

Thermopylae: the battle that changed the world

[History](#)



Jerry Ciacho November 30, Thermopylae: The Battle That Changed the World

Even the Greeks understood it was a suicide operation. Surely, they would all die in this battle. However, they also knew that this gallant act of courage would pierce through the hearts of their enemies and the cost of their own blood would later give them freedom. This book describes and comprehensively illustrates the captivating account of King Leonidas I, the Agiad hero-king who led the three hundred Spartans into the pass of Thermopylae against the Persian Empire of Xerxes I of over one million soldiers. In the course of three days, the Persians and the Greeks fought to the death. The Spartans, although greatly outnumbered, were able to shield off the bombardment of arrows thrown at them by five thousand Persian archers. According to Ctesias, a Greek physician and historian, the first wave of Persian attack was “cut to ribbons” leaving only one or two Spartans dead. The second day of battle was no different. The Persians performed no better on the second day than the first. Because of the treachery of Ephialtes, a Greek local who exposed a small pathway that led at the back of the Greek lines. On the third and final day of battle, the 300 Spartans are annihilated by the Persian army. The melee was evidently a crush for the Greek armed forces, who had an unassailable tactic, and would have driven the entire army of Xerxes had Thermopylae been protected but the Greeks were deceived, outflanked and ultimately outnumbered by the Persian army. This extraordinary historic battle between the Greek city-states and the Persian army changed the entire course of history. Without the three hundred Spartans, the Greeks back in their homes would not have enough time to prepare for the battles up ahead of them. Because of the daring and self-sacrificing deed of the three hundred fearless and valiant Spartans, the <https://assignbuster.com/thermopylae-the-battle-that-changed-the-world/>

Greeks eventually gained victory over the Persians. With the Battle of Salamis and the final and decisive Battle of Plataea, in which the Greeks destroyed a great number of Persian soldiers, the Persian army finally retreated. In addition to the Battle of Mycale which further threatened and destroyed the Persian fleet, threats of further invasions from them faded away. The Battle of Thermopylae is perhaps the most well-known and celebrated battles in European history. This battle, exemplified in this book? showed the great and noble character of the Spartans, their fearlessness and courage to defend their home, sacrificing their lives for the victory of their native soil. It was all about the pure attitude it took to not merely exist as a Spartan warrior, but to breathe your last breath protecting the right to live as free men, without having to worry about attacks and invasions. King Leonidas I' reasons for staying behind even though he had already gave an official order to retreat could have been numerous. The law of Sparta could be one. His belief in the prediction of the Oracle another. Furthermore, it is plausible that the withdrawal of some was a thoroughly planned method. If all continued on and remained to fight, the entire Greek defense would certainly face death, with no doubt. On the other hand, if all of them retreated, the Persian army would easily run over the retreating army of the Greeks. Only by a partial army holding the defending stance would the other forces be able to retreat effectively to be able to fight another day and win victory for all of Greece. This book showed as well the great skill and strategy of the Greeks who used not only their swords and weapons, their armors and strength, but also used their intelligence and brainpower wisely, creating an undefeatable and rock solid technique and approach. With only a few soldiers compared to the million Persian forces, they were able to kill a

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colossal number that Xerxes was enraged at being outfought by the smaller army of soldiers. He, consequently, ordered the cutting of King Leonidas' head and the body crucified. The book illustrated the story extensively and with great detail. He showed the Spartans as a symbol of courage and the fight for freedom. Freedom is as important as living, for living without freedom is not living at all. Thermopylae therefore attained a great significance that went beyond its concrete military impression. At the end of the day, the long struggle's worth did not lay in the territory conquered or lost. It did not lay in the number of men slaughtered or captured, but in motivation and inspiration. The Spartans had educated all of Greece, Europe and the world a lasting and lifelong lesson about bravery and sacrifice in the face of hopeless chances. Works Cited Cartledge, Paul. Thermopylae: The Battle That Changed The World. Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2006. Print.