THE GRECO-PERSIAN WARS
500 - 450 BCE

By Mrs. Erin C. Ryan © 2016
Who was Herodotus?

Herodotus (c. 484 – 425/413 BCE) was a traveler and writer who invented the field of study known today as ‘history’.

He was called ‘The Father of History’ by the Roman writer and orator, Cicero, for his famous work The Histories. He also wrote A History of the Persian Wars.

Herodotus has also been called “The Father of Lies” by critics who believe his stories are wildly inaccurate. Serious criticism of his work has to do with the credibility of the accounts of his travels.
Welcome to the world of Herodotus:
TIMELINE of GRECO-PERSIAN WARS

499 BCE
Ionian Revolt against Persia begins.

492 BCE
Darius I of Persia invades Greece.

11 Sep 490 BCE
A combined force of Greek hoplites defeat the Persians at Marathon.

Jul 480 BCE
Xerxes I makes extensive preparations to invade mainland Greece by building depots, canals and a boat bridge across the Hellespont.

Aug 480 BCE
Battle of Thermopylae. 300 Spartans under King Leonidas and other Greek allies hold back Xerxes I for three days but are defeated.

September 480 BCE
Greek victory against the Persians at the battle of Salamis.

479 BCE
Xerxes' Persian forces are defeated by Greek forces at Plataea effectively ending Persia’s ambitions in Greece.

449 BCE - 448 BCE
Peace between Greece and Persia.
### Did the Trojan War take place around or during the Greco-Persian Wars?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WAR</th>
<th>TIMESPAN</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
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<td>Trojan War</td>
<td>ca. 1194 - 1240 BCE</td>
<td>Homer wrote about this war in the epic poem, <em>Iliad</em></td>
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<td>Trojan War is MYTH</td>
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<td><strong>Dark Ages: 1200s - 700s BCE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Archaic Period: 700s - 500s BCE</strong></td>
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**Trojan War**

- **TIMESPAN**: ca. 1194 - 1240 BCE
- **NOTES**: Homer wrote about this war in the epic poem, *Iliad*

**Greco-Persian Wars**

- **TIMESPAN**: 499 BCE - 450 BCE
- **NOTES**: Greeks are victorious over Persian forces
Asiatic Ionian Greeks rebelled against Persia. They were joined by the Dorian, Aeolian, and Carian.

Persia ruled Greece since Cyrus the Great’s conquest in 546 BCE followed by: Cambyses II [530–522], Darius I [522–486], Xerxes I [486–465], Artaxerxes I [465–424], Darius II [423–404].

Too little is known about the details of Persian rule in Anatolia during the period 546–500 to say definitely that it was not oppressive, but, Miletus, the center of the revolt, was flourishing in 500.
PHASE II: MARATHON
[September 490 BCE]
GREEK CITY-STATES VS. PERSIAN EMPIRE

Approximately 10,000 strong
Greek **hoplites** prepared for a short-range battle

**phalanx:**
a body of troops moving in close formation

Approximately 26,000 strong
+ 100,000 armed sailors/oarsmen

Persian **Immortals**, archers, and **cavalry** prepared for a long-range battle

Greek hoplite

Persian 'axe man' calvary

Persian naval ships

Persian archers
PHASE II: **MARATHON**  
*September 490 BCE*
PHASE II: MARATHON

[September 490 BCE]

- Between Greeks and the invading forces of Persian King Darius
- Greeks surrounded Persian forces.
- Greek casualties: 1-3,000 dead
  Persian casualties: 4-5,000 dead
- Greek victory would go down in history as the moment the Greek city-states showed the world their courage and won the fight for their liberty.

Marathon was the first time that Persia became beatable. The battle would be represented in Greek art (literature, sculpture, architecture, and pottery) as a crucial and defining moment in the history of Greece.

source: http://www.ancient.eu/marathon/
PHASE II: MARATHON

[September 490 BCE]

When the Persian army landed at Marathon in 490 BC, the Athenians chose Pheidippides, their best runner, to send word to other Greeks of the invasion.

Although probably the greatest runner of ancient Greece, it was NOT Pheidippides who ran what we call a marathon. The modern sport of marathon running comes from another runner's return from the battle. He ran the 26 miles to give news of the victory before collapsing and dying ...or so the story goes.
PHASE III: HELLESPONT

[August 480 BCE]

Xerxes I built a bridge of Persian ships from Asia to Europe using a system developed during the reign of his father, Darius I.
PHASE IV: THERMOPYLAE

[August 480 BCE]

- **The Greek victory at Marathon kept Persians out of Greece for 10 years.**
- Darius I’s successor, Xerxes I, was determined to conquer Greece. He returned with ~200,000 men.
- The Greeks had to stop Xerxes I. If they failed, Persian forces would reach destroy Athens.
- The Greek Spartan, King Leonidas, led 300 of his men (+6,000 allies) to Thermopylae, the “hot gates”
- Persians won, but the sacrifice of Leonidas and his men remains one of the greatest war stories of all time.

source: [http://www.ancientgreece.co.uk/war/story/sto_set.html](http://www.ancientgreece.co.uk/war/story/sto_set.html)
PHASE IV: THERMOPYLAE [August 480 BCE]

The Battle of Thermopylae and movements to Salamis and Plataea, 480 BC
PHASE V: SALAMIS [480 BCE]

The Persian fleet scattered and Xerxes had to postpone his conquest for a year. This delay gave Greek city-states time to unite against him. The Battle of Salamis was the first great naval battle recorded in history.

The Greek commander, Themistocles, lured the Persian fleet into the narrow waters of the strait at Salamis, where the Persian ships had difficulty maneuvering.

The Greek triremes attacked furiously, ramming or sinking many Persian vessels.

The Greeks sank ~300 Persian vessels while losing only ~40 of their own.
PHASE V: **SALAMIS** [480 BCE]
Mardonius, a satrap, occupied Athens until he received word that Spartans were advancing.

Both sides brought massive armies. Nearly every city in Greece sent support: 60,000 hoplites + 40,000 infantry = 100,000 total

Herodotus claims the Persian forces numbered 1.7 million (an exaggeration). In reality the Persians probably numbered around 100,000.

Plataea was a series of battles. Persians were successful at first, but when Mardonius died leading a cavalry charge, the tide changed and most of the Persian force was annihilated.
# The Greco-Persian Wars in Summary:

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>II Thermopylae</th>
<th>III Salamis</th>
<th>IV Plataea</th>
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<td>Aug/Sep 490 BCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOCATION</td>
<td>Marathon, Greece</td>
<td>Thermopylae, Greece</td>
<td>The Straits of Salamis, Greece</td>
<td>Plataea, Greece</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLAYERS</td>
<td>Darius I vs. Greek city-states</td>
<td>Xerxes I vs. Leonidas and allies</td>
<td>Persian fleet vs. Greek fleet</td>
<td>Xerxes I vs. Greek city-states</td>
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<tr>
<td>RESULT</td>
<td>Greek Victory</td>
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