

Notes on Quiz #7: War Between the Greeks

1. Pericles's strategy for dealing with the Spartan threat to Athens was to
 - a. march out and fearlessly fight the Spartan army
 - b. evacuate the farms and bring everyone within the city walls
 - c. sail to Sparta and attack the city
 - d. surrender and hope for the best

Pericles knew that the Athenian army could not defeat Sparta in pitched battle. He also knew the Spartans would not stay in Attica long enough to mount a long siege of the city, especially as Athens could be easily supplied by sea thanks to the Long Walls. Thus he ordered the farmers to hole up inside the walls of Athens with the urban population.

2. All of the following are true about the Athenian "renegade aristocrat" Alcibiades EXCEPT:
 - a. Handsome, charming, and pleasure-seeking, he was eagerly courted by men and women alike
 - b. He advocated expanding the empire as a means of defeating Sparta, leading to the Sicilian Expedition
 - c. He returned to Athens after the war and opened a successful brothel
 - d. Recalled from the war to stand trial for heresy, he slipped off and defected to Sparta

Alcibiades was a young and dissolute Athenian noble who advocated aggressive action against Sparta, especially during the interlude of the Peace of Nicias. His agitation for action led to the Sicilian Expedition, which he was to lead. However, at the last moment he was called home under accusations of sacrilege. Rather than return to Athens to face punishment he defected to Sparta. This had two effects: first, the Sicilian Expedition was left in the hands of Nicias, who was not invested in it and who was not well; the expedition, which might have failed anyway because it was an overextension of Athens's power and resources, was a catastrophe in the hands of Nicias. Second, at Sparta Alcibiades was able to advise the Spartans on strategies for defeating Athens, including the base at Decelea. Ultimately he was kicked out of Sparta and fled to Persia.

3. Athens's negotiations with the unallied island city of Melos resulted in Athens
 - a. asserting, according to Thucydides, a natural law that those with power must dominate
 - b. selling the city's women and children into slavery
 - c. systematically massacring the city's men
 - d. all of the above

Though it professed to be neutral Melos was a Spartan colony in the middle of a chain of islands all of which had been brought under Athenian control (the Cyclades), and had made small contributions to Sparta. Thus, even though it was not a direct or immediate threat, it is of a piece with Athenian actions leading up to the war: Athens perceives a potential vulnerability (Potidaea, Megara) and strikes first and mercilessly to prevent the vulnerability from manifesting. — The ultimatum and massacre at Melos was a part of Athens's increasing oppressiveness and militancy during the war, guided in part by Alcibiades. The defiance and tragedy of the Melians was famously commemorated by Thucydides in the section of his history known today as the Melian dialog and through Euripides's play *The Trojan Women* the following year.

4. Sparta's victory over Athens was made possible by all of the following EXCEPT:

- a. Sparta's deal with the Scythians for naval assistance
- b. The devastating effects of plague in Athens
- c. Athens overextending itself to create a western front in Sicily
- d. The Spartan general Brasidas's success in winning Athenian allies over to Sparta

It was Sparta's deal with Persia, in exchange for Persian control over Greek Anatolia, that allowed the Spartans to end the war in a naval victory at Aegospotomi. — The massive loss of life due to plague meant that Athens was much weaker in terms of its agricultural and industrial labor force, so there was a huge impact on its economy. It was also weakened militarily, losing a great deal of manpower both for army and navy. Finally, the Plague removed the one leader most of Athens had faith in, Pericles; though he was under a cloud at the time due to accusations of corruption, his loss was like a blow. The overextension of their strength and resources by extending the war to Sicily ended in a huge catastrophe that permanently weakened Athens's ability to fight off Sparta. — Another, more minor factor is the unexpected ability of a laconic Spartan general, Brasidas, winning over Athenian allies to Sparta, leveraging their disaffection and overcoming their fear of Athens.

5. The formal charges laid against the philosopher Socrates in his trial included accusations of

- a. teaching false gods and corrupting the youth
- b. fomenting treason against Athens
- c. desecration of the herms
- d. underdeveloped rhetoric

Socrates was accused of denying Athens's gods, teaching new ones, and corrupting the youth. He could not be accused of treason because of the amnesty laid down after the overthrow of the Thirty Tyrants, but it is clear Socrates's brazen defiance of tradition made him a scapegoat for the Athenian defeat.

Optional Extra Credit

EC. In your opinion, which city is most to blame for the Peloponnesian War? Explain why.

There are three obvious candidates. Athens gets the blame for its aggressive expansionism, especially the founding of cleruchies and expanded trading during the Thirty Years' Peace, and its mistreatment of its allies (e.g., Potidaea). — It's Corinth, however, who treats every act of trading aggression by Athens as an indefensible provocation, and they call upon their ally, Sparta to turn the commercial rivalry between Athens and Corinth into Hellas-wide war. — Sparta, for its part, agrees to fight Athens because the Spartans believe that only their community is a true expression of the Greek idea, and that Athens's version, empowering the demos and fostering widespread creative expression, was so detrimental to Hellas that it had to be stopped.