

# The two faces of ancient greece (athens and sparta)



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The two most dominating city-states in Greece of their time, Athens and Sparta, were great rivals with two very different ways of life. Sparta's overbearing military and Athens' impartial justice system and government are models for many modern day countries. Even though these two city-states differ greatly from one another, they share many characteristics of their country and their time period. Athens and Sparta were the two most powerful Greek territories of their time. Like most cities of the same country, they have the same Greek culture, worshipping the same Greek gods and speaking Greek. Like all Greeks, their people loved to talk and tell stories. Although they fought against each other, their citizens equally had great amounts of pride for their entire country as well as their city-states. The two rivals were both devoted mainly to agriculture and based their wealth, but not their success, on agriculture. Both also participated in the annual Olympics, an ancient Greek national athletic competition which is now a worldwide tradition. These two Greek city-states were the most feared city-states in all of Greece. Though Athens and Sparta were similar, they were also very different. Athens was the first democracy, and it was also the first to govern with trial by jury. Athens' main accomplishment was that it had a very strong Navy. It was the command of the sea and the head of the Naval Alliance, or the Delian League. Athens was the most feared city-state to fight at sea. Its other achievements were that it had excellent forms of art, architecture, drama and literature, philosophy, science, and medicine. It was very wealthy and had beautiful, extravagant temples. The boys of Athens went to school between the ages of five and eighteen, where they learned reading, writing, mathematics, music, poetry, sports and gymnastics. The girls stayed at home and learned spinning, weaving and domestic arts.

Athens had well educated men, a good sense of art, and an all-powerful navy. Sparta developed the most powerful military oligarchy of their time. They had a very strong army and were the most feared city-state to fight on land. Sparta was a member of the Peloponnesian League and was the most powerful people in it. Its excellent military conquered many territories, which they controlled with slaves. Sparta's sole achievement, other than military supremacy, was that its people possessed a simple life style, with no care for the arts of Athens. When Spartan boys turned seven years old they began training for the military, and they ceased their training at the age of twenty. There was much more gender equality in Sparta than in Athens, and girls went to school where they learned reading, writing, athletics, gymnastics, and survival skills, and they could even join the military. Sparta was militarily supreme over Athens, and it also supported better equality and simplicity of life. Sparta and Athens contrasted greatly in military, art, education, government, and in many other areas. The few similarities they had were mainly based on their country's rituals and traditions. These rituals and traditions are what the modern world remembers of the Greek culture.