

Thermopylae 480 BCE

HPAH5044/6044 - ARMIES AND NAVIES



Context

- ▶ 480BCE, Aug/Sept
- ▶ Southern Thessaly/northern Boeotia
- ▶ Narrow pass that controlled major route into Boetia
- ▶ Persian victory



Other Thermopylae(s)

- ▶ 353 BCE – Athenian occupation vs Philip II
- ▶ 323 BCE – Athenian victory over Antipater
- ▶ 279 BCE – Celtic victory over Greek coalition
- ▶ 191 BCE – Roman victory over Antiochus III
- ▶ C. 254 CE – Roman victory over Gothic invasion
- ▶ 1941 CE – German victory over ANZAC forces

Who was at Thermopylae (480)?

Group	Number – Herodotus	Numbers – Diodorus Siculus
Lacedaemonians/ Perioeci	900?	700 or 1,000
Spartan hoplites	300	300
Mantineans	500	
Tegeans	500	
Arcadian Orchomenos	120	
Other Arcadians	1,000	3,000 (other Peloponnesians sent with Leonidas)
Corinthians	400	
Phlians	200	
Mycenaeans	80	
Total Peloponnesians	3,100 or 4,000	4,000 or 4,300
Thespians	700	–
Malians	–	1,000
Thebans	400	400
Phocians	1,000	1,000
Opuntian Locrians	"All they had"	1,000
Grand total	5,200 (or 6,100) plus the Opuntian Locrians	7,400 (or 7,700)

Herodotus on Thermopylae

- ▶ Discussion – based on your reading, consider the following:
- ▶ What literary techniques does Hdt use?
- ▶ Who are the major figures and how are they represented?

Alternative accounts

- ▶ Diodorus, 11.8.4 – 11.10.4 (based on Ephorus)
- ▶ Simonides (fragments)
- ▶ Ctesias', *Persica* (via Photius)
- ▶ Plutarch's *On the Malice of Herodotus*

Ephorus/Diodorus

- ▶ Diod. 11.11.5:

- ▶ 'And one would be justified in believing that it was these men [the Spartans] who were more responsible for the common freedom of the Greeks than those who were victorious at a later time in the battles against Xerxes; for when the deeds of these men were called to mind, the Persians were dismayed whereas the Greeks were incited to perform similar courageous exploits.'

- ▶ Hdt. 7.139.5:

- ▶ 'As it is, to say that the Athenians were the saviours of Hellas is to hit the truth. It was the Athenians who held the balance; whichever side they joined was sure to prevail. Choosing that Greece should preserve her freedom, the Athenians roused to battle the other Greek states which had not yet gone over to the Persians and, after the gods, were responsible for driving the king off.'

Plutarch

- ▶ Plut., De Herod., 32:
 - ▶ Now Herodotus, in his narration of that fight, has obscured the bravest act of Leonidas, saying that they all fell in the straits near the hill. But it happened otherwise. For when they perceived by night that they were surrounded by the enemy, they marched straight to the enemies' camp, and got very near the King's pavilion, with a resolution to kill him and willing to die in the attempt. They came then to his tent, killing or putting to flight all they met; but when Xerxes was not found there, seeking him in that vast camp and wandering about, they were at last with much difficulty slain by the barbarians, who surrounded them on every side.

Ctesias

- ▶ Ctesias, *Persica*, 27:
- ▶ Demaratus the Spartan, who arrived there first and accompanied Xerxes across, dissuaded him [Xerxes] from invading Sparta. His general Artapanus, with 10,000 men, fought an engagement with Leonidas, the Spartan general, at Thermopylae; the Persian host was cut to pieces, while only two or three of the Spartans were slain. The king then ordered an attack with 20,000, but these were defeated, and although flogged to the battle, were routed again...

Ctesias (cont.)

- ▶ ...The next day he ordered an attack with 50,000, but without success, and accordingly ceased operations. Thorax the Thessalian and Calliades and Timaphernes, the leaders of the Trachinians, who were present with their forces, were summoned by Xerxes together with Demaratus and Hegias the Ephesian, who told him that the Spartans could never be defeated unless they were surrounded. A Persian army of 40,000 men was conducted by the two leaders of the Trachinians over an almost inaccessible mountain-path to the rear of the Lacedaemonians, who were surrounded and died bravely to a man.

Simonides

- ▶ Diodorus 11.11.6

- ▶ Of those who perished at Thermopylae
All glorious is the fortune, fair the doom;
Their grave's an altar, ceaseless memory's theirs
Instead of lamentation, and their fate
Is chant of praise. Such weathering as this
Nor mould nor all-consuming time shall waste.
This resting place of valiant men has taken
The fair renown of Hellas for its inmate.
And witness is Leonidas, once king
Of Sparta, who has left behind a crown
Of mighty valour and undying fame.

Further reading

- ▶ Cartledge, P. 2006, *Spartan Reflections*. New York: The Overlook Press.
- ▶ Christopoulos, D. et al., 2011, 'Using Virtual Environments to Tell the Story: "The Battle of Thermopylae"'. *2011 Third International Conference on Games and Virtual Worlds for Serious Applications*.
- ▶ Flower, M. 1998, 'Simonides, Ephorus and Herodotus on the Battle of Thermopylae'. *Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 2.
- ▶ Hammond, N.G.L. 1996, 'Sparta at Thermopylae'. *Historia*, Vol. 45, Vol. 1.
- ▶ Lloyd Davies, L.
- ▶ *Spartan Mirage*