

## CC200: The Periclean Age, 480-430 BCE

Friday, February 13, 2009

Please bring this file to class.

The following pages contain passages from Herodotus' *Histories* and Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* on five topics. As you read these passages, compare the approach of each historian:

- Main themes of their works
- Historical methodology
- Athenian democracy – origins vs. evolution
- Athenian democracy – two critiques
- Articulating a vision for what it means to be Greek

A few biographical details:

### Herodotus

- Born c. 484 BCE in Halikarnassos in Asia Minor, died c. 425 in Thurii in S. Italy
- Son of Lyxos, a Carian (non-Greek); relative of the late epic poet Panyassis
- City of birth on the fringe of the Greek world, under Persian rule in 480s
- Departed (fled?) in the 450's to travel to and conduct research in Egypt, Babylon in Mesopotamia, Scythia north of the Black Sea, and mainland Greece
- Began his work c. 450, finished c. 430; read his work aloud in Athens in the 440's
- Wrote in the Ionic dialect, the dialect of Ionian Greek cities in Asia Minor, the home to some of the most prominent pre-Socratic philosophers

### Thucydides

- Born c. 460, died c. 400 in Athens
- Son of two Athenian citizens, including his father Olorus (a name of Thracian origin), and from a very well-connected Athenian family
- Begins writing at the outbreak of the war in 431; suffered but recovered from the plague 430-426
- Served as general in the war in northern Greece (Thrace) in 424; subsequently exiled from Athens for failure from preventing the Spartans from seizing the strategic city of Amphipolis
- Still working on his (incomplete) history on his death c. 400
- Wrote in the Athenian (Attic) dialect

## Main themes of their work: Herodotus vs. Thucydides

Introduction (*Prooimion*) to Herodotus' *Histories*:

"This is the display of the inquiry of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, so that things done by man not be forgotten in time, and that great and marvelous deeds, some displayed by the Hellenes, some by the barbarians, not lose their glory, including among others what was the cause of their waging war on each other."

Introduction to Thucydides' *History*:

1.1:

Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, beginning at the moment that it broke out, and believing that it would be a great war, and more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it. This belief was not without its grounds. The preparations of both the combatants were in every department in the last state of perfection; and he could see the rest of the Hellenic race taking sides in the quarrel; those who delayed doing so at once having it in contemplation. Indeed this was the greatest movement yet known in history, not only of the Hellenes, but of a large part of the barbarian world--I had almost said of mankind. For though the events of remote antiquity, and even those that more immediately precede the war, could not from lapse of time be clearly ascertained, yet the evidences which an inquiry carried as far back as was practicable leads me to trust, all point to the conclusion that there was nothing on a great scale, either in war or in other matters.

## Historical Methodology: Herodotus vs. Thucydides

Hdt. 2.29-30:

I was unable to learn anything from anyone else, but this much further I did learn by the most extensive investigation that I could make, going as far as the city of Elephantine to look myself, and beyond that by question and hearsay .....

Thuc. 1.20-23:

1.20

[1] Having now given the result of my inquiries into early times, I grant that there will be a difficulty in believing every particular detail. The way that most men deal with traditions, even traditions of their own country, is to receive them all alike as they are delivered, without applying any critical test whatever.

1.21

[1] On the whole, however, the conclusions I have drawn from the proofs quoted may, I believe, safely be relied on. Assuredly they will not be disturbed either by the lays of a poet displaying the exaggeration of his craft, or by the compositions of the chroniclers that are attractive at truth's expense; the subjects they treat of being out of the reach of evidence, and time having robbed most of them of historical value by enthroning them in the region of legend. Turning from these, we can rest satisfied with having proceeded upon the clearest data, and having arrived at conclusions as exact as can be expected in matters of such antiquity. [2] To come to this war; despite the known disposition of the

actors in a struggle to overrate its importance, and when it is over to return to their admiration of earlier events, yet an examination of the facts will show that it was much greater than the wars which preceded it.

## 1.22

[1] With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said. [2] And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. [3] My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other. [4] The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content. In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time.

## 1.23

[1] The Median war, the greatest achievement of past times, yet found a speedy decision in two actions by sea and two by land. The Peloponnesian war was prolonged to an immense length, and long as it was it was short without parallel for the misfortunes that it brought upon Hellas. [2] Never had so many cities been taken and laid desolate, here by the barbarians, here by the parties contending (the old inhabitants being sometimes removed to make room for others); never was there so much banishing and blood-shedding, now on the field of battle, now in the strife of action. [3] Old stories of occurrences handed down by tradition, but scantily confirmed by experience, suddenly ceased to be incredible; there were earthquakes of unparalleled extent and violence; eclipses of the sun occurred with a frequency unrecorded in previous history; there were great droughts in sundry places and consequent famines, and that most calamitous and awfully fatal visitation, the plague. All this came upon them with the late war, [4] which was begun by the Athenians and Peloponnesians by the dissolution of the thirty years' truce made after the conquest of Euboea. [5] To the question why they broke the treaty, I answer by placing first an account of their grounds of complaint and points of difference, that no one may ever have to ask the immediate cause which plunged the Hellenes into a war of such magnitude.[6] The real cause I consider to be the one which was formally most kept out of sight. The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon, made war inevitable. Still it is well to give the grounds alleged by either side, which led to the dissolution of the treaty and the breaking out of the war.

## **Athenian Democracy: Herodotus on its origins; Thucydides on its evolution under Pericles**

Hdt. 5.66:

“These two were rivals for power, and Cleisthenes, who was getting the worst of it, took the people into his faction .... Having once got the masses to support him, he found himself much more powerful than his rivals. Isagoras then appealed to Cleomenes the Spartan king ... [and they expelled] Cleisthenes and a large number of other Athenians .... Then [Cleisthenes] attempted to abolish the [representative] Council [of 400 men] and transfer power to a body of three hundred supporters of Isagoras. The Council resisted, and refused to obey his orders, whereupon he, together with Isagoras and his supporters, occupied the Acropolis. This united the rest of Athens against them; they were blockaded in the Acropolis for two days, but on the day after, a truce was made and all of them who were Spartans were allowed to leave the country .... [The Athenians executed Isagoras and some of his supporters, and] recalled Cleisthenes.

Thuc. 2.65:

Pericles indeed, by his rank, ability, and known integrity, was enabled to exercise an independent control over the multitude--in short, to lead them instead of being led by them; for as he never sought power by improper means, he was never compelled to flatter them, but, on the contrary, enjoyed so high an estimation that he could afford to anger them by contradiction. Whenever he saw them unseasonably and insolently elated, he would with a word reduce them to alarm; on the other hand, if they fell victims to a panic, he could at once restore them to confidence. In short, what was nominally a democracy became in his hands government by the first citizen.

### **Athenian democracy: two critiques**

Hdt. 3.82:

In a democracy, malpractices are bound to occur; ... corrupt dealings in government services lead not to private feuds, but to close personal associations .... Somebody or other comes forward as the people's champion and breaks up the cliques which are out for their own interests. This wins him the admiration of the mob, and as a result he soon finds himself entrusted with absolute power.

Thuc. 3.84:

[In Corcyra] there occurred the first examples of the breakdown of law and order ... the revenge by those who had in the past been arrogantly oppressed ...; the wicked resolutions taken by those who ... wished to escape from their usual poverty and coveted the property of their neighbors .... Human nature, always ready to offend even where laws exist, showed itself proudly in its true colors, as something incapable of controlling passion, insubordinate to the idea of justice ....

### **Articulating a vision for what it means to be Greek: Herodotus on Thermopylae; Thucydides and the Periclean Funeral Oration:**

7.201-234:

King Xerxes lay encamped in Trachis in Malis and the Hellenes in the pass. This place is called Thermopylae by most of the Hellenes, but by the natives and their neighbors Pylae. Each lay encamped

in these places. Xerxes was master of everything to the north from Trachis, and the Hellenes of all that lay toward the south on the mainland.

The Hellenes who awaited the Persians in that place were these: three hundred Spartan armed men; one thousand from Tegea and Mantinea, half from each place; one hundred and twenty from Orchomenus in Arcadia and one thousand from the rest of Arcadia; that many Arcadians, four hundred from Corinth, two hundred from Phlius, and eighty Mycenaeans. These were the Peloponnesians present; from Boeotia there were seven hundred Thespians and four hundred Thebans.

In addition, the Opuntian Locrians in full force and one thousand Phocians came at the summons. The Hellenes had called upon them through messengers who told them that this was only the advance guard, that the rest of the allies were expected any day now, and that the sea was being watched, with the Athenians and Aeginetans and all those enrolled in the fleet on guard. There was nothing for them to be afraid of. The invader of Hellas was not a god but a human being, and there was not, and never would be, any mortal on whom some amount of evil was not bestowed at birth, with the greatest men receiving the largest share. The one marching against them was certain to fall from pride, since he was a mortal. When they heard this, the Locrians and Phocians marched to Trachis to help.

Each city had its own general, but the one most admired and the leader of the whole army was a Lacedaemonian, Leonidas, son of Anaxandrides, son of Leon, son of Eurycratides, son of Anaxandrus, son of Eurycrates, son of Polydorus, son of Alcamenes, son of Teleclus, son of Archelaus, son of Hegesilaus, son of Doryssus, son of Leobotes, son of Echestratus, son of Agis, son of Eurysthenes, son of Aristodemus, son of Aristomachus, son of Cleodaeus, son of Hyllus, son of Heracles.

Leonidas came to Thermopylae with the appointed three hundred he had selected, all of whom had sons. He also brought those Thebans whom I counted among the number and whose general was Leontiades son of Eurymachus. Leonidas took pains to bring only the Thebans among the Hellenes, because they were accused of medizing [= siding with the Persians, also known as the Medes]; he summoned them to the war wishing to know whether they would send their men with him or openly refuse the Hellenic alliance. They sent the men but intended something quite different.

The Spartans sent the men with Leonidas on ahead so that the rest of the allies would see them and march, instead of medizing like the others if they learned that the Spartans were delaying. At present the Carneia was in their way, but once they had completed the festival, they intended to leave a garrison at Sparta and march out in full force with all speed. The rest of the allies planned to do likewise, for the Olympiad coincided with these events. They accordingly sent their advance guard, not expecting the war at Thermopylae to be decided so quickly.

This is what they intended, but the Hellenes at Thermopylae, when the Persians drew near the pass, fearfully took counsel whether to depart. The rest of the Peloponnesians were for returning to the Peloponnese and guarding the isthmus, but the Phocians and Locrians were greatly angered by this counsel. Leonidas voted to remain where they were and send messengers to the cities bidding them to send help, since they were too few to ward off the army of the Medes.

While they debated in this way, Xerxes sent a mounted scout to see how many there were and what they were doing. While he was still in Thessaly, he had heard that a small army was gathered there and that its leaders were Lacedaemonians, including Leonidas, who was of the Heracleid clan. Riding up to the camp, the horseman watched and spied out the place. He could, however, not see the whole camp, for it was impossible to see those posted inside the wall which they had rebuilt and were guarding. He did take note of those outside, whose arms lay in front of the wall, and it chanced that at that time the Lacedaemonians were posted there. He saw some of the men exercising naked and others combing their hair. He marvelled at the sight and took note of their numbers. When he had observed it all carefully, he rode back in leisure, since no one pursued him or paid him any attention at all. So he returned and told Xerxes all that he had seen.

When Xerxes heard that, he could not comprehend the fact that the Lacedaemonians were actually, to the best of their ability, preparing to kill or be killed. What they did appeared laughable to him, so he sent for Demaratus the son of Ariston, who was in his camp. When this man arrived, he asked him about each of these matters, wanting to understand what it was that the Lacedaemonians were doing. Demaratus said, "You have already heard about these men from me, when we were setting out for Hellas, but when you heard, you mocked me, although I told you how I expected things to turn out. It is my greatest aim, O King, to be truthful in your presence. So hear me now. These men have come to fight us for the pass, and it for this that they are preparing. This is their custom: when they are about to risk their lives, they arrange their hair. Rest assured that if you overcome these men and those remaining behind at Sparta, there is no one else on earth who will raise his hands to withstand you, my King. You are now attacking the fairest kingdom in Hellas and men who are the very best." What he said seemed completely incredible to Xerxes, so he then asked how they, who were so few in number, would fight against his army. Demaratus answered, "My King, take me for a liar if this does not turn out as I say." So he spoke, but he did not persuade Xerxes.

He let four days go by, expecting them to run away at any minute. They did not leave, and it seemed to him that they stayed out of folly and lack of due respect. On the fifth day he became angry and sent the Medes and Cissians against them, bidding them take them prisoner and bring them into his presence. The Medes bore down upon the Hellenes and attacked. Many fell, but others attacked in turn, and they made it clear to everyone, especially to the king himself, that among so many people there were few real men. The battle lasted all day.

When the Medes had been roughly handled, they retired, and the Persians whom the king called Immortals, led by Hydarnes, attacked in turn. It was thought that they would easily accomplish the task. When they joined battle with the Hellenes, they fared neither better nor worse than the Median army, since they used shorter spears than the Hellenes and could not use their numbers fighting in a narrow space. The Lacedaemonians fought memorably, showing themselves skilled fighters amidst unskilled on many occasions, as when they would turn their backs and feign flight. The barbarians would see them fleeing and give chase with shouting and noise, but when the Lacedaemonians were overtaken, they would turn to face the barbarians and overthrow innumerable Persians. A few of the Spartans themselves were also slain. When the Persians could gain no inch of the pass, attacking by companies and in every other fashion, they withdrew.

It is said that during these assaults in the battle the king, as he watched, jumped up three times from the throne in fear for his army. This, then, is how the fighting progressed, and on the next day the barbarians fought no better. They joined battle supposing that their enemies, being so few, were now disabled by wounds and could no longer resist. The Hellenes, however, stood ordered in ranks by nation, and each of them fought in turn, except the Phocians, who were posted on the mountain to guard the path. When the Persians found nothing different from what they saw the day before, they withdrew.

The king was at a loss as to how to deal with the present difficulty. Epialtes son of Eurydemus, a Malian, thinking he would get a great reward from the king, came to speak with him and told him of the path leading over the mountain to Thermopylae. In so doing he caused the destruction of the Hellenes remaining there. Later he fled into Thessaly in fear of the Lacedaemonians, and while he was in exile, a price was put on his head by the Pylagori when the Amphictyons assembled at Pylae. Still later he returned from exile to Anticyra and was killed by Athenades, a Trachinian. Athenades slew Epialtes for a different reason, which I will tell later in my history, but he was given no less honor by the Lacedaemonians. It was in this way, then, that Epialtes was later killed.

Xerxes was pleased by what Epialtes promised to accomplish. He immediately became overjoyed and sent out Hydarnes and the men under Hydarnes command, who set forth from the camp at about lamp-lighting time. This path had been discovered by the native Malians, who used it to guide the Thessalians into Phocis when the Phocians had fenced off the pass with a wall and were sheltered from the war. So long ago the Malians had discovered that the pass was in no way a good thing.

The course of the path is as follows: it begins at the river Asopus as it flows through the ravine, and this mountain and the path have the same name, Anopaea. This Anopaea stretches along the ridge of the mountain and ends at Alpenus, the Locrian city nearest to Malis, near the rock called Blackbuttock and the seats of the Cercopes, where it is narrowest.

This, then, was the nature of the pass. The Persians crossed the Asopus and travelled all night along this path, with the Oetaean mountains on their right and the Trachinian on their left. At dawn they came to the summit of the pass. In this part of the mountain one thousand armed men of the Phocians were on watch, as I have already shown, defending their own country and guarding the path. The lower pass was held by those I have mentioned, but the Phocians had voluntarily promised Leonidas to guard the path over the mountain.

The Phocians learned in the following way that the Persians had climbed up: they had ascended without the Phocians' notice because the mountain was entirely covered with oak trees. Although there was no wind, a great noise arose like leaves being trodden underfoot. The Phocians jumped up and began to put on their weapons, and in a moment the barbarians were there. When they saw the men arming themselves, they were amazed, for they had supposed that no opposition would appear, but they had now met with an army. Hydarnes feared that the Phocians might be Lacedaemonians and asked Epialtes what country the army was from. When he had established what he wanted to know with certainty, he arrayed the Persians for battle. The Phocians, assailed by thick showers of arrows and supposing that the Persians had set out against them from the start, fled to the top of the mountain and

prepared to meet their destruction. This is what they intended, but the Persians with Epialtes and Hydarnes paid no attention to the Phocians and went down the mountain as fast as possible.

The seer Megistias, examining the sacrifices, first told the Hellenes at Thermopylae that death was coming to them with the dawn. Then deserters came who announced the circuit made by the Persians. These gave their signals while it was still night; a third report came from the watchers running down from the heights at dawn. The Hellenes then took counsel, but their opinions were divided. Some advised not to leave their post, but others spoke against them. They eventually parted, some departing and dispersing each to their own cities, others preparing to remain there with Leonidas.

It is said that Leonidas himself sent them away because he was concerned that they would be killed, but felt it not fitting for himself and the Spartans to desert that post which they had come to defend at the beginning. I, however, tend to believe that when Leonidas perceived that the allies were dispirited and unwilling to run all risks with him, he told them to depart. For himself, however, it was not good to leave; if he remained, he would leave a name of great fame, and the prosperity of Sparta would not be blotted out. When the Spartans asked the oracle about this war when it broke out, the Pythia had foretold that either Lacedaemon would be destroyed by the barbarians or their king would be killed. She gave them this answer in hexameter verses running as follows:

[4] For you, inhabitants of wide-wayed Sparta,  
Either your great and glorious city must be wasted by Persian men,  
Or if not that, then the bound of Lacedaemon must mourn a dead king, from Heracles' line.  
The might of bulls or lions will not restrain him with opposing strength; for he has the might of Zeus.  
I declare that he will not be restrained until he utterly tears apart one of these.

Considering this and wishing to win distinction for the Spartans alone, he sent away the allies rather than have them leave in disorder because of a difference of opinion.

Not the least proof I have of this is the fact that Leonidas publicly dismissed the seer who attended the expedition, for fear that he might die with them. This was Megistias the Acarnanian, said to be descended from Melampus, the one who told from the sacrifices what was going to happen to them. He was dismissed but did not leave; instead he sent away his only son who was also with the army.

Those allies who were dismissed went off in obedience to Leonidas, only the Thespians and Thebans remaining with the Lacedaemonians. The Thebans remained against their will and desire, for Leonidas kept them as hostages. The Thespians very gladly remained, saying they would not abandon Leonidas and those with him by leaving; instead they would stay and die with them. Their general was Demophilus son of Diadromes.

Xerxes made libations at sunrise and waiting till about mid-morning, made his assault. Epialtes had advised this, for the descent from the mountain is more direct, and the way is much shorter than the circuit and ascent. Xerxes and his barbarians attacked, but Leonidas and his Hellenes, knowing they were going to their deaths, advanced now much farther than before into the wider part of the pass. In all

the previous days they had sallied out into the narrow way and fought there, guarding the defensive wall. Now, however, they joined battle outside the narrows and many of the barbarians fell, for the leaders of the companies beat everyone with whips from behind, urging them ever forward. Many of them were pushed into the sea and drowned; far more were trampled alive by each other, with no regard for who perished. Since the Hellenes knew that they must die at the hands of those who had come around the mountain, they displayed the greatest strength they had against the barbarians, fighting recklessly and desperately.

By this time most of them had had their spears broken and were killing the Persians with swords. Leonidas, proving himself extremely valiant, fell in that struggle and with him other famous Spartans, whose names I have learned by inquiry since they were worthy men. Indeed, I have learned by inquiry the names of all three hundred. Many famous Persians also fell there, including two sons of Darius, Abrocomes and Hyperanthes, born to Darius by Phratagune daughter of Artanes. Artanes was the brother of king Darius and son of Hystaspes son of Arsames. When he gave his daughter in marriage to Darius, he gave his whole house as dowry, since she was his only child.

Two brothers of Xerxes accordingly fought and fell there. There was a great struggle between the Persians and Lacedaemonians over Leonidas' body, until the Hellenes by their courageous prowess dragged it away and routed their enemies four times. The battle went on until the men with Epialtes arrived. When the Hellenes saw that they had come, the contest turned, for they retired to the narrow part of the way, passed behind the wall, and took their position crowded together on the hill, all except the Thebans. This hill is at the mouth of the pass, where the stone lion in honor of Leonidas now stands. In that place they defended themselves with swords, if they still had them, and with hands and teeth. The barbarians buried them with missiles, some attacking from the front and throwing down the defensive wall, others surrounding them on all sides.

This then is how the Lacedaemonians and Thespians conducted themselves, but the Spartan Dieneces is said to have exhibited the greatest courage of all. They say that he made the following speech before they joined battle with the Medes: he had learned from a Trachinian that there were so many of the barbarians that when they shot their missiles, the sun was hidden by the multitude of their arrows. He was not at all disturbed by this and made light of the multitude of the Medes, saying that their Trachinian foreigner brought them good news. If the Medes hid the sun, they could fight them in the shade instead of in the sun. This saying and others like it, they claim, Dieneces the Lacedaemonian left behind as a memorial.

Next after him two Lacedaemonian brothers, Alpheus and Maron, sons of Orsiphantus, are said to have been most courageous. The Thespian who gained most renown was one whose name was Dithyrambus son of Harmatides.

There is an inscription written over these men, who were buried where they fell, and over those who died before the others went away, dismissed by Leonidas. It reads as follows:

Here four thousand from the Peloponnese once fought three million.

That inscription is for them all, but the Spartans have their own:

Foreigner, go tell the Spartans that we lie here obedient to their commands.

That one is to the Lacedaemonians, this one to the seer:

This is a monument to the renowned Megistias,  
Slain by the Medes who crossed the Spercheius river.  
The seer knew well his coming doom,  
But endured not to abandon the leaders of Sparta.

Except for the seer's inscription, the Amphictyons are the ones who honored them by erecting inscriptions and pillars. That of the seer Megistias was inscribed by Simonides son of Leoprepes because of his tie of guest-friendship with the man.

It is said that two of these three hundred, Eurytus and Aristodemus, could have agreed with each other either to come home safely together to Sparta, since Leonidas had dismissed them from the camp and they were lying at Alpeni very sick of ophthalmia, or to die with the others, if they were unwilling to return home. They could have done either of these things, but they could not agree and had different intentions. When Eurytus learned of the Persians circuit, he demanded his armor and put it on, bidding his helot to lead him to the fighting. The helot led him there and fled, but he rushed into the fray and was killed. Aristodemus, however, lost his strength and stayed behind. Now if Aristodemus alone had been sick and returned to Sparta, or if they had both made the trip, I think the Spartans would not have been angry with them. When, however, one of them died, and the other had the same excuse but was unwilling to die, the Spartans had no choice but to display great anger towards Aristodemus.

Some say that Aristodemus came home safely to Sparta in this way and by this excuse. Others say that he had been sent out of the camp as a messenger and could have gotten back in time for the battle but chose not to, staying behind on the road and so surviving, while his fellow-messenger arrived at the battle and was killed.

When Aristodemus returned to Lacedaemon, he was disgraced and without honor. He was deprived of his honor in this way: no Spartan would give him fire or speak with him, and they taunted him by calling him Aristodemus the Trembler. In the battle at Plataea, however, he made up for all the blame brought against him.

It is said that another of the three hundred survived because he was sent as a messenger to Thessaly. His name was Pantites. When he returned to Sparta, he was dishonored and hanged himself.

The Thebans, whose general was Leontiades, fought against the king's army as long as they were with the Hellenes and under compulsion. When, however, they saw the Persian side prevailing and the Hellenes with Leonidas hurrying toward the hill, they split off and approached the barbarians, holding out their hands. With the most truthful words ever spoken, they explained that they were Medizers, had been among the first to give earth and water to the king, had come to Thermopylae under constraint, and were guiltless of the harm done to the king. By this plea they saved their lives, and the Thessalians bore witness to their words. They were not, however, completely lucky. When the barbarians took hold of them as they approached, they killed some of them even as they drew near. Most of them were branded by Xerxes command with the kings marks, starting with the general Leontiades. His son Eurymachus long afterwards was murdered by the Plataeans when, as general of four hundred Thebans, he seized the town of Plataea. This, then, is how the Greeks fought at Thermopylae.

## Funeral Oration of Pericles

Thuc. 2.34-46:

2.34

[1] In the same winter the Athenians gave a funeral at the public cost to those who had first fallen in this war. It was a custom of their ancestors, and the manner of it is as follows. [2] Three days before the ceremony, the bones of the dead are laid out in a tent which has been erected; and their friends bring to their relatives such offerings as they please. [3] In the funeral procession cypress coffins are borne in cars, one for each tribe; the bones of the deceased being placed in the coffin of their tribe. Among these is carried one empty bier decked for the missing, that is, for those whose bodies could not be recovered. [4] Any citizen or stranger who pleases, joins in the procession: and the female relatives are there to wail at the burial. [5] The dead are laid in the public sepulchre in the most beautiful suburb of the city, in which those who fall in war are always buried; with the exception of those slain at Marathon, who for their singular and extraordinary valor were interred on the spot where they fell. [6] After the bodies have been laid in the earth, a man chosen by the state, of approved wisdom and eminent reputation, pronounces over them an appropriate panegyric; after which all retire. [7] Such is the manner of the burying; and throughout the whole of the war, whenever the occasion arose, the established custom was observed. [8] Meanwhile these were the first that had fallen, and Pericles, son of Xanthippus, was chosen to pronounce their eulogium. When the proper time arrived, he advanced from the sepulchre to an elevated platform in order to be heard by as many of the crowd as possible, and spoke as follows:

2.35

[1] 'Most of my predecessors in this place have commended him who made this speech part of the law, telling us that it is well that it should be delivered at the burial of those who fall in battle. For myself, I should have thought that the worth which had displayed itself in deeds, would be sufficiently rewarded by honors also shown by deeds; such as you now see in this funeral prepared at the people's cost. And I could have wished that the reputations of many brave men were not to be imperilled in the mouth of a single individual, to stand or fall according as he spoke well or ill. [2] For it is hard to speak properly upon a subject where it is even difficult to convince your hearers that you are speaking the truth. On the one hand, the friend who is familiar with every fact of the story, may think that some point has not been set forth with that fulness which he wishes and knows it to deserve; on the other, he who is a stranger to the matter may be led by envy to suspect exaggeration if he hears anything above his own nature. For men can endure to hear others praised only so long as they can severally persuade themselves of their own ability to equal the actions recounted: when this point is passed, envy comes in and with it incredulity. [3] However, since our ancestors have stamped this custom with their approval, it becomes my duty to obey the law and to try to satisfy your several wishes and opinions as best I may.

2.36

[1] I shall begin with our ancestors: it is both just and proper that they should have the honor of the first mention on an occasion like the present. They dwelt in the country without break in the succession from generation to generation, and handed it down free to the present time by their valor. [2] And if our more remote ancestors deserve praise, much more do our own fathers, who added to their inheritance the empire which we now possess, and spared no pains to be able to leave their acquisitions to us of the present generation. [3] Lastly, there are few parts of our dominions that have not been augmented by

those of us here, who are still more or less in the vigor of life; while the mother country has been furnished by us with everything that can enable her to depend on her own resources whether for war or for peace. [4] That part of our history which tells of the military achievements which gave us our several possessions, or of the ready valor with which either we or our fathers stemmed the tide of Hellenic or foreign aggression, is a theme too familiar to my hearers for me to dilate on, and I shall therefore pass it by. But what was the road by which we reached our position, what the form of government under which our greatness grew, what the national habits out of which it sprang; these are questions which I may try to solve before I proceed to my panegyric upon these men; since I think this to be a subject upon which on the present occasion a speaker may properly dwell, and to which the whole assemblage, whether citizens or foreigners, may listen with advantage.

### 2.37

[1] Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighboring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favors the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences; if to social standing, advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition. [2] The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbor for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty. [3] But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens. Against this fear is our chief safeguard, teaching us to obey the magistrates and the laws, particularly such as regard the protection of the injured, whether they are actually on the statute book, or belong to that code which, although unwritten, yet cannot be broken without acknowledged disgrace.

### 2.38

[1] Further, we provide plenty of means for the mind to refresh itself from business. We celebrate games and sacrifices all the year round, and the elegance of our private establishments forms a daily source of pleasure and helps to banish the spleen; [2] while the magnitude of our city draws the produce of the world into our harbor, so that to the Athenian the fruits of other countries are as familiar a luxury as those of his own.

### 2.39

[1] If we turn to our military policy, there also we differ from antagonists. We throw open our city to the world, and never by alien acts exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning or observing, although the eyes of an enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality; trusting less in system and policy than to the native spirit of our citizens; while in education, where our rivals from their very cradles by a painful discipline seek after manliness, at Athens we live exactly as we please, and yet are just as ready to encounter every legitimate danger. [2] In proof of this it may be noticed that the Lacedaemonians do not invade our country alone, but bring with them all their confederates; while we Athenians advance unsupported into the territory of a neighbor, and fighting upon a foreign soil usually vanquish with ease men who are defending their homes. [3] Our united force was never yet encountered by any enemy, because we have at once to attend to our marine and to despatch our

citizens by land upon a hundred different services; so that, wherever they engage with some such fraction of our strength, a success against a detachment is magnified into a victory over the nation, and a defeat into a reverse suffered at the hands of our entire people. [4] And yet if with habits not of labor but of ease, and courage not of art but of nature, we are still willing to encounter danger, we have the double advantage of escaping the experience of hardships in anticipation and of facing them in the hour of need as fearlessly as those who are never free from them. Nor are these the only points in which our city is worthy of admiration.

#### 2.40

[1] We cultivate refinement without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy; wealth we employ more for use than for show, and place the real disgrace of poverty not in owning to the fact but in declining the struggle against it. [2] Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters; for, unlike any other nation, regarding him who takes no part in these duties not as unambitious but as useless, we Athenians are able to judge at all events if we cannot originate, and instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all. [3] Again, in our enterprises we present the singular spectacle of daring and deliberation, each carried to its highest point, and both united in the same persons; although usually decision is the fruit of ignorance, hesitation of reflection. But the palm of courage will surely be adjudged most justly to those, who best know the difference between hardship and pleasure and yet are never tempted to shrink from danger. [4] In generosity we are equally singular, acquiring our friends by conferring not by receiving favors. Yet, of course, the doer of the favor is the firmer friend of the two, in order by continued kindness to keep the recipient in his debt; while the debtor feels less keenly from the very consciousness that the return he makes will be a payment, not a free gift. [5] And it is only the Athenians who, fearless of consequences, confer their benefits not from calculations of expediency, but in the confidence of liberality.

#### 2.41

[1] In short, I say that as a city we are the school of Hellas; while I doubt if the world can produce a man, who where he has only himself to depend upon, is equal to so many emergencies, and graced by so happy a versatility as the Athenian. [2] And that this is no mere boast thrown out for the occasion, but plain matter of fact, the power of the state acquired by these habits proves. [3] For Athens alone of her contemporaries is found when tested to be greater than her reputation, and alone gives no occasion to her assailants to blush at the antagonist by whom they have been worsted, or to her subjects to question her title by merit to rule. [4] Rather, the admiration of the present and succeeding ages will be ours, since we have not left our power without witness, but have shown it by mighty proofs; and far from needing a Homer for our panegyrist, or other of his craft whose verses might charm for the moment only for the impression which they gave to melt at the touch of fact, we have forced every sea and land to be the highway of our daring, and everywhere, whether for evil or for good, have left imperishable monuments behind us. [5] Such is the Athens for which these men, in the assertion of their resolve not to lose her, nobly fought and died; and well may well every one of their survivors be ready to suffer in her cause.

## 2.42

[1] Indeed if I have dwelt at some length upon the character of our country, it has been to show that our stake in the struggle is not the same as theirs who have no such blessings to lose, and also that the panegyric of the men over whom I am now speaking might be by definite proofs established. [2] That panegyric is now in a great measure complete; for the Athens that I have celebrated is only what the heroism of these and their like have made her, men whose fame, unlike at of most Hellenes, will be found to be only commensurate with their deserts. And if a test of worth be wanted, it is to be found in their closing scene, and this not only in the cases in which it set the final seal upon their merit, but also in those in which it gave the first intimation of their having any. [3] For there is justice in the claim that steadfastness in his country's battles should be as a cloak to cover a man's other imperfections; since the good action has blotted out the bad, and his merit as a citizen more than outweighed his demerits as an individual. [4] But none of these allowed either wealth with its prospect of future enjoyment to unnerve his spirit, or poverty with its hope of a day of freedom and riches to tempt him to shrink from danger. No, holding that vengeance upon their enemies was more to be desired than any personal blessings, and reckoning this to be the most glorious of hazards, they joyfully determined to accept the risk, to make sure of their vengeance and to let their wishes wait; and while committing to hope the uncertainty of final success, in the business before them they thought fit to act boldly and trust in themselves. Thus choosing to die resisting, rather than to live submitting, they fled only from dishonor, but met danger face to face, and after one brief moment, while at the summit of their fortune, escaped, not from their fear, but from their glory.

## 2.43

[1] So died these men as became Athenians. You, their survivors, must determine to have as unaltering a resolution in the field, though you may pray that it may have a happier issue. And not contented with ideas derived only from words of the advantages which are bound up with the defence of your country, though these would furnish a valuable text to a speaker even before an audience so alive to them as the present, you must yourselves realize the power of Athens, and feed your eyes upon her from day to day, till love of her fills your hearts; and then when all her greatness shall break upon you, you must reflect that it was by courage, sense of duty, and a keen feeling of honor in action that men were enabled to win all this, and that no personal failure in an enterprise could make them consent to deprive their country of their valor, but they laid it at her feet as the most glorious contribution that they could offer. [2] For this offering of their lives made in common by them all they each of them individually received that renown which never grows old, and for a sepulchre, not so much that in which their bones have been deposited, but that noblest of shrines wherein their glory is laid up to be eternally remembered upon every occasion on which deed or story shall fall for its commemoration. [3] For heroes have the whole earth for their tomb; and in lands far from their own, where the column with its epitaph declares it, there is enshrined in every breast a record unwritten with no tablet to preserve it, except that of the heart. [4] These take as your model, and judging happiness to be the fruit of freedom and freedom of valor, never decline the dangers of war. [5] For it is not the miserable that would most justly be unsparing of their lives; these have nothing to hope for: it is rather they to whom continued life may bring reverses as yet unknown, and to whom a fall, if it came, would be most tremendous in its consequences. [6] And surely, to a man of spirit, the degradation of cowardice must be immeasurably more grievous than the unfelt death which strikes him in the midst of his strength and patriotism!

#### 2.44

[1] Comfort, therefore, not condolence, is what I have to offer to the parents of the dead who may be here. Numberless are the chances to which, as they know, the life of man is subject; but fortunate indeed are they who draw for their lot a death so glorious as that which has caused your mourning, and to whom life has been so exactly measured as to terminate in the happiness in which it has been passed. [2] Still I know that this is a hard saying, especially when those are in question of whom you will constantly be reminded by seeing in the homes of others blessings of which once you also boasted: for grief is felt not so much for the want of what we have never known, as for the loss of that to which we have been long accustomed. [3] Yet you who are still of an age to beget children must bear up in the hope of having others in their stead; not only will they help you to forget those whom you have lost, but will be to the state at once a reinforcement and a security; for never can a fair or just policy be expected of the citizen who does not, like his fellows, bring to the decision the interests and apprehensions of a father. [4] While those of you who have passed your prime must congratulate yourselves with the thought that the best part of your life was fortunate, and that the brief span that remains will be cheered by the fame of the departed. For it is only the love of honor that never grows old; and honor it is, not gain, as some would have it, that rejoices the heart of age and helplessness.

#### 2.45

[1] Turning to the sons or brothers of the dead, I see an arduous struggle before you. When a man is gone, all are wont to praise him, and should your merit be ever so transcendent, you will still find it difficult not merely to overtake, but even to approach their renown. The living have envy to contend with, while those who are no longer in our path are honored with a goodwill into which rivalry does not enter. [2] On the other hand if I must say anything on the subject of female excellence to those of you who will now be in widowhood, it will be all comprised in this brief exhortation. Great will be your glory in not falling short of your natural character; and greatest will be hers who is least talked of among the men whether for good or for bad.

#### 2.46

[1] My task is now finished. I have performed it to the best of my ability, and in words, at least, the requirements of the law are now satisfied. If deeds be in question, those who are here interred have received part of their honors already, and I for the rest, their children will be brought up till manhood at the public expense: the state thus offers a valuable prize, as the garland of victory in this race of valor, for the reward both of those who have fallen and their survivors. And where the rewards for merit are greatest, there are found the best citizens. [2] And now that you have brought to a close your lamentations for your relatives, you may depart.'

## Timeline for the Persian Wars and the Periclean Age

Dates	Political events	Literature and art
506	Democracy in Athens	Athenian <i>agora</i> as economic and political center
490	First Persian invasion: Battle of Marathon	(from 490-480, Athens begins the first version of the Parthenon)
480	Second Persian invasion: Battles of Thermopylae, Salamis, Plataea	Athens destroyed and abandoned
478	Creation of 150-state alliance called the Delian League and led by Athens	Acropolis in ruins
460	Pericles' career begins	Aeschylus' <i>Oresteia</i> (including the <i>Agamemnon</i> ) 458
450	Growth of Athenian empire Pericles launches building program	Herodotus' <i>Histories</i> Parthenon begun
432/1	Outbreak of Peloponnesian War	Thucydides begins his <i>History</i> Parthenon completed
431-429	Plague in Athens; death of Pericles	Pericles' Funeral Oration 431
429-421	Thucydides' exile in 424; first ten years of war concludes with a truce in 421	Plato born c. 429 Sophocles' <i>Oedipus Tyrannos</i> 427 Aristophanes' <i>Clouds</i> 423
416	Melian Expedition; Sicilian Expedition	Euripides' <i>Trojan Women</i> 415
404	Sparta defeats Athens Death of Socrates 399	Plato's <i>Symposium</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 416 (setting)</li> <li>• 400 (narration)</li> <li>• 380 (composition)</li> </ul>