

## Peloponnesian War: DBQ

Historical Context: After the Persian War, Athens became the most powerful city-state in Greece. Many other city-states, including Sparta, felt threatened by Athens' rise to power. Eventually, Sparta declared war on Athens. In this Peloponnesian War, Athens was devastated.

**Part 1: Short Answer. Study each document carefully. Answer the questions that follow.**

*Document 1: The Peloponnesian War 431 BCE- 404 BCE ----A Summary*

Causes	Military Strategies	Outcomes
Anger at Athenian grab for power and prestige	Athens and allies: Avoid land battles and rely on sea power.	Sparta victorious, becomes leading Greek city-state.
Fear of Athens' status as a powerful naval empire	Sparta and allies: Focus on land battles; cut off Athenian food supply by laying waste to countryside.	Athens loses its empire, power, wealth, and prestige
Anger at Athenian attempts to colonize lands of other city-states		

1. What military strategies were used by the Spartans and their allies?

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## Document 2

Sparta and its allies, with the exception of Corinth, were almost exclusively land based powers, able to summon large land armies which were very nearly unbeatable. Under the direction of Pericles, the Athenians pursued a policy of retreat within the city walls of Athens, relying on Athenian maritime supremacy for supply while the superior Athenian navy harassed Spartan troop movements. Unfortunately the strategy also resulted in adding many people from the countryside to an already well-populated city, introducing a severe crowding factor as well as resource shortages. Due to the close quarters and poor hygiene exhibited at that time Athens became a breeding ground for disease and many citizens died.

The **Plague of Athens** was an epidemic which devastated the city-state of Athens in ancient Greece during the second year of the Peloponnesian War (430 BCE) when an Athenian victory still seemed within reach. It is believed to have entered Athens through Piraeus, the city's port and sole source of food and supplies.

1. Why were so many Athenians impacted by the plague?

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## Document 3: *Reaction to the Athenian defeat*

They were beaten at all points and altogether; all that they suffered was great; they were destroyed, as the saying is, with a total destruction, their fleet, their army, everything was destroyed, and few out of many returned home. Such were the events in Sicily. . . .

When the news was brought to Athens, for a long while they disbelieved even the most respectable of the soldiers who had themselves escaped

from the scene of action and clearly reported the matter, a destruction so complete not being thought credible . . . Already distressed at all points and in all quarters, after what had now happened, they were seized by a fear and consternation quite without example . . . [They began to despair of salvation.

---Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*

This passage deals with the Athenian defeat at Syracuse. How did Athenians react to this loss?\_\_\_\_\_

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*Document 4: The Cost of the Peloponnesian War*

The economic consequences of the war were grave. Commerce by land and sea was disrupted . . . Agriculture suffered in most of Greece . . . A good deal of territory was [ruined], and livestock and farming implements destroyed as well as growing vines and olive trees . . .

In Athens, as many as fifty thousand people had probably died of the plague . . . War casualties seem to have included at least five thousand . . . soldiers and twelve thousand sailors . . . Probably the number of adult male citizens in 403 was half what it had been in 431.

---Sarah B. Pomeroy and others,  
*A Brief History of Ancient Greece*

What was the human cost of the Peloponnesian War to Athens?

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