



Thermopylae: The Persians Strike Again

9_A

Introducing the Read-Aloud

10 minutes

What Have We Already Learned?

Remind students that in the last read-aloud they heard about a great battle on the plains of Marathon. Ask students to explain why this battle began and what the final outcome was between the Persian and Greek armies. You may wish to prompt them with the following questions:

- Why did King Darius of Persia send an army of soldiers to Athens?
- How did the Greek army compare to the Persian army?
- Why did the Athenian generals send Pheidippides to Sparta?
- Why was Callimachus's vote so important at the Battle of Marathon?
- What strategy did the Greek army use to win against the invading Persian army?
- After the battle, what tribute was paid to Pheidippides?

Making Predictions About the Read-Aloud

Read the title of the read-aloud to students. Ask students to think about what the title means and why they think the Persians are striking again. Have students predict whether the outcome will be the same or different than the battle at Marathon.

Purpose for Listening

Tell students to listen carefully to find out whether or not their predictions are correct.



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◀ Show image 9A-1: Xerxes planning attack

- 1 [Point to the image.]
- 2 The word *defeating* means winning a battle or contest. How did Xerxes feel about the Greeks defeating his father years ago at Marathon?
- 3 Why do you think King Xerxes wanted Persia to fight the Greeks again? Do you think this time the Persians will win?

King Darius (duh-*RYE*-us) of Persia failed to conquer Greece and died not long after the Greeks won the Battle of Marathon. Darius's son Xerxes (*ZURK*-seez)¹ became the king of Persia. His anger at the Greeks for **defeating** his father worked inside of him until he could no longer stand it.² Ten years after Marathon, King Xerxes sat planning how Persia would attack Greece again. "This time," he thought, "Persia will have so many soldiers and ships that it will not fail."³

Xerxes gathered tens of thousands of soldiers, led by his finest troops. Even Xerxes, however, did not have enough ships to carry that many men to Greece by sea. "We will go over land from Asia and down into Greece," he commanded.



◀ Show image 9A-2: Persians crossing giant ship bridge⁴

- 4 [Show Poster 2 (Battle of Thermopylae), and point to the Persians' first route, marked in purple.]
- 5 A channel is a sailable route between two bodies of water. The Persians had to cross the channel of Hellespont to travel by land to Greece. The word *channel* can also refer to a television station.
- 6 [Point to how the ships are connected by platforms to make a giant ship bridge.] Do you think King Xerxes will succeed with this plan to move so many men?
- 7 [Show again on Poster 2 the route marked in purple that the Persians took from the Hellespont to Thermopylae, and point to the mountains.]
- 8 Which is the smaller army—the Persians or the Greeks?

This meant that the Persians would have to cross a mile-wide **channel** of water that lay between Asia and northern Greece.⁵ Xerxes told his navy captains, "We will cross the channel on an enormous floating bridge. Spread out your ships in rows, and tie them together. Then lay wooden platforms across the space between the ships over which my army can pass."⁶

Xerxes's vast army succeeded in crossing the decks of six hundred ships and moved into Greece. There they faced another difficulty: Greece's high mountains. To avoid having to travel over these mountains, Xerxes led his army south along a narrow strip of dry land near the eastern coast of Greece called Thermopylae (thoor-*MAHP*-il-lee).⁷ At the other end of this narrow pass, the Greeks were waiting for him. The Greeks knew that Xerxes's army could not spread out to its full width to attack here, for there simply was not enough room in the narrow pass between the mountains and the ocean. Instead, here a smaller army might have a chance to win.⁸



← **Show image 9A-3: Leonidas at the head of the Greek armies at Thermopylae**

With most of the city-states working together, the Greeks had sent ten thousand men to block the Persian march. Led by the Spartan king Leonidas (lee-*ah*-nih-diss), the Greeks took up positions across the full width of Thermopylae.⁹ Leonidas told his soldiers, “The longer we can hold the Persians here, the more time it gives the other Greeks to prepare for battle.” With the **fate**¹⁰ of their families always in their minds, Leonidas and his soldiers waited.

9 [On Poster 2, point to the Greek forces at Thermopylae marked with red ‘X’s.]

10 or final result or destiny



← **Show image 9A-4: Themistocles leading the Greek navy**

Leonidas knew that, farther south, an Athenian leader named Themistocles (thuh-*mi*-stuh-kleez) was rushing to draw together a fleet of navy ships.

Themistocles was sure that the war would be won at sea, for as he had told the other Greeks, “The Persians may force their way into Greece, but Xerxes cannot keep bringing food and other supplies to his men here by land. It takes too long. So if we control the sea, the Persians will eventually have to go home.”¹¹ Leonidas and his Spartan soldiers had to hold Xerxes at Thermopylae long enough for the Athenian fleet to get into position.¹²

11 Does this sound like a good strategy?

12 Who do you think will win this time: the Persians or the Greeks? Are the Greek city-states working together during this emergency?



← **Show image 9A-5: Persian and Greek armies meeting at the narrow pass**

Soon the Persians reached the place where the Greeks blocked the pass. Xerxes sent a message to the Greeks warning them to surrender and ask for mercy. He wrote, “I command so many archers that their attack of arrows will block out the sun above you.”¹³

To this, one of the Spartans jokingly answered, “Fine, we **prefer** to fight in the shade anyway.”¹⁴

After waiting for four days for the Greeks to surrender, the furious King Xerxes¹⁵ gave word for his Persian armies to attack. However, just as the Greeks had predicted, only a small number

13 Archers shoot arrows with a bow, like the hunting goddess Artemis.

14 *Prefer* means to like something better than something else. Did the Greeks really prefer to fight in the shade? Why do you think they said this?

15 [Point to King Xerxes in the image.]

16 [On Poster 2, point to the second Persian route marked in red that went through a pass in the mountains.]



of Persian soldiers could fit into the narrow pass at once, so their great numbers did not help them. Leonidas and the Greeks drove back one attack after another. Then one of the Persian officers said to Xerxes, “O great king, a Greek who lives near here offers to lead us to the Greeks through another pass in the mountains, if you will pay him enough gold.”

Xerxes smiled grimly. “Good! Have him lead half our men along this other path, so that we can come out behind the Greeks.”¹⁶

◀ **Show image 9A-6: Leonidas telling other Greeks they will stay**

The Persians began to move back so that they could take the other route. But Leonidas of Sparta saw what was happening. Quickly meeting with the other Greek leaders, he commanded, “Take your men safely away from here. I will remain behind with three hundred of my best Spartan fighters, and will force the Persians to take the other, longer way around.”¹⁷

“But this is very dangerous for you and your three hundred men,” another officer protested. “Once the Persians come through the other pass, they will circle around and attack you from behind. You will be caught between the two Persian forces.”

Leonidas turned to one of his Spartan officers. “What do you think?”

His friend shrugged. “We are Spartans,” he said, and that was all. It was enough.

Leonidas told the other Greeks, “There is your answer. We will stay.”¹⁸

◀ **Show image 9A-7: Three hundred Spartans standing against thousands of Persians**

So the rest of the Greek army quickly retreated out of the narrow pass as the three hundred Spartans spread out across the area. When they were in position, Leonidas told them, “Let us fight in such a way that forever after, all Persians will speak of us in amazement, and all Greeks in words of pride.”

17 Why did Leonidas and his men decide to stay behind?

18 What do the words *We are Spartans* mean to you? Do you think the Spartans were brave for staying?



19 or bravery

20 [On Poster 2, point again to the Greek forces at Thermopylae marked with red 'X's.]



21 [On Poster 2, point to the city-state of Athens.]

22 or empty and abandoned

23 [On Poster 2, point to the island of Salamis.]

24 [On Poster 2, point to the third Persian route marked in white from Persia to Salamis.] The Persians took a long time to arrive in their ships, and they had to sail close to land so they could stop at different cities on the way for supplies.

25 [On Poster 2, show the Greek forces marked in red near the island of Salamis.] What do you think is going to happen?

26 or front



27 [Point to the ships sailing away in the image.] Is this what you thought would happen?

Together the Spartans bravely fought as long as they could, but in the end, the Persians defeated the Spartans and continued on. Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans are still remembered more than two thousand years later for their heroism¹⁹ for fighting against such a large army. These Greeks were able to hold the Persians at the pass long enough for the other Greek forces to prepare for battle. This famous act of courage by the Spartans became known as “the last stand at Thermopylae.”²⁰

← **Show image 9A-8: Greek navy battling the Persian navy**

Soon the Persians continued south and reached Athens.²¹ To their shock, they found the city nearly **deserted**.²² Meanwhile, Themistocles, the Athenian navy commander, had moved all of the Greeks to nearby areas, including an island called Salamis (SAL-uh-miss).²³ When Xerxes realized this, he sent for his navy from Persia. “Sail over here and attack Salamis!” he ordered.²⁴

But this was exactly what the clever Themistocles had counted on. He had hidden the Greek navy in the bays and harbors that lay between Salamis and Athens on the Greek mainland.²⁵ As in the mountain pass at Thermopylae, the greater Persian numbers could not help Xerxes in this narrow neck of water. When the Persian ships approached, Themistocles signaled to his ships’ captains, “Attack!” From their hiding places, the smaller, faster Greek ships surprised the Persians. The larger Persian ships, jammed together in the narrow waters, could not turn around to defend themselves. Using metal battering rams attached to the bow²⁶ of their ships, the Greeks smashed into the helpless Persian ships. One after another, the Persian vessels sank. Those few that did not sink sailed away broken and battered.

← **Show image 9A-9: Victorious Greeks, Persians retreating**

The Greek victory at Salamis was complete. King Xerxes realized, “We cannot stay here if we cannot count on our ships to bring us food, medicine, and more soldiers from Persia.” Finally, the Persians left Greece.²⁷

There would be only one more land battle the following year, which was won by the Greeks; but nothing compared to the heroic stand by the Greeks at Marathon, Thermopylae, and Salamis. Finally, the Persian threat was over forever, and the stories of these Greek victories would be told again and again for years to come.

Discussing the Read-Aloud

15 minutes

Comprehension Questions

10 minutes

Note: You may wish to show students Poster 2 to guide them in their responses.

1. *Evaluative* Were your predictions about whether the outcome would be the same or different correct? Why or why not? (Answers may vary.)
2. *Inferential* Why did King Xerxes decide to attack Greece? (He was angry because the Greeks had defeated his father previously during the Battle of Marathon.)
3. *Literal* What obstacles or difficulties did the Persian army face? (They had to cross a channel of water using a ship bridge and also cross Greece's high mountains.)
4. *Literal* How did King Xerxes transport tens of thousands of troops into Greece? (by creating a floating bridge, using wooden platforms across the spaces and decks of six hundred ships anchored side-by-side)
5. *Inferential* How did the Greeks defeat the much larger Persian army? (Again, the Greeks used strategy; they fought the smaller number of Persians at the narrow pass of Thermopylae and held them there while the other Greek forces prepared; they then attacked the Persians near Salamis with their ships.)
6. *Inferential* When did the Persian threat to Greece finally end? (After their defeats at the battles of Thermopylae and Salamis, and after they ran out of supplies, the Persians left Greece.)

7. *Inferential* What does Sparta's stand at Thermopylae tell us about the Spartans? (Answers may vary but may include that they were brave and did what needed to be done for their city-state and for Greece.)
8. *Evaluative* How do you think the Greeks felt about defeating Persia? (Answers may vary but may include that they felt relieved, happy, heroic, etc.)

[Please continue to model the *Question? Pair Share* process for students, as necessary, and scaffold students in their use of the process.]

9. *Evaluative Where? Pair Share:* Asking questions after a read-aloud is one way to see how much everyone has learned. Think of a question you can ask your neighbor about the read-aloud that starts with the word *where*. For example, you could ask, "Where does today's read-aloud take place?" Turn to your neighbor and ask your *where* question. Listen to your neighbor's response. Then your neighbor will ask a new *where* question, and you will get a chance to respond. I will call on several of you to share your questions with the class.
10. After hearing today's read-aloud and questions and answers, do you have any remaining questions? [If time permits, you may wish to allow for individual, group, or class research of the text and/or other resources to answer these remaining questions.]

Word Work: Prefer

5 minutes

1. In the read-aloud you heard one of the Greeks state, “Fine, we *prefer* to fight in the shade anyway.”
2. Say the word *prefer* with me.
3. *Prefer* means to choose or like something more than something else.
4. Some people prefer to walk to school rather than ride the bus.
5. Think of things you prefer more than other things. Try to use the word *prefer* when you tell about it. [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase the students’ responses: “I prefer _____ rather than _____.”]
6. What’s the word we’ve been talking about? What part of speech is the word *prefer*?

Use a *Sharing* activity for follow-up. Directions: Think of some things you prefer over others. Keep in mind that everyone has different ideas about the things they prefer, and that may determine why you would select one thing over another and why your answer might be different from someone else’s. Remember to answer in complete sentences and be sure to begin your responses with “I prefer . . .”



Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day



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Extensions

20 minutes

Civilization Chart (Instructional Master 1B-1, optional)

Show students Image Card 21 (Greeks' Victory), and ask them what they see in the image. Prompt students to recall the heroic acts of the ancient Greeks who fought against the much larger Persian army in the Battle of Thermopylae. Tell students that the Greeks' story is remembered and has been told for many years as an example of heroic behavior. Ask students which square the Image Card should go in. Have a volunteer place the Image Card in the "Contributions" square.

Review with students what is already on the Civilization Chart, and have them discuss what they remember about each image.

✈ Above and Beyond: You may wish to have some students complete Instructional Master 1B-1 on their own by drawing pictures and/or writing words in each square.

↔ Multiple Meaning Word Activity

Sentence in Context: Channel

1. [Show Poster 4M (Channel).] In the read-aloud you heard that Xerxes told his navy captains, "We will cross the channel on an enormous floating bridge." [Show image 9A-2: Persians crossing giant ship bridge; point out that this ship bridge went across the channel. Then point to the part of Poster 4M that shows a water channel.]
2. *Channel* can also refer to a television station and its shows. [Point to the part of the poster that shows this.]
3. Now with your partner, make a sentence for each meaning of *channel*. I will call on some of you to share your sentences. [Call on a few partner pairs to share one or all of their sentences. Have them point to the meaning of *channel* their sentence uses.]

↔ Vocabulary Instructional Activity

Horizontal Word Wall: Prefer

Materials: long horizontal chart paper; words written on index cards: *dislike*, *do not like* (in red); *ok* (in yellow); *like*, *prefer*, *really like*, *love* (in green)

1. In the read-aloud you heard one of the Greek soldiers say, “Fine, we *prefer* to fight in the shade anyway.”
2. Say the word *prefer* with me.
3. Prefer means to choose or like something more than something else.
4. We will make a Horizontal Word Wall for *prefer*.
5. [Place *dislike* on the far left of the chart and place *love* on the far right. Now hold up *prefer* and ask whether it should be placed closer to *dislike* or *love*. Hold up the rest of the cards and ask where it should be placed on the Horizontal Word Wall. At the end, the order should be: *dislike*, *do not like*, *ok*, *like*, *prefer*, *really like*, *love*. *Like* and *prefer* may overlap.]
6. Talk with your partner using the different words on the Horizontal Word Wall. Remember to be as descriptive as possible and use complete sentences.

[Throughout this domain, encourage students to continue thinking about this Horizontal Word Wall and add any additional words to the word wall as they arise. Some suggestions: *loathe*, *resent*, *impartial*, *enjoy*, *adore*.]

- Above and Beyond: Have students use two or more words on the Horizontal Word Wall in one sentence.