

CHAPTER 27

city-states of Sparta (above)
Athens (below) were bitter rivals.

Life in Two City-States: Athens and Sparta

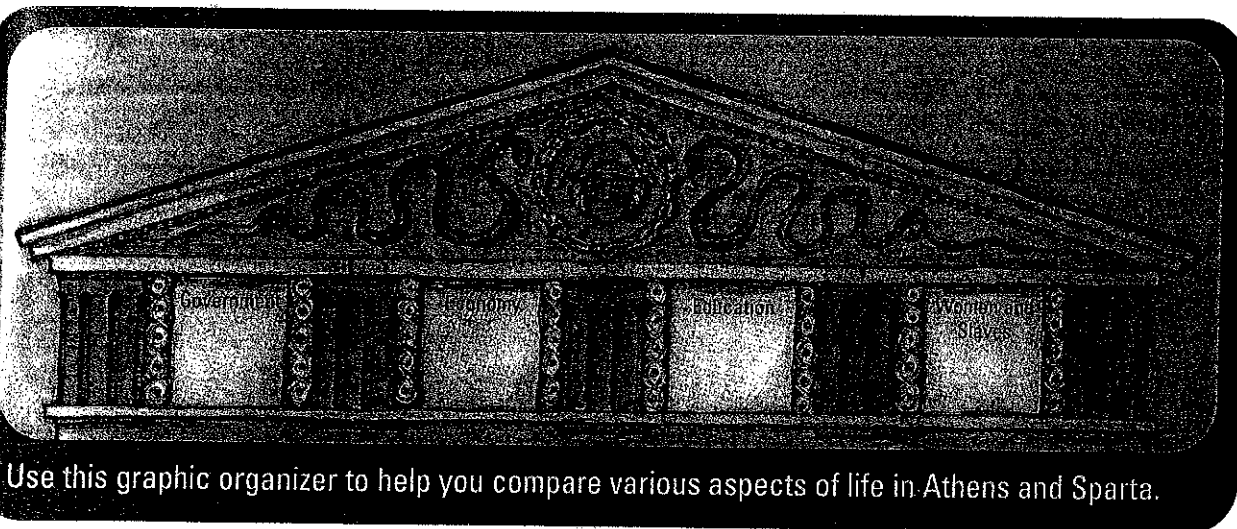
27.1 Introduction

In Chapter 26, you learned that ancient Greece was a collection of city-states, each with its own government. In this chapter, you will learn about two of the most important Greek city-states, Athens and Sparta. They not only had different forms of government, but very different ways of life.

Athens was a walled city near the sea. Nearby, ships came and went from a busy port. Inside the city walls, master potters and sculptors labored in workshops. Wealthy people and their slaves strolled through the marketplace. Often the city's citizens (free men) gathered to loudly debate the issues of the day.

Sparta was located in a farming area on a plain. No walls surrounded the city. Its buildings were simple and plain compared to those of Athens. Even the clothing of the people in the streets was drab. Columns of soldiers tramped through the streets, with fierce expressions behind their bronze helmets.

Even a casual visitor could see that Athens and Sparta were very different. Let's take a closer look at the way people lived in these two city-states. We'll examine each city's **government, economy, education,** and treatment of women and slaves.



Use this graphic organizer to help you compare various aspects of life in Athens and Sparta.

27.2 Comparing Two City-States

Peloponnesus the peninsula forming the southern part of the mainland of Greece

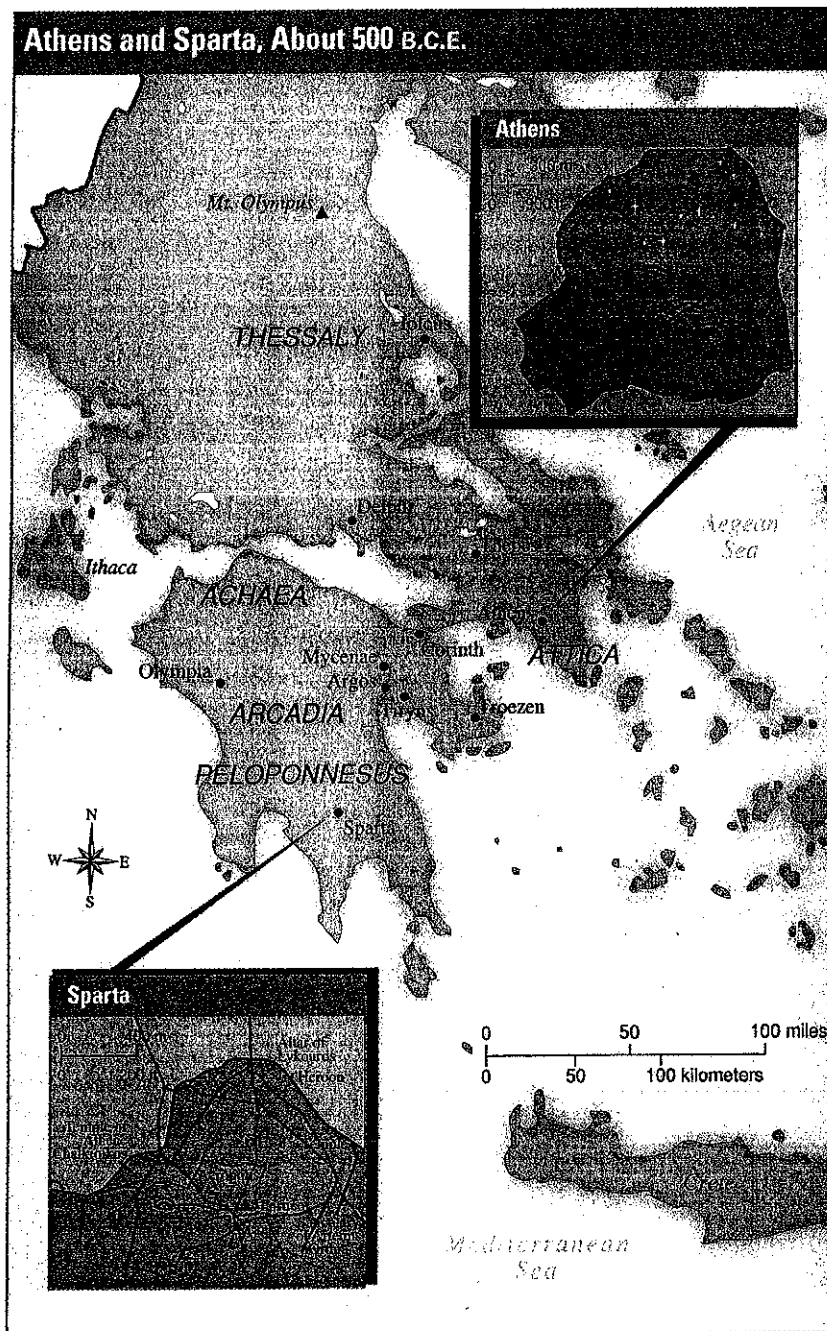
Athens and Sparta were both Greek cities, and they were only about 150 miles apart. Yet they were as different as they could be. Why?

Part of the answer is geography. Athens is in central Greece, only four miles from the Aegean Sea. Its location encouraged Athenians to look outward toward the world beyond the city. Athenians liked to travel. They were eager to spread their own ideas and to learn from others. They encouraged artists from other parts of Greece to come and share their knowledge of art

and architecture. Athens developed strong relationships with other city-states, and it grew large and powerful through trade. A great fleet made it the leading naval power in Greece.

In contrast, Sparta was more isolated. It was located on a plain between the mountains and the sea in the part of Greece known as the **Peloponnesus**. Spartans were suspicious of outsiders and their ideas. They grew much of what they needed in the fertile soil around Sparta. What they couldn't grow, they often took from their neighbors through the power of their armies. While Athenians boasted of their art and culture, Spartans valued strength and simplicity. They taught their sons and daughters to fight, and they produced soldiers rather than artists and thinkers.

For most of their histories, the two city-states were bitter rivals. As you will see, their differences were reflected in every part of life.



Athenian Government

As you learned in the last chapter, Athens became a democracy around 500 B.C.E. But unlike modern democracies, Athens allowed only free men to be citizens. All men over the age of 18 who were born in Athens were Athenian citizens. Women and slaves were not citizens.

Every citizen could take part in the city's government. A group called the Council of 500 met every day. Each year, the names of 500 citizens 30 years of age or older were collected, and 100 of those names were chosen. The council ran the day-to-day business of government and suggested new laws.

Proposed laws had to be approved by a much larger group, the Assembly. The Assembly met on a hill every 10 days. At least 6,000 citizens had to be present for a meeting to take place. If not enough people showed up, slaves would round up more citizens with ropes dipped in red paint. Men were embarrassed to appear at the meeting with their clothes stained with red marks.

The Assembly debated and voted on laws proposed by the council. Every citizen had the right to speak at Assembly meetings. Some speakers were more skilled than others. Some spoke longer than others. Sometimes a water clock was used to time the speaker. One cup of water was set above another. The first cup had a small hole drilled into the bottom. The speaker could talk only until all the water ran out of the top cup and into the bottom cup.

Most Athenian men enjoyed taking part in the city's democracy. They liked to gather and debate the issues. They were proud of their freedom as Athenian citizens.



Desmosthenes, an Athenian leader, speaks to the Assembly.

