

BATTLES AND BATTLE FORMATIONS

The Greeks were well-known throughout the ancient world for their superior military skills. Training, discipline and the careful use of battle formations often enabled them to win victories even when they were outnumbered. Here is a list of sites of the most important battles fought by the ancient Greeks, with maps showing what happened at some of the most famous ones.

AEGINA An island between Athens and southern Greece, the site of a naval war between Aegina and Athens in the early 5th century BC.

AEGOSPOTAMI A town near the Hellespont in Turkey. In 405BC, the Athenian navy was virtually wiped out here by the Spartans. It was the last great battle of the Peloponnesian Wars.

CHERONEA A town in central Greece, the site of Philip II of Macedon's decisive victory over the Greek cities in 338BC.

GAUGAMELA A town on the east side of the Euphrates river, now in Iraq. Here, in 331BC, Alexander the Great won his third victory over King Darius III of Persia.

GRANICUS RIVER A river in northwest Turkey, the scene of Alexander's first victory over the Persians in 334BC.

HYDASPES A river in northwest India and the scene of Alexander's battle against the Indians in 326BC.

ISSUS A river near the borders of present-day Syria and Turkey. It was the site of Alexander's second victory over the Persians in 333BC.

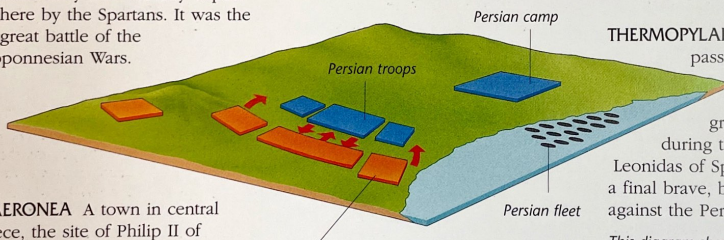
LEUCTRA A town in central Greece, where the Thebans won a victory against the Spartans in 371BC.

MANTINEA A town in southern Greece, where the Thebans won a victory over the Spartans, in 362BC, although they lost the war.

MARATHON

A plain in Attica, northeast of Athens. In 490BC, the combined armies of the Athenians and their allies, the Plataeans, won a great victory against the Persians.

This diagram shows the positions of the two armies at the Battle of Marathon.



Greek forces begin to encircle the Persians.

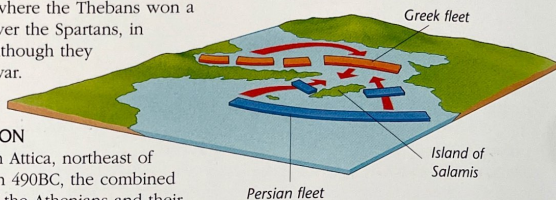
PLATAEA A town in central Greece, the site of a Spartan victory over the Persians in 479BC.

PYDNA The site of the battle in 168BC in which the Romans defeated the Macedonians and took over control of Greece.

RAPHIA A town in Palestine, the scene of a battle in 217BC between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies.

SALAMIS An island just off the coast of Greece, near Athens. In 480BC, the Greeks won a great naval victory here against the Persians during the long-running Persian Wars.

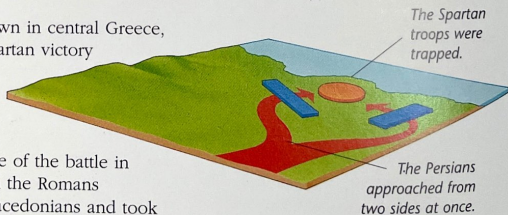
This diagram of the Battle of Salamis shows the positions of the Greek and Persian fleets before the battle began.



The Greeks are hiding in the bay behind the island, waiting for the Persian fleet to sail up the narrow stretch of water before they attack.

THERMOPYLAE A narrow mountain pass on the east coast of Greece, where the Persians won a great victory in 480BC, during the Persian Wars. King Leonidas of Sparta led his troops in a final brave, but hopeless, battle against the Persians.

This diagram shows the positions of the Spartans and the Persians at the Battle of Thermopylae.



The Spartan troops were trapped.

The Persians approached from two sides at once.

TROY The site of nine cities in Asia Minor, each built on the ruins of its predecessor. The seventh was besieged by the Greeks in about 1250BC, during the Trojan War.