights as male citizens.

3 When the Persian Empire invaded Greece in the early fifth century BCE, Athens and Sparta helped lead a coalition of Greek city-states against it. The Athenian fleet played a major role in the Greek victory at Salamis in 480 BCE, while a Greek army led by Sparta defeated Persian forces at Plataea in 479 BCE. Afterward, Athens led a naval alliance that increasingly served Athenian interests. Sparta and its allies feared Athenian power, and the two sides fought the Peloponnesian War from 431 to 404 BCE. Sparta won, but years of fighting weakened Greek city-states and left them divided.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could Greek city-states share a culture without forming one kingdom?

2. How did political power in Athens differ from political power in Sparta?

3. How did each city's economy or labor system connect to its military strength?

4. How did cooperation during the Persian invasions give way to war between Greek city-states?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise an independent Greek city-state just after the Persian Wars. In five or six sentences, recommend an alliance with Athens or Sparta, compare the cities' political and social structures, and explain one risk your choice could bring.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details about how Athens and Sparta were governed, circle details about their social structures, and number the events that show how cooperation turned into conflict. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could Greek city-states share a culture without forming one kingdom?	**They shared a language, festivals, and stories, but each polis kept its own laws and government.**
2	How did political power in Athens differ from political power in Sparta?	**Athenian male citizens could vote in an assembly. Sparta had two kings who led armies, with important authority also held by a council of elders and elected officials.**
3	How did each city's economy or labor system connect to its military strength?	**Athens relied on maritime trade and had a powerful navy. In Sparta, helots farmed while male citizens trained as soldiers.**
4	How did cooperation during the Persian invasions give way to war between Greek city-states?	**Athens and Sparta helped lead a coalition against Persia. Later, Athens's naval alliance increasingly served its own interests, and Sparta and its allies feared Athenian power. The sides fought the Peloponnesian War.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I advise our city-state to ally with Sparta after the Persian Wars. In Athens, male citizens can vote in the assembly, but women, enslaved people, and resident foreigners cannot. Sparta has two kings who lead armies, while a council of elders and elected officials hold important authority. Spartan male citizens train as soldiers while helots farm, unlike Athens, which relies on maritime trade and a navy. Sparta's soldiers could help defend our city, and its allies share our concern about growing Athenian power. However, joining Sparta could pull us into a war with Athens and its naval alliance.

Accept either alliance recommendation if the student accurately compares political and social structures and explains a plausible risk using passage evidence.