

Title: 6th Grade History Lesson: Athens vs. Sparta - Divergent Paths of the Greek Polis (Block 7)

Materials Needed World Map or large laminated map focusing on the Peloponnese and Attica regions of Greece. Printouts/Digital images contrasting Athenian life (Assembly, port, market) with Spartan life (military training, helots working). INSPECT Civilization Tracker (used for Athens and Sparta columns). Comparison Chart Template (Venn Diagram or T-Chart) for Athens/Sparta political (P) and social (S) characteristics. Index cards or small dry-erase boards (for formative assessment). Reference materials on previous empires (e.g., Assyrian military structure, Egyptian Pharaoh power). Learning Objectives (Success Criteria) Building on the understanding of the independent *polis* (Lesson 3), by the end of this lesson, the learner will be able to: Political/Social Contrast (P/S): Compare and contrast the political systems (Athenian Democracy vs. Spartan Oligarchy/Militarism) and the resulting social structures (S) of the two major Greek city-states. Economic Influence (E/S): Analyze how the differing economic systems—maritime trade (Athens) versus localized agriculture controlled by force (Sparta)—dictated the structure of their respective societies and political participation. Progression Synthesis: Evaluate Athenian democracy as a radical departure from the centralized monarchies/empires (P) previously studied (Egypt, Assyria), linking its development to the use of the refined Greek alphabet (C/T) for debate and record-keeping.

Block 7: Two Faces of the *Polis* (50 Minutes) Introduction (5 min) Review & Reinforcement (Connecting to Previous Lesson) Educator Prompt: Last time, we discussed how Greece's geography prevented one single unified empire and led to independent *poleis*. What was the most important feature distinguishing the politics (P) of a *polis* from the politics of the Egyptian kingdom? (Answer Focus: Citizen participation/self-governance, rather than centralized divine rule.) Hook: The Ancient Cold War Educator Prompt: Athens and Sparta were both Greek, they both spoke the same language, and they were geographically close. Yet, they developed completely opposing ways of life: one focused on books, ships, and voting; the other focused only on discipline, physical strength, and soldiers. Why did they develop such different political (P) and social (S) systems? Objectives Review Today, we focus on the huge divergence between Athens (P: Democracy) and Sparta (P: Militarism), and how their economic needs (E) shaped the very lives (S) of their citizens and non-citizens. Body: Democracy vs. Discipline (40 min) I Do: Sparta—The Military Machine (15 min) Content Delivery: P/S (Political/Social): Introduce Sparta as a rigid military oligarchy (rule by a small group of elders). Explicitly connect their social structure (S) to their political necessity (P). E/S Connection: Sparta lacked the vast fertile land of the river valleys, but they conquered neighboring people (Messenians) and enslaved them, calling them Helots. Explain that Sparta's entire political and social system was designed *only* to control the overwhelming number of Helots and prevent rebellion. Therefore, every male citizen was a full-time soldier (T). Bridge Language: "Unlike the massive farming projects of Egypt, which were managed by a centralized government, Spartan agriculture relied on forced labor, which demanded constant military readiness. This necessity dictated their political structure." Technology (T): Discuss the focus on military training and discipline as their primary, defining "technology." We Do: Athens—The Birth of Citizen Power (15 min) Activity: Comparing Political Participation (P, S, E) P/S (Political/Social): Introduce Athens as the birthplace of *Demokratia* (democracy—rule by the people). Define the Athenian citizen (adult male, Athenian parentage) and discuss who was excluded (women, foreigners/metics, slaves). E (Economic Systems): Reinforce the Athenian reliance on maritime trade (like the Phoenicians, who provided them the alphabet). Discuss how trade created wealth for non-landowners (merchants, sailors), increasing demands for political inclusion. This flexible economy supported a flexible, evolving social structure. Interactive Comparison: Using the Comparison Chart, list key characteristics: * *Athenian P:* Citizens vote in assembly. * *Spartan P:* Elders/Kings rule; citizens obey. * *Athenian S:* Focus on education, art, and rhetoric. * *Spartan S:* Focus on military training from age 7. Formative Assessment: Learner identifies which city-state placed a higher value on specialized individual skills (like shipbuilding or philosophy) and explains why (Athens, due to their dependence on diverse trade). You Do: The Ultimate Progression (10 min) Application: Tracing the Political Leap (P, C, T) Explicit Connection: Ask the learner to look at the P column of their full INSPECT Tracker (Sumer, Egypt, Assyria, Greece). Activity: Political Continuum. Place the following political systems on a spectrum from 'Least Citizen Power' to 'Most Citizen Power': Egyptian Pharaoh, Assyrian

Emperor, Spartan Oligarchy, Athenian Democracy. Educator Prompt: How did the *refined* Greek alphabet (from Lesson 3) specifically help the development of Athenian democracy (P) more than the Spartan system? (Focus: The alphabet allowed for recording complex laws, citizen debates, and philosophical arguments, which are essential for democracy, but unnecessary for Spartan military command.) Conclusion & Summative Assessment (5 min) Recap the Journey We have seen the *polis* evolve into two drastically different models: Athens (open, democratic, commercial) and Sparta (closed, militaristic, agrarian control). This lesson highlights the most significant political shift so far—the move from top-down monarchy (river valleys) to citizen-driven political thought (Athens). Fill in the INSPECT Tracker for Athens and Sparta. Summative Assessment: Progressive Political Comparison Educator Prompt: Imagine the powerful Assyrian Emperor (from our first lessons) visiting both Athens and Sparta. Which political system (P) would the Emperor understand and respect more, and why? Use evidence from the political systems (P) and social structures (S) of all three groups to support your answer. (Success: Learner argues for Sparta, citing the militaristic focus, rigid social control, and lack of democratic debate, noting its closer resemblance to centralized military power than to Athenian democracy.) Next Steps (Bridge to Next Lesson) We have established the deep divide between Athens and Sparta. Next, we will see what happens when these two powerful, yet opposite, city-states are forced to cooperate against an outside threat—the Persian Wars—and then ultimately turn against each other, setting the stage for the rise of a new power: Macedonia. This will connect our previous study of empire building (Assyria, Persia) with the fate of the Greek *polis*.