

# Xerxes – college essay



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Family Background and status Xerxes was born a royal prince and would have had all the respect and prestige associated with his status. He was not the eldest son of King Darius I. Darius had three sons by another wife whilst he was still but a lord. For Darius to strengthen his claim to the Persian throne, Darius married Tathaspes, the daughter of Cyrus the Great. Xerxes was the eldest son of this union. This made Xerxes the son of the king, grandson of the founder of the empire and the son with the most royal blood.

Herodotus recorded that Persian Males were educated between the ages of five and twenty. To ride, to use a bow and to speak the truth. " On Xerxes' father, Darius' tomb there is an inscription that reads. " Trained am I both with hands and feet. As a horseman I am a good horseman. As bowman I am a good bowman both afoot and on horseback. As a superman I am a good superman both afoot and on horseback. " This is an example of the Persian values that were held highly by Darius I but also by other prominent Persians including Xerxes .

Xerxes education would have included the importance of speaking the truth, praying, studying music, learning from Persian legends, and rigorous training in all physical accomplishments, including horsemanship, throwing spears, shooting bow and arrows, hunting and tracking. Part of Xerxes' education later in his life included titles that would aid him in his Kingship. Xerxes was the Satrap of Babylon; this would have been a way to prepare him for kingship by giving him experience in government and administration in one of the most important satrapies in the empire.

Although he was named Xerxes in his time as king this was only his Throne name, his real name remains unknown to us to this day. As king, his status rose, so did his skills in horsemanship, Archery and gardening. Succession to Kingship After the death of Darius I, Darius II, who was the eldest of Darius I's children, claimed the throne, proclaiming that he was the rightful heir to the throne due the fact that it was accustom that the eldest son of the king was to be the next to succeed to the throne.

While Xerxes urged that he was the descendant of Cyrus the great, who had won the freedom of the Persians while Darius I was born of the lord Darius and his commoner wife. Xerxes was born to Darius and Darius II after Darius' ascension to the throne. Xerxes also claimed that it was the god Ares will for him to succeed his father to the throne. Xerxes was crowned and succeeded his father, Darius. The transition to Xerxes rule was smooth due to Darius II's great Authority and persuasion. Xerxes' ascension was no longer challenged unlike previous kings.

According to Herodotus, Xerxes' brother Artabanus, satrap of Bactria, contested the throne but was won over by gifts and the promise that he would be second in the kingdom after Xerxes. Artabanus crowned the new King and remained loyal, dying a hero at Salamis. Herodotus gives a different version: a violent quarrel broke out between Darius' sons over the succession. A deposed Spartan king named Demaratus told Darius that in Sparta the custom was for the son born after his father became king to become king himself. Darius proclaimed Xerxes heir.

Herodotus believed that Xerxes would have become king anyway, ' because of the immense influence of Tattoos'. " Other sons of Drains there were - thus unto Aura Mazda was the desire - Drains my father made me the greatest after himself". " A great god is Aura Mazda... Who made Xerxes king, one king of many... ' am Xerxes, the great king... Song of Drains the king, an Chainmen, a Persian... By the favor of Aura Mazda... Administration of the Persian Empire The Persian Empire was a hereditary monarchy; this meant the king who inherited the throne from his father.

Xerxes was an absolute ruler and administrated his realm from his palaces. This task was not left solely to Xerxes; he had considerable help in the Administration of the realm. The empire was divided into Administrative areas called satrapies, when Xerxes succeeded to the throne there were over 20 satrapies, each was ruled by a satrap responsible to the king. Role of satraps The king also appointed a Satrap's secretary and commander of the garrison. The Satrap's duties were to collect tribute, raise military funds, dispense Justice, administrate the economy and minted silver coinage. King Xerxes imposed tribute throughout the empire, to its distant shores. " The organization of the empire The administrative basis of the Persian Empire was established by Cyrus the great. The previous bureaucracy of the Babylonians and Modes were used as a very useful guide. Drains was aware of how previous rulers had run such a large empire and this played a key role in his central administration behind his reforms. Royal Advisers Key advisers of the king were nobles, courtiers and members of his family.

The King's closest family members may have had opinions on many issues. Local experts for areas were invaluable to the king providing essential for

providing information to the royal court in order to plan tactics for warfare and dissolving revolts. The treasury Treasuries were set up in in each major city each under the responsibility of chief Treasurer (Zanzibar). All subjects paid some tax to the king. This had to be stored and recorded before being used to pay for the administration of the empire.

**Provincial Organization** The numerous countries of the empire had previously experienced the rule of others UT as Persians became dominate and they adopted and adapted many aspects of culture and government from the Modes and Babylonians. **Law** The law was directed locally, each case had the right to appeal to the satrap or to Xerxes himself, assisted by a panel of royal Judges who formed a high court, and this position was held by them for life. Where possible the satrapies tried to keep local institutions in each new area as a way to prevent disruptions and rebellions. **What was a Province?** A province was an administrative district.

Sometimes the borders between provinces coincided with natural political and ethnic borders of countries. **Revolts in the Empire** Almost immediately after Xerxes succeeded to the throne, he had to face the difficult task of putting down revolt that had first broken out the year before during the reign of his father Darius. **Egyptian revolt** After the Persians were defeated in Marathon, Egypt rebelled in 486 BC in protest against a rise in taxes in order to invade Greece, against corruption on the Persian administration and against the policy of skilled workers being taken to work as laborers on building projects.

Drains I died before he could put down the revolt, which left the task of putting it down in the hands of his son Xerxes. By BBC, the revolt had been suppressed. The property of many temples had been confiscated and the treatment of the Egyptian people became harsher. Xerxes became an unpopular king in Egypt by building no temples and treating the country as a conquered province and not employing any Egyptians in his administration and but entrusting the government of the satrapy to his brother Casements. " Xerxes marched against the rebels in the year after the death of Drains.

He subdued them and laid Egypt under a much harder slavery than in the time of Drains, and he handed it over to Casements, his own brother and Drains' son. While ruling Egypt, Casements was later killed by a Libyan, Innards son of Semitic. " Babylonian Revolt The Babylonians were discontented because of the taxation, loss of skilled workers and the upkeep of the Persian court and Garrison there. Two revolts occurred: one in BBC and the other in BBC when satrap Cyprus was killed. Xerxes sent his brother -in-law Megabytes to crush the revolt.

Babylon was severely punished for the revolt, the fortifications were torn down, the leaders were executed and their land was given to Persian nobles. A gold statue from the temple of Bell Maraud was taken ND melted down, a priest who objected to this was killed, the Euphrates River was diverted to divide the city and taxation remained high. Xerxes seemed to have dropped the title of " King of Babylon" from his official titles. The Satrapy of " Babylon and the lands beyond the river" lost its identity by being divided into two smaller satrapies.

This evidently reduced Babylon's political status. But as it would appear Babylon didn't suffer economically after the Revolt. When Babylon revolted for the second and last time, Xerxes' punishment for them was not so lenient. Some of the enmeshment inflicted on the Babylonians were the destruction of the fortifications of Babylon, the execution of some priests, the infliction of damage on major religious sanctuaries and the confiscation and removal to Prolepsis of valuable religious property.

Babylon its former political status as a special province of the Chainmen empire and was absorbed into the new satrapy of Assyria. Religious Policy The Persians had Originally worshiped many minor gods before the teachings of Zoroaster were adopted by Darius and Xerxes. Minor Gods were called 'Divas'. In the time of Xerxes the term 'Divas' included good and evil gods. Xerxes honored the god Ahura Mazda as the god "who made this earth". The Persian god appears to have the major deity worshiper by the Chainmen kings.

Like his father Darius, Xerxes was anxious to acknowledge Ahura Mazda as the supreme creator god but more importantly, Xerxes recognized that he was king through the "favor" of Ahura Mazda. With the king worshiping Ahura Mazda gave the religion an important political dimension- in Justifying Xerxes' claim to the throne and the action of his reign could seek divine approval. A crucial concept of this reign was the devotion to "Art", meaning truth or righteousness, and Xerxes chose to emphasize this. Further demonstrating his devotion to Art, Xerxes named his son and successor, Artabanus, meaning Art's kingdom. Ramadan bore me aid. " Xerxes declared himself an adversary of the divas (demons), possibly the gods of the early

Aryans, who had been relegated to the position of demons associated with the forces of evil. This meant that Xerxes represented Ahriman and light; anyone who opposed him was therefore dark and evil. Xerxes appears to have developed his own form of personal religion that stressed not so much the remote tauter of the god or the strictness Zoroastrian, but rather an emphasis on holy Art, truth and righteousness.

Xerxes urged Arteries to emphasis the concept of righteousness in his rule. The Persian kings tolerated other religions in the empire, probably for political reasons. Foreign gods were worshipped in Egypt, Babylon and other areas on the kings behalf. Payments to foreign gods are also recorded. The Magi were priests of the temples of fire. However, it is unknown whether the Magi were genuine believers in Zoroastrian. The Magi performed rituals out in the open.

The Magi also worked at interpreting the Kings dreams and made prophecies. There was tolerance of beliefs and practices of others in the time of Xerxes' kingship, a reflection of lack of Royal radicalism and of the extensive and compromising religious atmosphere of the time. Xerxes Building program Prolepsis " Prolepsis was in fact the symbolic apogee of Chainmen achievement, a monument recording the rise to power of the Persian tribes under the protection of Ahriman, the creator god of the Zoroastrian creed. Darius left a number of unfinished building projects when he died and passed the throne onto his son Xerxes. The royal building projects in the Persian empire was an important aspect of Darius and Xerxes kingship. The breathtaking buildings and sculptures at Prolepsis provide unique evidence of the reign of Xerxes place that such a large-



scale architectural that played a major role as king of the Persian Empire.

After the invasion of Greece, Xerxes was able to turn his full attention to his father's building plans for Proleptis.

Xerxes building programs would not have been possible without the natural and human resources of the Empire. The gate of All Lands Gatehouse of Xerxes also known as " the gate of All Lands" , the name was appropriate cause all those entering the complex had to enter through this , the walls surrounding the platform made this gate the only entrance in the whole complex. Guards were sculpted out of the stone walls at the front and rear doorways.

A pair of colossal bulls guarded the western entrance; a pair of Serialized man-bulls stood at the eastern doorway. The Pedant The doorway from the gatehouse led south to the Pedant which was a large building which was used as receptions by the kings. Construction on the Pedant started during the reign of Darius and was completed during the reign of Xerxes. It stood on its own three meter high terrace that could be reached by two grand flights of stairs which were decorated with sculptures.

The stairway relief's were arranged in three rows and show nobles, courtiers, guardsmen, royal grooms, personal attendants and the representatives of the twenty-three nations bring tribute to the king. During Xerxes reign these sculptures might have been brilliantly colored. The hall of one hundred columns The second of the large buildings on the terrace at Proleptis was the hall of one hundred columns also known as the throne room.

Construction of this building was started by Xerxes and completed by his son Artabanus I towards the end of the fifth century BC.

The main features of this room were the one hundred twelve meter high columns which supported a flat cedar roof, the brick walls that were over three meters thick, doorways and windows framed with massive stone surrounds, its own gatehouse and eight stone doors decorated with reliefs of royal court scenes with the king having an audience with visitors or the king in combat with monsters. Xerxes' palace was built on the site at Persepolis, it was around twice the size of Darius', and it has two staircases with carved reliefs. Xerxes began another palace in the last years of his reign on the highest point of the platform.

Xerxes was the great builder at Persepolis. He died before the Hall of a Hundred Columns and his Palace were finished. Foreign Policy With an extensive Empire, the foreign policy of the Persians was conquest rather than a system of alliance. Rather than constantly going to warfare Tactics of submission were used. Envoys were sent demanding 'earth and water' as a token of submission. This Method was intelligent because it meant that where possible they could save resources and money to gain new territory. Only fighting when it was necessary gave Persians an advantage to what it would have been if they didn't get to choose.

Invasion of the Greek mainland When Xerxes rose to kingship after the death of his father Darius, Xerxes became the military leader of the Persian military forces. Darius had invaded Greece in 490 BC but suffered a defeat. Ten years later Xerxes had to decide whether to complete his father's plan

of revenge against Greece. The course of war Xerxes had come up with a plan to strike Greece from the Satrapy of Thrace, roads were built and the towns were stocked with grain. This would be their supply route during their escapade to punish Greece. Xerxes was confident that the Greeks would fear the might of the Persian Army.

Battle of Thermopile Leonida was north of Thermopile at a narrow pass between the mountains and the sea, known as the gateway to Athens. Leonida had a force of 300 Spartan hoplites supported by 7000 allied troops to delay the Persian forces until the wall across the Isthmus was completed. The Greek naval fleet was watching to make sure that the Persian Naval forces didn't leave to attack Athens. Xerxes didn't attack for four days, he expected the outnumbered Greeks to withdraw when they did not he sent troops to attack their camps. The Persian casualties were high.

Xerxes sent the Persian immortals but they no more successful than the other troops. A Greek traitor showed the Persians a path through the mountains behind the Greek troops. Leonida sent most of the troops home and only the 300 Spartan and some of the Allied troops remained to try and hold the pass. Leonida and the 300 Spartan died after the Persian forces surround them. The delays that were created at Thermopile gave the Greeks enough time to evacuate Athens and build the wall at the Isthmus. " the Persians coming on from the front... And closing in from behind finally overwhelmed them with missile weapons. The Battle of Artemisia The battle of Artemisia was a sea battle. The Greek forces had the advantage of the knowledge of local weather conditions. The Greek fleet taken its first position at Artemisia, shortly after first contact with the Persian fleet, the Greeks

withdrew to the narrowest part of the channel at Chalcis. Hundreds of the Persian warships were wrecked along with many of the transport and grain ships. Although the Greek fleet had damaged some of the Persian fleet after the news of the defeat at Thermopylae, the Greek fleet returned to Salamis where Athenians had been evacuated to.

The loss of a significant amount of ships in this battle had affected the naval superiority. This meant that the Persian fleet was in no shape to engage in a full-scale sea battle. The amount of damage to the Persian fleet affected the result of the battle of Salamis. The Battle of Salamis The Persian fleet sailed to the bay of Peaia, the port of Athens, the fleet met up with its army that now occupied the city. The fleet had been reinforced by ships from emending Greek states, the fleet assembled to be inspected by Xerxes.

Only Queen Artemisia of the Ionians advised Xerxes to wait the Greeks out until they ran out of supplies saying they would have no other choice than to surrender to the Persians. However Xerxes this advice and ordered for the fleet to prepare for battle. The Greek ships were fitted with rams and were able to ram the Persian ships, turn easily and do it again. The Persians had lost 200 ships in this encounter where the Greeks had only lost 40. Persian immortals that had been positioned on the island of Salamis were wiped out by Spartan Hoplites.

At Salamis, which is regarded as a major turning point in the Persian wars, was a victory for the Greeks who had managed to destroy a heart breaking amount of the Persian fleet. This meant that the Persians could no longer part take in sea battles. Battle of Platea The Greeks had assembled 30, 000

Spartan hoplites, 8000 Athenians and men from other Greek states to fight against Mardonius and his Persian soldiers. The Greeks moved their camp during the night, at dawn Mardonius attacked at Dawn, he was killed during the battle, the Persian chain of command collapsed and the men retreated.

The battle had been lost for the Persians and the Greeks were victorious. Although the Greeks were victorious in the Persian wars, Xerxes saw this as a victory because they had not set out to conquer the Greek world but to punish the Greek cities that had aided in the Ionian revolt. Xerxes' relationship with prominent Persians and Non-Persians Xerxes was known for taking good advice, he was on good terms with his family and some important members had a great influence on him. Xerxes had his close group of friends known as the king's friends and benefactors. Persian Relationships Xerxes' mother Xerxes had immense influence on Xerxes; she had aided him in the issues of his succession to kingship. Xerxes had also given him advice on many other issues in his Empire. Megabates Megabates was the brother-in-law of Xerxes. He had put down the Babylonian revolt. Mardonius Mardonius was the cousin and Uncle-in-law of Xerxes. Who had aided him in the war against Greece, he was loyal to Xerxes until he died at the battle of Plataea.

Non-Persian Relationship Xerxes also had political and personal relationships with non-Persians and did take their advice. Demarces Demarces was an ex Spartan king of Sparta who had attached himself to the Persian court. Themistocles Themistocles was an Athenian leader during the Persian wars after being ostracized from Athens he turned his allegiance to Persia. Images and Representations of Xerxes as King Many images and <https://assignbuster.com/xerxes-college-essay/>

representations of Xerxes as king have been portrayed through time up to the modern times where he has been represented in Hollywood movies.

**Ancient representations** The Ancient representations are overwhelmingly negative towards Xerxes. Herodotus Portrayed Xerxes as being violent and unstable as well as being weak and extremely violent. Although Herodotus had portrayed Xerxes as a negative, he also said that he was Noble and occasionally compassionate. Other historians and play writes portraying him as cowardly, hasty, loathsome, a ridiculous figure, a despicable man and a womanish tyrant.

**Modern Representations** Modern Representations are mixed between positive and negative. " Persian sources... Reveal a very different man. Tall, regal and handsome he stands in the Proleptis relief's. " The movie 300 portrays Xerxes as gigantic, womanish, arrogant and materialistic Tyrant. The movie changes the reason why Xerxes invaded Greece. This extremely inaccurate movie portrays Xerxes as wearing small gold Jeweled shorts/ underwear and his face covered in piercing, his body covered in gold chains.

Xerxes the giant and Leonia in 300 Xerxes representation in 300

**Annotation** The movie 300 is a useful source to show the bias against Xerxes. Although this movie is wildly inaccurate it does have its benefits of providing a source that proves how the bias of Greek historians has affected representations of Xerxes in modern times. Herodotus exaggerated events in his writings of history because they were meant to be heard and to entertain people, this exactly what the Jack Snyder film is for.

To entertain people rather than to be historically correct in events, representations of historical figures and technology of the time. This source is only useful to show the bias in some representations of Xerxes. The manner and Impact of Xerxes' Death Xerxes was assassinated by Artisans, the commander of the royal bodyguard and the most powerful official in the Persian court. Although he shared the same name as Xerxes' uncle, his rise to prominence was due to his popularity in religious matters of the court and harem intrigues rather than being born into his status.

He had placed his seven sons in the key high positions in the Persian court in the hope to anoint Xerxes successor to the throne. Sources also suggest that Artisans proceeded to kill Xerxes oldest son and heir to the throne Dairies, which left Arteries as heir to the throne of Persia until Artisans became unhappy with Arteries and tried to kill the new Persian king, Arteries. This led to a fight between the two men, the king of Persia, Arteries managed to kill the man who had killed his father.