

Discuss how and why
lycurgus was forced
to reform sparta.
explain what the
lycurg...

[History](#)



The paper "How and Why Lycurgus Was Forced to Reform Sparta" is a great example of an essay on history. Lycurgus had a person like Hercules as his ancestor and came from a Spartan royal family. After the death of his father and brother, he was given the inheritance. His brother's wife was going to have a baby, which she was willing to drop if Lycurgus marries her. Lycurgus, however, decided to keep the baby and after he was born he went away to Crete in case anyone thinks he is after his life (Yonge 2010). All this time Lycurgus went through the kinds of government Crete had and jotted down whatever could be of any use to Sparta (Plutarch 1816). Furthering his research for ruling a nation, he even went to lavish Ionia in order to study them and compare with the more sober Cretans. However, his absence made the Spartans write to him to come back and rule them.

After his return to Sparta, Lycurgus visited the Oracle in order to find some guidance and he was told that he should go ahead with what he had in mind and that his state would be well known throughout the world. Encouraged, he then brought about several major changes in the government which he thought would be beneficial to the society.

The first thing Lycurgus did was instituting a senate of twenty-eight men (Schiller and Hempel 1861). They had the same power as that of the two Spartan royal houses. These twenty-eight senators were the colleagues of the kings. Although people could vote in order to cast their opinion the ultimate decision was of the senate as they had the power to decide if a vote is required. Prior to such a system, Sparta had remained a dictatorship where the common people had certainly no say in anything.

The next issue Lycurgus looked at was land ownership. During those times

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extreme inequality existed in Sparta and there were just a few who had the majority of wealth and land. Because of this inequality, the rich were extremely arrogant and lived a life of luxury, making the poorer people envious and dissatisfied. It also led to more crime. To solve this Lycurgus took over all the land and everyone was given an equal piece in order to ensure that money does not become a cause of dissatisfaction or crime. Although this reduced the problems there was another issue to be taken care of. They also existed money in the form of gold and silver and thus there was inequality in this case as well. For that purpose, Lycurgus introduced only iron money as that does not have any intrinsic value. This proved to be very beneficial for the state as the Spartans stop importing luxurious items and there no longer was any robbery or bribery.

One more law against the rich and for encouraging equality was that everyone had to have their meals together at public mess halls. Since everyone was served the same food there was no issue of anyone having more or less, or showing off fancy things.

Lycurgus also made sure that the children born were very strong and fearless. He allowed men to “lend” their wives to other men for planting their seeds in them. He said that if a woman can bear the child of a healthy, brave man who is not her husband, let that be then. The women were also supposed to be fearless and healthy. To make sure of that he made it compulsory for them to dance naked in front of young men so that they would have a chance of showing off their body and beauty and thus would take care of themselves for fear of being ridiculed since no one likes weak and fat women.

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Spartans needed to have a strong military organization so that they could keep the civilians under their control and so that they would be able to maintain their position along with protecting Sparta from foreign ideas. For this purpose, Lycurgus replaced the three Dorian tribes with five new ones. All these tribes were given a regiment.

Due to all such reforms, Sparta did indeed gain fame throughout the world. It was known to have become a very conservative state, so much that it was termed as being stagnated. Because of the limitations, the people had regarding the accumulation of wealth, the Spartans would be very eager to fight wars as they looked forward to attaining the booty afterward. Equality was encouraged in Sparta and this was not just in terms of monetary wealth but also among the two genders, as Spartan women could enjoy enough power and position. They could not, however, hold public office or vote. Besides, that mercantile middle class did not exist in Sparta.