

Name _____ Date _____

The Peloponnesian War

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

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Renowned throughout the ancient world for its fearsome soldiers, Sparta fostered a climate of militarism in even its youngest citizens. At age seven, boys were required to enter the agoge, a program designed to train Spartan males in the art of war. Girls were not allowed to join and were instead educated at home.

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The agoge was divided into three age groups: the paides, paidiskoi, and h\xc4\x93b\xc5\x8dntes. While the paides, who were seven to 14 years old, learned to read and write, the agoge curriculum emphasized physical education above all else. Boys participated in athletic competitions and endurance exercises that tested their survival skills. The paidiskoi, who ranged in age from 15 to 19, continued their military education while learning to navigate adult society. This was accomplished through participation in the syssitia, or communal meals where men of all ages socialized. At 20, students graduated to h\xc4\x93b\xc5\x8dntes. Members of this group were eligible for military service and granted suffrage in the Spartan assembly. Still, they were not considered full members of Spartan society until selected by a group of older men to join the homoioi, a word that roughly translates to \xe2\x80\x9cpeers.\xe2\x80\x9d Men left the agoge at 30, at which point they were expected to serve full-time in the military and start a family.

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Notes

Born into a politically powerful Athenian family, Pericles rose to become one of the most influential Greek leaders of the fifth century BCE. Like most privileged young men of his time, his early years were devoted to classical education in music, philosophy, and rhetoric. He also used his inherited wealth to patronize the arts, most notably sponsoring the production of plays by ancient greats like Aeschylus. Though little is known about his entry into politics, contemporary sources suggest that Pericles did not assume a leadership position until his thirties, after establishing himself as a prominent legal figure.

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As a member of the Athenian assembly, Pericles made his disdain for Sparta a cornerstone of his platform. In 462 BCE, he led a group of young politicians in a successful effort to oust the old ruling faction, who prioritized friendly relations with the Spartans. Pericles maintained control of the government from this point forward. Eager to expand Athens's cultural hegemony, he coordinated the construction of the Parthenon and the Acropolis. He also led several military missions during the Peloponnesian War, including the recapture of Delphi from the Spartans. His death from the plague in 429 BCE was a significant blow to Athens's leadership and a likely contributor to the city-state's eventual downfall.

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Toward the end of the fifth century BCE, Greek city-states began hiring foreign soldiers to serve in their armies. These men were known as mercenaries, and they made their living by participating in conflicts for personal profit, unlike citizens who were typically conscripted into the military of their homeland. The economic crises caused by the ongoing conflict between Athens and Sparta made mercenarism an attractive option for many young Greeks. However, DNA evidence suggests that some mercenaries hailed from as far away as the Baltic region and even Central Asia.

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The general public did not hold mercenaries in high regard. Many felt that the idealized notion of the warrior, centered on self-sacrifice in the service of the state, was incompatible with mercenaries' money-making goals. Xenophobia was also a factor, as the ancient Greeks were generally distrustful of foreigners. Still, foreign soldiers had a lasting impact on Greek society. The Scythians, who hailed from modern-day Iran and were famed for their skill on horseback, are featured in ancient plays and depicted on decorative vases. The Thracians of the Balkan Peninsula introduced a new type of infantry called the peltast, whose light armor made them much more mobile than the traditional Greek hoplites. Over the centuries, these groups and others would come to make up a significant portion of many Greek armies.

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