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Lesson: A Tale of Two Cities (Athens and Sparta in Ancient Greece)

Class: 6th Grade Social Studies

Standards:

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of ancient Greek civilization, including art, politics, and philosophy.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to obtain geographic information from a variety of print and electronic sources.

Time: 3 45-minute class periods

Opening Activity: Pre-Assessment Pop-Quiz (15 minutes)

Write or display the following true/false statements on the board:

1. The ancient Greeks owned slaves.
2. Women vote in democratic Athens.
3. Most city-states were actually cities.
4. The ancient Greeks have nobles and aristocrats.
5. The secret of ancient Greece's success is its rich, fertile land.
6. The ancient Greeks valued wealth above all else.

Ask students to number a piece of paper from 1 to 6 and answer true/false to each question. These will not be collected or graded, but results will be shared in class.

Give students up to 5 minutes to answer the questions.

Discussion: Have students raise hands for true or false, then discuss.

1. True - Even democratic Athens had no compunction about owning slaves.
2. False - It could be argued that women had more power over their lives in Sparta.
3. False - The vast majority were only small towns of a few hundred citizens.
4. True - Even in democratic Athens the aristocrats remained a force to be reckoned with.
5. False - The mountainous terrain was only suitable for a few select crops like olives.
6. False - Fame and honor meant much more to the average Greek citizen than wealth.

Video: View the following portions of "The Greeks: Crucible of Civilization" (PBS). (25 minutes)

Sparta

Starts: 10.44 "But there was one city-state which had military power..."

Ends: 12.36 "For the rest of the Greeks the Spartans were a threat always on the horizon."

Athens (under Cleisthenes):

Starts: 40.51 "In this new dawn..."

Ends: 45.24 "A new generation of Athenians would take up his legacy."

Athens (under Pericles):

Starts: 1.20.10 "The Athenians were now looking for a leader..."

Ends: 1.34.11 "...echo around the world."