

## B. Causes of the Wars

### 1. The Conquest of Ionia by Persia

- a) For over two hundred years, Greek colonies has on the shore of what is Turkey today, a place the Greeks called Ionia.
- b) They were neighbors of the Lydian empire.
- c) C.547 BC, however, Lydia was conquered by Cyrus of Persia.
- d) The Ionians choose not to help the Persians, so Cyrus decided to punish them. He conquered them and made them part of the Persian Empire.
- e) After the conquest of Ionia, Cyrus and his successors were busy elsewhere, so there were no conflicts between Persia and Greece for some time to come.

### 2. The Ionian Revolt (c.500 BC)

- a) The Persians allowed the Ionian Greeks to retain their form of local government.
- b) The one condition the Persians set was that the Ionians had to be loyal.
- c) When the Ionian colonies wanted democracy, it probably would have been allowed, except they rebelled.
- d) Receiving help from Athens, they formed their democracies, but as part of the revolt, the Athenians attacked the city of Sardis (in Lydia), where a son of tyrannos Peisistratus named Hippias was said to be. (Hippias was hated by the Athenians, because he had ruled temporarily after his popular father, but he had been a harsh ruler.)
- e) The Ionian Revolt was successful. The Greek forces sacked Sardis.
- f) When Darius heard the news, he wanted revenge. He ordered a slave to remind him at every meal: "Master, remember the Athenians."

## C. The First Persian Campaign (492 BC)

1. Darius sent a fleet of 300 ships to attack Greece.
2. By a freak event of nature, an unexpected storm off the Chalkidiki peninsula, the Persian fleet was destroyed. (The fleet, made of warships called *triremes* could not navigate through rough water, let alone a major storm, because the ships were designed only for war maneuvers.)

## D. The Second Persian Campaign (490 BC)

1. Darius assembled a fleet twice as large as the previous one, and sent it directly across the Aegean Sea to Athens.
2. Upon seeing the Persian fleet off the coast of Greece, the Athenians sent a messenger named Phidippides to obtain help from Sparta. Phidippides ran 140 miles in 36 hours.

This is where the word “marathon” comes from, since the Persian fleet landed at Marathon.

3. The Spartans would not come because they were celebrating a religious festival during a full moon. Athens had to fight alone.
4. At the Battle of Marathon (490 BC) saw the Athenians were outnumbered but they were victorious because of the quality of their phalanx soldiers and the cunning of their commanders who created a “double envelopment” maneuver to surround the larger enemy force.
5. This victory gave the Greeks extra time to prepare for the next Persian attack.

#### D. The Third Persian Campaign (480-479 BC)

##### 1. Persian Preparations

- a) The new Persian king, Xerxes, assembled an army of perhaps 600,000 men!
- b) Accompanying this army was a fleet of 1300 warships.
- c) It was by far the largest force ever assembled to that point in history.

##### 2. Two “Great Defeats”: Thermopylae and Artemisium (480 BC)

- a) To avoid the storms off Chalkidiki, Xerxes had his men cut a canal through part of the peninsula. Nonetheless, nearly 400 of his ships were lost in another storm. “Only” 900 remained.
- b) This fleet moved on to Cape Artemisium, where it was met by a force of 300 Greek ships. The Persians lost 200 ships, the Greeks 100.
- c) On land, the huge Persian army made its way through the mountains of Greece via mountain passes down to Thermopylae (the “Hot Gates”).
- d) Here the Greeks chose to mount a defense under King Leonidas of Sparta, because there was little room to maneuver and the Persians' greater numbers would not matter.
- e) Sadly, the Greeks were betrayed by a traitor named Ephialtes, who revealed to the Persians the existence of a small mountain trail which led to behind the Greeks lines.
- f) Knowing that they could not hold off an attack from both sides, most of the Greeks retreated.
- g) Leonidas and his famous 300 Spartans stayed behind to guard the retreat. Their sacrifice has been viewed as one of the great acts of military valor in all of history.