



Athens and Sparta: A Conversation Between Two City-States

Overview:

Students will learn the differences between two rival city-states in Greece around 500 BCE.

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson students will be able to:

-  **Explain** how the geographic locations of these two entities influenced what kind of city-states they became, with respect to: their governmental structure, education, and economy.
-  **Identify** what strengths each city-state had.
-  **Hypothesize** what might bring these two bitter rivals together.

Preparation:

-  Prior to the lesson, make a copy of the attached map of Greece with Athens, Sparta, and Corinth to be used on the overhead projector. Alternatively, you can draw a similar one on the board.
-  For the play: place olives, feta cheese, lemon, garlic, oregano, dates, and grape juice in a basket and have grape juice in a pitcher with two cups.
-  Prepare table cloths and sheets for students to make Greek togas. Provide olive branch crown for Athens and farmer's hat for Sparta.
-  Bring in books of works by Plato, Socrates, or Aristotle.

Vocabulary:

-  Plain (flat land)
-  Bitter rivals

Materials:

-  Table cloths and sheets for togas and belts; jewelry for Athens; farmer's hat for Sparta
-  Mediterranean foods: olives, feta, lemon, garlic, oregano, dates, pita bread, and grape juice in a basket
-  A plate for food
-  Map (attached) of Greece with Athens, Sparta, and Corinth attached

On the Board:

-  Vocabulary
-  Student Reflection Questions

Suggested Snack:

-  Olives (from the garden) paired with feta cheese

-  Artisans
-  Philosophers
-  Economy



Isolated

Learning Activities:

1. Introduction (5 min.)

- A. Explain that the students will take part in a play about some rival cities in Ancient Greece.
- B. Have students create their own togas out of table cloths, sheets, and belts to hold them in place.

2. Script (25 min.)

Athens: Thank you, Sparta, for inviting me to lunch and bringing produce from your farm. May I ask what you have in your basket?

Sparta: It's my pleasure — I'm glad we could meet halfway here in Corinth since our cities are bitter rivals. I have brought (transfers the following from basket onto a plate: olives, feta cheese, lemon, garlic, oregano, dates, and pours grape juice from a pitcher into cups.)

Sparta: Let's eat! (Passes the plate to Athens and then takes some for herself.)

Athens: I've brought a few gifts for you from our artisans — you probably know that Athens is known for its arts, culture, and philosophers/thinkers. Here's a little box made out of clay and a pottery figurine with a goat painted on it; and here is a pottery figurine of the Greek goddess Medea with snakes on her head. Also, I want to read you a little from Plato.

Sparta: Thank you for these. I will put the pottery gifts by the window in my farmhouse, along with the quote by Plato. By the way, could you tell me how the economy is doing in your city-state of Athens?

Athens: Our economy is doing very well — we have been trading our honey, olive oil, silver, and pottery with Italy. And we get wood from them. We also trade these things with Egypt for their grain. As you know, we get much of our food from your city-state Sparta in exchange for our leather jewelry and some of our slaves.

Sparta: Yes, we have needed more slaves to work on our farms. Our government you know is run by a small Council of Elders, and they say we need more slaves. One thing we've done is that we have fought wars with our neighbors and turned the prisoners into slaves.

Athens: We are lucky where our city-state is located. We are only 4 miles from the Aegean Sea. It allows us to look outward to the world beyond our city. We like to travel, trade our goods elsewhere, and we are eager to spread our ideas and learn from others.

Sparta: Our city is located on a plain, in a valley, between the mountains and the sea. So we are isolated. I have to admit that we are very suspicious of outsiders and their ideas.

Athens: Well I hope you are not suspicious of me. Thank you for your invitation to have a meal together. Our two city-states have been bitter rivals, but I'd like to talk with you about a way we could get together to protect ourselves from the expanding Persian Empire.

Sparta: Wow! We were hoping you would say that! We have a common concern. Let's talk!

4. Snack (5 min.)

- A. Serve olives (from the garden) with feta cheese, pita bread, and grapes or grape juice.

5. Reflection (5 min.)

- A. Have students answer the Reflection Questions in their garden journals.

Student Reflection Questions:

1. What kinds of food did Athens and Sparta share? Have you tried these foods before? Do you like them?
2. What brought the two rivals together in the end?

Assessment Questions:

1. What brought the two rivals together in the end? (**A common enemy**)
2. Explain the differences in location between Athens and Sparta according to the play. (**Athens is only 4 miles from the Aegean Sea so they like to travel and trade. Sparta is more isolated so they are suspicious of outsiders.**)

Standards:

CCSS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.