



The Spartans: The World of the Warrior-Heroes of Ancient Greece

By Paul Cartledge

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The Spartans were a society of warrior-heroes who were the living exemplars of such core values as duty, discipline, self-sacrifice, and extreme toughness. This book, written by one of the world's leading experts on Sparta, traces the rise and fall of Spartan society and explores the tremendous influence the Spartans had on their world and even on ours. Paul Cartledge brings to life figures like legendary founding father Lycurgus and King Leonidas, who embodied the heroism so closely identified with this unique culture, and he shows how Spartan women enjoyed an unusually dominant and powerful role in this hyper-masculine society. Based firmly on original sources, **The Spartans** is the definitive book about one of the most fascinating cultures of ancient Greece.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Legendary for their ferocious combat skills, the Spartans built a warrior culture in ancient Greece unsurpassed for its courage and military prowess. Eminent historian Cartledge (*Spartan Reflections*) provides a remarkable chronicle of Sparta's rise and fall, from its likely origins around 1100 B.C. to the height of its fame and glory in the battle of Thermopylae in 480 B.C. and its fall in the fourth century B.C. The Spartans built their society through conquest and subjugation, ruling over their subject peoples with an iron hand and putting down revolts with devastating might. Between 490 and 479, Sparta joined Athens in fighting the Persians in three key wars—Thermopylae, Plataea and Mycale—that contributed to the demise of Persian power and the rise of Hellenistic power on the Mediterranean. Cartledge punctuates his absorbing tale with brief, engaging biographies of the city-state's kings from Lycurgus, the earliest Spartan leader, who brought constitutional law to the city, to Leonidas, who led the Spartans at Thermopylae. According to Cartledge, the Spartans' legacy to Western culture includes devotion to duty, discipline, the willingness to sacrifice individual life for the greater good of the community and the nobility of arms in a cause worth dying for. Cartledge's crystalline prose, his vivacious storytelling and his lucid historical insights combine here to provide a first-rate history of the Spartans, their significance to ancient Greece and their influence on our culture. It ties in to a PBS series to air this summer. 27 b&w illus., 3 maps.

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From [Booklist](#)

To project civic-mindedness or combativeness, American towns and school teams have appropriated the name of Sparta—so who were the Spartans and why do we care? So asks Cartledge, a Cambridge University scholar whose engaging narrative tries to discern the authenticity of events and personalities known only through fragmentary written or archaeological evidence, which can be mythical, partisan, or propagandistic. Cartledge spans Sparta's entire existence but concentrates on the century from the Persian invasions to its collapse following its triumph over Athens in 404 B.C.E. Presenting Sparta's military and diplomatic policies, the author studs his account with lively sketches of Spartan leaders, above all Leonidas. As embodiments of Sparta's warrior caste at the Battle of Thermopylae (480 B.C.E.), Leonidas and his 300 hoplites have redounded down the millennia, most recently in the historical novel *Gates of Fire* by Steven Pressfield (1998), which will soon be made into a movie. In his panorama of the real Sparta, Cartledge cloaks his erudition with an ease and enthusiasm that will excite readers from page one. *Gilbert Taylor*
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Review

“Cartledge displays a marvelous ability to make the readers care about the Laconic warriors . . . and the society that shaped them.” —*USA Today*

“Cartledge brings [the Spartans] to life again with verve [and] style.” —*Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*

“The history and atmosphere of Sparta are well conveyed by Cartledge.” —*The New York Review of Books*

“A fine overview of the rise and fall of a singular culture, spiced with anecdotes, quotations, brisk summary, and real insight.” —*Seattle Times*

“The Spartans presented in this book could change the popular image of ancient history, making it more

compelling and accessible.” —*The Times Literary Supplement*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alan Williams:

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