

Name: _____

Date: _____

Class: _____

Last Stand of The 300

(ON A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER) Answer the following questions *after viewing* the movie Last Stand of The 300. All answers must be in **COMPLETE** sentences. Remember to give specific evidence from the movie. This will be a **graded assignment** and will count as an **ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION GRADE** and an **ORAL WRITTEN COMMUNICATION** grade.

1. What are some of the defining differences between the Persians and Spartans?
2. What are some of the practical problems associated with moving such a vast army and navy over such great distances?
3. Why do the Greeks want to meet the Persians at Thermopylae and Artemisium?
4. How would you describe the Greek battle plan?
5. Was it fear alone or did the Peloponnesians have other reasons for wanting to retreat?
6. Why do you think the Greeks organize themselves by cities?
7. Compare the battle strategies of Xerxes and Leonidas. How do these military strategies reflect the personalities of the two leaders and some of the cultural differences that Herodotus emphasizes in his version of the Persian Wars? Cite specific examples from the movie to support your interpretation.
8. What role did nature play in the Persian War? Find some examples in the movie of the ways that nature and geography were important to the war. How did the Persians and the Greeks take advantage of natural circumstances and events? Can you think of ways they were able to overcome natural obstacles?

Background Information

Huge and diverse, the Persian Empire was founded by Cyrus the Great (reigned 559-530 BCE) who conquered nearly the whole territory you see on the map. He overthrew the ruling Median dynasty to establish Persian control. His conquest of Lydia and Babylonia vastly increased Persian territory. The Kings of Persia, a very small group of families, originally descended from Cyrus' family. Each one was called "the Great King" and was the supreme ruler of the Persian Empire. It is important to remember that the Great King was the central figure of the Persian Empire. His word was the source of religious, legal, and political life. Revolts against the King were ruthlessly suppressed, and the goals of the Great King were universalistic: like the Assyrian and Sumerian Kings before him, the Persian King believed that he was appointed by god to rule the world. Darius I "the Great" (reigned 522-486 BCE) was the first Persian King to expand the empire to include all Phoenicians and Egyptians. The king Xerxes (reigned 486-465 BCE), son of Darius I "the Great" (reigned 522-486 BCE) was the leader of the Persian army during the infamous battle of Thermopylae.

Although 6th and 5th Centuries BCE Persia was huge, Greece was small (see map). Modern scholars estimate the population of the Persian Empire at 70 million people, spread over 1 million square miles of territory. Greece, with about 50 thousand miles of territory, had fewer than 2 million inhabitants. Furthermore, in contrast to the Persian Empire, Greece was not a unified nation or country, but a dispersed group of individual city states, each with its own government. At the time of the Persian Wars the two most powerful states were Athens and Sparta, and they were the ones offering the greatest resistance to Xerxes and leading a small coalition of other city states in resisting the invasion. The Athenians were the primary source of Greek naval power; The Spartans were famous for their disciplined army, their law-abiding citizens, and their plain-spoken ways.

The Spartan way of life relied on intensive military training for Spartan males, starting at a very early age, and rigorous discipline in every other aspect of life as well. However advanced the Spartans were in developing a government that gave a greater voice to its citizens, it is important to remember that this state also had its dark side. After several long wars the Spartans had conquered the neighboring peoples, whom they called "Helots." The Helots were held essentially in bondage to raise crops and perform other services for the Spartans. Uprisings among the Helots, who made up 90 percent of the population, were a constant threat to the ruling Spartan minority.

Persian Empire: 6th and 5th century



Greece: 6th and 5th century

