

Core Knowledge

## YEAR 3: ANCIENT GREECE (five lessons): Lesson 5. Marathon and Thermopylae



UK

TAGS: [Athens](#) [Sparta](#) [Persia](#) [Hoplite](#) [Marathon](#) [Thermopylae](#) [Pheidippides](#)

General information	
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Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: YEAR 3: ANCIENT GREECE (five lessons): Lesson 5. Marathon and Thermopylae by Core Knowledge ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice, Daniel A. Nkemele. *Our Mythical Childhood Education* (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2025). Link: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/education-survey/item/119>.

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## Creators

### Core Knowledge

#### Core Knowledge UK

The Core Knowledge Foundation is a nonprofit organization from Charlottesville, Virginia, which was founded in 1986 by E. D. Hirsch, Jr. The foundation offers open access curricula to schools, teachers, parents.

<https://www.coreknowledge.org/about-us/>

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### Additional information

#### Contents & Purpose

After learning about the Persian wars, this lesson focuses on two battles, one representing Athenian might and one Spartan heroism. The battles refer to the Persian invasion of 490 and 480 B.C.E. the students are asked to fill in a news article about Marathon and Thermopylae. They can write also a poem if they wish.

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#### Further comments

Marathon and Thermopylae were probably chosen due to their more familiarity than other battles from ancient Greece. It gives the teachers the opportunity to explain the meaning of the Marathon race. Thermopylae might be known from the movie *300* (2006) at least to some students, although they are much younger than the intended audience of the film, hence it is not referred to in the lesson, but other videos from the History channel and the BBC's *Horrible Histories* are referred to.

These two battles however, showed a very different ethics and attitude towards life and death. The Spartans preferred death over retreat, the Athenians had no choice but to fight (and the Spartans did not come to their aid at first, a fact which is not mentioned in the lesson).

Writing a newspaper article forces the students to focus on the main details and concise the significant elements of each battle, while still making the article comprehensible to a larger audience. Hence they must learn the battles well in order to write a good article.

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