

**Women in Athens & Sparta** Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Prd: \_\_\_\_ Score: \_\_\_\_ /15

Directions: Δώστε έμφαση στην απάντηση στο κείμενο στο αριστερό.

### Athens

It is one of the strangest cases in history, Athens of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. The culture of Athens seemed at its greatest. It was a **democracy** which had experienced some of the most wonderful architecture, sculpture, plays and philosophy in history. But it was financed by slavery and war and was a low point in ancient Greece for women. Here is some evidence to support this statement:

1. Women had *no* political rights. They could *not* vote or be leaders in the government. They were *not* allowed on juries or as judges. It is even questionable whether or not they could even testify in court.
2. Women could *not* own property. Property might be given to them *by men*, but it was controlled by male guardians: fathers, sons, husbands, or the nearest male relative.
3. "Respectable" women were secluded and *not* seen in public except at a few important religious events.
4. Professions like medicine, law and acting were *closed to* women.
5. *No* woman could make a business deal that was worth more than a bushel of barley (not much in those times).
6. The husband *had control* of the children and *could even kill them if he chose*.

Historians have tried to understand why Athens treated its women so poorly. Other Greek polises gave women more freedom and rights, why was Athens so different? A number of ideas have been suggested. One is the emphasis on politics in Athens drew attention away from the family. Since women could not participate in government, many Athenian men believed women did not matter.

Another theory is that in the past, wealthy women had abused their power, so Athenians were afraid of strong, independent women. It is possible that differences in age might have created negative attitudes towards women. Most men in Athens married around the age of 30.

Making inferences: Why is Athens described as *strange* in this opening paragraph?

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Applying past knowledge: What is this example of **great Athenian architecture**?

The \_\_\_\_\_ →



True or False (← circle 1): Women in Athens were important in most court cases.

Women were not allowed in public *unless* it was a \_\_\_\_\_ event.

Thinking beyond the text: Do you *think* Athenian men used this right *often*? *Why or why not*?

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(2 pts.)



They typically married a girl half their age. The difference in maturity may have led to men thinking less of their wives. Whatever the case may be, it is clear that women in Athens were (as you are about to find out) treated much worse than women in Sparta.

**Sparta**

It has been suggested that if the Greek legend of the Amazons was based on truth, the idea came from the women of Sparta. Spartan women compare to the Amazon women in two ways: their beauty and their toughness.

Because of their military way of life, the encouragement of tough soldiers was one of the major goals of the Spartan government. Healthy, tough mothers were the way of getting them. The rest of the polises of Greece seem to have agreed; Spartan women were the most beautiful of the Greek women. Helen (the face that launched 1000 ships) may have gone to Troy, but she was originally from Sparta.

The reason for the beauty of Spartan women, especially when compared to those of Athens, was partly the result of government policy. Healthy mothers, the leaders felt, produced healthy offspring. Spartan women were not required to stay in dark, unsanitary homes as were "respectable" Athenian women. Spartan women were encouraged to exercise and to take pride in being physically fit. There is evidence that Spartan female infants were fed well compared to Athenian girls who were generally fed *less than* their brothers. Though no Greek women were allowed in the Olympic games, Spartan women seem to have participated in their own sports contests. Spartan men were proud of the athletic skills of the women. For example, one Spartan man, *disguised* his sister as a man to enter her in the Olympic chariot races. *She won!*

Besides their healthy beauty, the Spartan women were known for their toughness. Some "rights" they had were necessary to hold this polis together when Spartan troops were away. They could own and control their own property.

Applying math to Social Studies:

How old would the typical Athenian bride be? \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

Whoa, Athena! ☺



← An Amazon warrior riding her horse.

Spartan women were \_\_\_\_\_

- a. tough
- b. beautiful
- c. Both a & b
- d. Neither a nor b

True or False (← circle 1): Spartan women were treated well because it was believed that healthy, tough women would have healthy, tough sons.

Give at least four (4) examples of privileges women in Sparta had that women in Athens did not.

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(4 pts.)



By 400 B.C. it is estimated that 2/5 of the property in Sparta was owned by women. If their husbands were old or had been away on a long war, they could take another husband so that Sparta would be sure of a new supply of soldiers. When Leonidas, the great Spartan soldier-king, marched off to his sure death at the Battle of Thermopylae, his message to his Spartan wife was, "Marry good men and bear good children." His wife's message to him was, "Come home *carrying* your shield or *on* it." The Spartan women did have *more* privileges than other Greek women.

*Applying past knowledge:* Rulers in which *other ancient civilization* were allowed to have *more than one spouse*? \_\_\_\_\_

*Making inferences:* What do you think Leonidas' wife meant by "Come home *carrying* your shield or *on* it."? \_\_\_\_\_



A Spartan soldier bids farewell to his family before going off into battle.