

WORLD HISTORY READERS

Level 3-4

# The Battle of Salamis

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Seed  
Learning



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## The Battle of Thermopylae

Do you know of the famous Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC between the Greeks and Persians?



The narrow pass of Thermopylae

Xerxes, the king of Persia

(modern-day Iran), invaded Greece.

Sparta and some other Greek cities sent soldiers to stop the Persians. A small number of brave Greek warriors fought against Xerxes and his big army.



Xerxes, king of Persia

The story goes that 300 Spartan soldiers held the narrow pass of Thermopylae against 100,000 Persians for three days. They all died. The truth is a little different, though. There were really about 5,000 Greek soldiers there until the last day.



A Greek warrior

## A Sea Battle Near Thermopylae

The soldiers of Sparta had the best army in Greece. But the people from Athens had the best navy. The Athenians fought a sea battle against the Persians at the same time the Spartans fought at Thermopylae.

When the Greek soldiers lost at Thermopylae, the Greek navy had to pull back. The Greek fleet of ships moved to a narrow area of water called the Straits of Salamis. Because it was narrow, it was a good

place for a small fleet to fight a big one.

However, because the army and navy had to move back, the Persians were able to take Athens.



A view of Athens today



A monument showing Spartan soldiers at Thermopylae



A map of Greece



## Fight or Give Up

The Greek army had been beaten at Thermopylae. Now only the small Greek navy waiting at Salamis could prevent the Persians from conquering Greece.



Themistocles,  
A Greek hero

If the Greek navy could beat the Persians at Salamis, the Persian army would have to leave Greece and go home. If the Persians won, they could take all the cities in Greece.



The narrow straits at Salamis

However, the Greek navy was running out of food. They had to beat the Persians in a battle soon or give up. So the Greek leader, Themistocles, fooled the Persians into attacking them.

## The Trick

Themistocles sent a slave as an informer. The man tricked Xerxes by saying that the Greeks couldn't agree and would flee during the night.

Xerxes and all his commanders wanted to attack, except one, Queen Artemisia, his only female captain. She said that the Greeks could not get away and were running out of food. She did not think that attacking them was necessary.

A slave told  
a lie to Xerxes.



A Persian  
soldier



An actress as Queen  
Artemisia

## Xerxes Decides

Xerxes, however, did not want to wait. He said that the Persians would win. He ordered his fleet to attack as he watched from a hill. Xerxes wanted to see how well his captains did.



The memorial of the Battle of Salamis

Xerxes watching

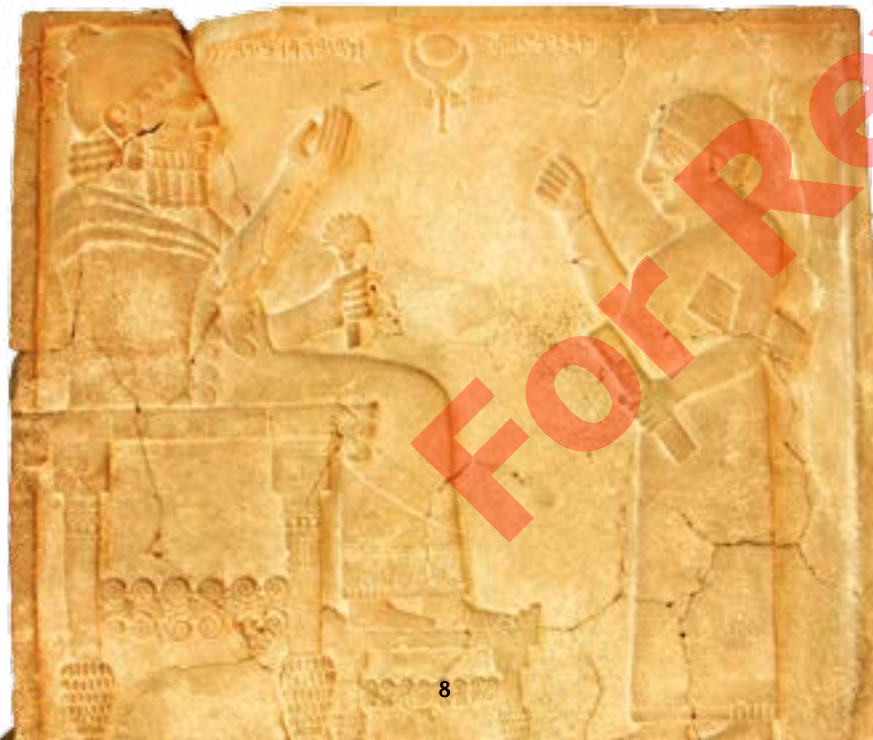
## The Persian Fleet vs. the Greek Fleet

The powerful Persian fleet moved toward the small Greek fleet. The Persian fleet had about 800 ships from many countries, including Phoenicia and Egypt. The Greeks only had about 370 ships.



The ship could sail or be rowed.

Could the smaller Greek navy win this big battle?



Battleships

## Comprehension Questions

1. Who fought the Persians at Thermopylae?
  - (a) Greek soldiers
  - (b) Roman soldiers
  - (c) Phoenician soldiers
  - (d) Egyptian soldiers
2. Why did the Greek ships move to Salamis?
  - (a) They wanted to attack.
  - (b) They wanted to rest.
  - (c) They wanted a good position.
  - (d) They won a battle.
3. Why did the Persians start an attack?
  - (a) Xerxes was asked to.
  - (b) Xerxes was fooled.
  - (c) The Greeks were escaping.
  - (d) The Greeks attacked first.
4. What is a trireme?
  - (a) A kind of triangle
  - (b) A group of soldiers
  - (c) A kind of ship
  - (d) A Persian commander
5. "Ramming" means...
  - (a) hitting an enemy ship.
  - (b) jumping onto an enemy ship.
  - (c) moving a ship by rowing.
  - (d) moving a ship quickly.
6. First, the Greek ships...
  - (a) moved back.
  - (b) moved forward.
  - (c) turned around.
  - (d) made pairs.
7. What did the Greek ships do next?
  - (a) They escaped.
  - (b) They attacked.
  - (c) They turned around.
  - (d) They sank.
8. What made it hard for the Persian ships?
  - (a) There were too few.
  - (b) There were too many.
  - (c) They were too big.
  - (d) They were too slow.
9. How many Persian ships were sunk?
  - (a) About 40
  - (b) About 80
  - (c) About 120
  - (d) About 200
10. The year after the Battle of Salamis...
  - (a) Xerxes and Themistocles became friends.
  - (b) Greece became part of the Persian Empire.
  - (c) the Persians attacked Greece again but failed.
  - (d) the Persians won.

## Glossary

- **army** a group of soldiers who fight on land
- **captain** the person who controls a ship
- **conquer** to take control of a country or defeat people in a war
- **flee** to run away (from danger)
- **fleet** a group of ships
- **fool** to trick someone
- **Greek** (someone or something) coming from Greece
- **informer** a person who gives information in secret
- **invade** to attack a country to take its land
- **navy** the warships of a country
- **oar** a long wooden pole for rowing a ship or boat
- **Persian Empire** an area that was ruled by one person and which spanned from Egypt to Turkey and through Mesopotamia
- **powerful** very strong
- **ram** to hit hard
- **sailor** a person who sails on a boat
- **Spartan** a person from the city of Sparta
- **strait** a narrow body of water between two pieces of land
- **Themistocles** the Athenian leader of the Greeks
- **Xerxes** the king of Persia from 486 – 465 BC