

Political Issue A: Government

You must join either the Delian League that is led by Athens or the Peloponnesian League that is led by Sparta. The leaders of each league demand that you have the same form of government that they have. Representatives from Athens and Sparta will now try to convince you that their form of government is best.

Athens

We Athenians invented democracy, the government that all of Greece envies. We believe that all people should have a right to participate in their own government. In Athens, we have an organization called the Assembly. This body passes all of our laws, and all free men over the age of 18 can belong to it. We don't believe in putting absolute power in the hands of one person, so we elect 10 generals to lead our army and navy and act as our judges. In addition, we have a group called the Council of 500. This group proposes the laws upon which the Assembly votes, and it operates our government on a daily basis. Any citizen, rich or poor, may be a member of the Council. Members are chosen by lottery, and they are paid for their services. We Athenians do not believe that only a chosen group of wealthy old men should rule an entire city-state. If you want a government that gives all citizens a right to participate, join our league.

Sparta

We Spartans believe that our oligarchy system of government is much more stable and efficient than the democracy of Athens. We believe our older and more experienced rulers have the wisdom to make good decisions for our people. For example, we have two strong kings to lead us into battle. The kings also serve on our main body of rulers, the Council of Elders. This Council is made up of 30 experienced men who must be at least 60 years old to hold office. The Council writes our laws and then presents them to our Assembly, which votes "yes" or "no" on them. All citizens over the age of 30 may belong to the Assembly. Our Assembly also annually elects five men, called *ephors*, in whom we place great trust. These chief officials oversee the actions of our kings, and are responsible for controlling the education of our children and the supervision of our slaves. These officials may even ignore the vote of our Assembly, if they believe it is in the best interest of all Spartans to do so. Sparta has been very successful because our government is stable. We're not subject to the "mob rule" of the Athenian system, where inexperienced young citizens run the government. Under their democracy, leaders who are popular today may be forced into exile tomorrow. If you feel that government is best left in the hands of experienced and knowledgeable men, join our league.

Critical-Thinking Question A: Now that you have heard the two viewpoints on government, which league do you think your city-state would most benefit by joining? What other city-states would also benefit by joining the league you chose?

Political Issue B: Quality of Life

It has been reported that Athenians have used money from the Delian League treasury to beautify Athens and support the arts. This treasury money was meant to be used for protection of the Delian League's citizens, but the Athenians claim to have used it to improve all citizens' quality of life. The representatives from Athens and Sparta will now explain why each feels the quality of life in their city is better.

Athens

The quality of life in Athens benefits all members of the Delian League. It's true that we have used some of the money from the Delian League treasury to rebuild parts of our city that were destroyed during the Persian Wars. However, there were good reasons for this. In the first place, it is the duty of all Greeks to ensure that the Gods are properly honored. Therefore, we had to restore the many beautiful temples that the Persians destroyed. In addition, spending money on cultural improvements benefits both Athens and its allies. Our spectacular monuments, works of art, and educational institutions draw visitors from across Greece and lend prestige to the Delian League. Citizens of our member city-states are welcome to visit our beautiful city and to take part in its exciting, intellectual life. Furthermore, we used only 1/60 of the total league revenues for rebuilding, a very small amount. This amount did not decrease the security of the league members, who are more than adequately protected by our combined military forces. Finally, we are sure that if you come to Athens, you will be inspired to redesign and rebuild your city too, and improve the quality of life of your people.

Sparta

If you choose to join our Peloponnesian League, you will never have to worry that we will use your money to selfishly beautify our own city. We have no interest in building huge statues or temples, or wasting money on the arts. Besides, the arts only benefit the privileged class. We Spartans reject all outward displays of wealth. We will not allow anything to distract us from achieving our highest goal—maintaining a powerful military force that can protect our city-state and our allies. Our educational system, unlike the one in Athens, includes only subjects that will produce courageous warriors. When Spartan boys are seven years old, we send them to a military school. They learn to read, write, and use weapons. These are useful skills that will help them become good political leaders and soldiers. Our military experience makes Sparta better suited to protect the rest of Greece from foreign attack, and from Athenian imperialism. We Spartans are proud of our simple and practical way of life. Join our league and follow our example, and you will be proud, too.

Critical-Thinking Question B: Now that you have heard the two viewpoints on quality of life, do you want to remain with the league you chose, or change your alliance? What other city-states would also benefit by being a member of the league you chose?

Political Issue C: Treatment of Non-Citizens

A city-state's treatment of its non-citizens will affect its stability and its ability to lead an alliance effectively. The representatives from Athens and Sparta will now describe their treatment of non-citizens, specifically women and slaves.

Athens

We Athenians have high regard for our non-citizens. We entrust our women with a great deal of responsibility. Married women are responsible for managing their households. That includes acquiring and training household servants, preparing meals, and sometimes nursing sick slaves. These women are also in charge of the care and education of their children—the future leaders of Athens. Many of our women also participate in religious festivals. Some even become priestesses with important jobs, such as looking after the sacred objects stored in our sanctuaries. We protect our women, making sure they each have a father, a husband, or a brother to look after them. Finally, since most citizens are too busy to perform common labor, we find it necessary to employ slaves. However, we value our slaves and treat them well. We allow many slaves to become educated, to practice trades, or to work independently of their owners. Some slaves can even earn their freedom. Our society has a tolerant and enlightened attitude toward its non-citizens. Join us, if respectable and honorable treatment of non-citizens is important to you.

Sparta

The Athenians claim they give their women great responsibilities. Well, in Sparta, women have more than responsibilities—they have rights, privileges, and freedom as well. The Spartan state provides an education for young girls in singing, dancing, and gymnastics. Unlike Athenian women, Spartan women do not need to be “protected” by male guardians. While we would never ask our women to become part of the army, we know that Spartan women are willing and capable of helping to defend our land if it is invaded. Furthermore, unlike Athenian women, Spartan women do more than just manage a household every day. While their husbands are off serving in our army for years at a time, Spartan women are home managing large estates, supervising dozens of slaves, and handling the family finances. Spartan women even have the right to own property in their own names. Of course, our women have one other important role to fill: they are expected to be healthy childbearers who can produce future soldiers for our state. As you can see, women in Sparta have more freedom than anywhere else in Greece. Finally, like Athens, we too, are forced to rely on non-citizens in certain areas. However, we don't engage in a slave trade, like Athens does. We rely on a group from the lower class—called the helots—to help us maintain a constant food supply. Our treatment of non-citizens is far better than that of Athens, making Sparta stable and better prepared to lead a strong alliance. Join us!

Critical-Thinking Question C: Now that you have heard the two viewpoints on treatment of non-citizens, do you want to remain with the league you chose, or change your alliance? What other city-states would also benefit by being a member of the league you chose?

Political Issue D: Trade and Prosperity

The Delian League and the Peloponnesian League have different trade policies and different views on how to achieve prosperity. Representatives of Athens and Sparta will now explain how joining their league will allow your city-state to prosper.

Athens

Delian League members benefit greatly from our trade policies. Our ships travel without fear to Egypt, Italy, and the Near East to acquire unique and valuable goods in exchange for our products. As a result of this highly successful trade, the economies of our member city-states are prospering. Protecting this trade network is, of course, very important. That's why we insist on maintaining one system of currency, which makes it easier for the exchange of goods to take place. Naturally, the strength of the Delian League depends on its unity. That is why it is important for all members to remain in the league. Recently we were forced to take action against the city-state of Naxos, which wanted to withdraw from the league. Such an action could only hurt trade and weaken all the league member city-states. We showed Naxos the foolishness of its plan, and it wisely chose to rejoin the league. We also protect the security of the Delian League members by stationing our troops in city-states that may be invaded. We Athenians have taken these actions to help guarantee that Delian League members continue to achieve prosperity—a prosperity that you too can have if you join our league.

Sparta

We in the Peloponnesian League also believe in prosperity. However, unlike Athens, we do not believe in forcing our members to remain in the league against their will. Nor do we believe in disciplining them if they do decide to leave. The Athenian representative did not mention that his city sent a fleet of ships to blockade Naxos. They then forced Naxos to dismantle its walls, give up its own fleet, and contribute money to the Delian League. We would never treat a member of the Peloponnesian League in that way. As for trade, our policy is simple. We engage in limited trade only among ourselves. This avoids the likelihood of military conflicts with such powers as Persia for control of the trade routes in the eastern Mediterranean. We Spartans also have no desire to dominate or interfere in the affairs of our member city-states. The Athenians' insistence on using only one currency—their own—makes it easier for them to use their coins to influence and pay off political leaders of other Delian League city-states. Soon they will have created an Athenian empire within their league. We believe the best way to achieve equal prosperity among all members is to follow the economic policies of our Peloponnesian League. If you join our league, you can achieve that prosperity too—and not at the cost of your own free will.

Critical-Thinking Question D: Now that you have heard the two viewpoints on how to best achieve prosperity, do you want to remain with the league you chose, or change your alliance? What other city-states would also benefit by being a member of the league you chose?