Name _____ Date _____

Athens and Sparta: Comparing Two Greek City-States

Directions: Read the passage and study the table. Use both of them to answer the questions.

Athens and Sparta

Two Rivals in Ancient Greece

Ancient Greece is a land of steep mountains and rocky soil, and the sea is never far away. Mountains split the land into many small valleys. Partly for this reason, the Greeks formed many separate city-states instead of one kingdom. Each one had its own laws and its own leaders.

Two of the best-known city-states were Athens and Sparta. Athens stood a few miles from the sea. Its merchants traded by ship, and its leaders built a large fleet of warships. In about 508 BCE, Athens began to change its government into a democracy, a word that means "rule by the people." Only citizen men could take part, however. Women, enslaved people and foreigners living in Athens could not vote.

Sparta lay inland, in a fertile river valley. Long before, the Spartans had conquered their neighbors and forced them to farm the land. These people were called helots, and they far outnumbered the Spartans. Many historians think fear of a helot revolt is one reason Sparta made every citizen man a soldier.

In the early 400s BCE, Athens and Sparta fought side by side against invaders from the Persian Empire. Later they became rivals. From 431 to 404 BCE they fought each other in the Peloponnesian War, and Sparta and its allies won.

Comparing Athens and Sparta in the 400s BCE

Topic	Athens	Sparta
Government	A democracy: citizen men met in the Assembly to debate and vote on laws.	Two kings and a council of elders led. An assembly of citizen men voted yes or no on their plans.
Education of boys	Boys whose families could pay studied reading, writing, music and sports with teachers.	At age 7, boys left home to live and train in groups run by the city.
Education of girls	Most girls learned weaving and other home skills from their mothers.	Girls trained in classes much like the boys' classes, though less harshly, and took part in sports such as running.
Army and navy	Citizen men served when needed. Athens was known for its strong navy.	Citizen men trained full time as soldiers. Sparta was known for its strong army.

Topic	Athens	Sparta
Women	Could not vote. Most ran the household, and many took part in religious festivals.	Could not vote. Could own land and managed family estates while men served in the army.

1. According to the passage, how did geography shape ancient Greece?

A. Deserts kept the Greeks far away from the sea.

B. One great river flooded each year and fed a single large kingdom.

C. Wide, flat plains made it easy for one king to rule all of Greece.

D. Mountains split the land, which helped lead to many separate city-states.

2. What does the table say happened to Spartan boys at age 7?

A. They went to sea as rowers on warships.

B. They left home to live and train in groups run by the city.

C. They started voting in the assembly.

D. They began lessons with teachers their families paid.

3. The passage says Athens stood a few miles from the sea. Which fact from the table fits best with that location?

A. Athenian boys studied music and sports with teachers.

B. Athens was known for its strong navy.

C. Most Athenian girls learned weaving from their mothers.

D. Many Athenian women took part in religious festivals.

4. Complete these sentences about Athens and Sparta with words from the passage.

Word bank

senators • democracy • helots • monarchy

Athens began to change its government into a _____ in about 508 BCE. In Sparta, the conquered people forced to farm the land were called _____.

5. The table says Spartan citizen men trained full time as soldiers. Which sentence from the passage helps explain why?

A. Many historians think fear of a helot revolt is one reason Sparta made every citizen man a soldier.

B. Each one had its own laws and its own leaders.

C. Its merchants traded by ship, and its leaders built a large fleet of warships.

D. Athens stood a few miles from the sea.

6. According to the passage, who could take part in the democracy of Athens?

A. Every adult who lived in Athens

B. Only citizen men

C. Citizens and the foreigners who traded there

D. Citizen men and citizen women

7. According to the table, which two statements are true of both Athens and Sparta? Select 2.

☐ A. Citizen men fought for their city-state.

☐ B. Boys left home at age 7 to train.

☐ C. The city-state was known for its strong navy.

☐ D. Girls trained in sports such as running.

☐ E. Women could not vote.

8. How did the lives of women in Sparta differ from the lives of women in Athens, according to the table?

A. Athenian women served in the navy, while Spartan women stayed home.

B. Spartan women could own land, while most Athenian women ran the household.

C. Spartan women could vote, while Athenian women could not.

D. Athenian women trained in sports, while Spartan women did not.

9. What happened after Athens and Sparta fought side by side against the Persian Empire?

A. They joined together into one kingdom ruled from Athens.

B. They became rivals and fought the Peloponnesian War.

C. Sparta changed its government into a democracy.

D. The Persian Empire conquered both of them.

10. Using both the passage and the table, which statement best sums up a key difference between Athens and Sparta?

A. Sparta let all adults vote, while Athens was ruled by two kings.

B. Athens built a navy and was a democracy, while Sparta trained every citizen man to be a soldier.

C. Both city-states were ruled by kings who claimed to be gods.

D. Athens cared only about war, while Sparta cared only about trade.