**#5—Crash Course World History**

**The Persians & the Greeks**

1. The Persian Empire became the model for pretty much all land-based empires throughout the world’ except for—wait for it—the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Much of what we know about the Persians and their empire come from an outsider writing about them which is something we now call history, and one of the first true historians was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, whose famous book The Persian Wars talks about the Persians quite a bit.
3. Now the fact that Herodotus was a Greek is important because it introduces us to the idea of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
4. So the Persian Achaemenid dynasty was founded in 539 BCE by King \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the Great. Cyrus took his nomadic warriors and conquered most of Mesopotamia, including the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which ended a sad period in Jewish history called The Babylonian Exile (or Captivity).
5. But his son, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the First, was even greater: He extended Persian control east to the Indus Valley, west to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and north to Anatolia. There were Greeks in Anatolia called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Greeks.
6. The Persians ruled with a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: Like conquered kingdoms were allowed to keep their kings and their elites as long as they pledged allegiance to the Persian King and paid \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which is why the Persian king was known as The King of Kings. Plus taxes weren’t too high and the Persians improved infrastructure with better \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and they had a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-like mail service of which Herodotus said: “… they are stayed neither by snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness from accomplishing their appointed course with all speed.” (Sound familiar?)
7. The Persians embraced freedom of religion. They were Zoroastrian, a monotheistic religion. It was really Zoroastrianism that introduced to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ dualism we all know so well. The Persians weren’t very concerned about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ people of the empire to their faith. Plus, Zoroastrianism forbad \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
8. We all know about the Greeks: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Philosophy. Literature. Greek poets and mathematicians, playwrights and architects and philosophers founded a culture we still identify with. And they introduced us to many ideas, including \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
9. Greeks lived in \_\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_\_which consisted of a city (polis) and its surrounding area. Most of these city-states featured at least some form of slavery and in all of them citizenship was limited to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Each of the city-states had its own form of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, ranging from very democratic—unless you were a women or a slave—to completely dictatorial. The people who lived in these cities considered themselves \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of that city, not of anything that might ever be called Greece; at least until the Persian Wars.
10. So between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ BCE, the Persians made war on the Greek city states. This was the war that featured the battle of Thermopylae where 300 brave \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ battled--if you believe Herodotus--five million Persians. And also the battle of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which is a plain about 26.2 miles away from Athens.
11. The whole war started because Athens supported those aforementioned \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Greeks when they were rebelling in Anatolia against the Persians. That made the Persian king \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ mad so he led two major campaigns against the Athenians, and the Athenians enlisted the help of all the other Greek city states. In the wake of that shared Greek victory, the Greeks began to see themselves as Greeks rather than as Spartans or Athenians or whatever.
12. Athens emerged as the de facto capital of Greece and then got to experience a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ and built the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, a temple to Athena that later became a church and then a mosque and then an armory until finally settling into its current gig as a ruin. When you combine that high minded rhetoric with the undeniable power and beauty of the art and philosophy that was created in ancient Athens, it’s not hard to see it as the foundation of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ civilization.
13. The Peloponnesian War, a 30-year conflict between the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The Spartans did not embrace democracy but instead embraced a kingship that functioned only because of a huge class of brutally mistreated slaves. The war was not about politics but rather about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and power.
14. Thucydides wrote the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the Peloponnesian War in which he states, “The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.” This statement is sometimes seen as the first explicit endorsement of the so-called theory of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in international relations. For realists, interaction between nations (or peoples or cultures) is all about who has the power. Whoever has it can compel whoever doesn’t have it to do pretty much anything.
15. So here’s a non-rhetorical question: Did the right side win the Persian wars? Most classicists and defenders of the Western Tradition will tell you that of course we should be glad the Greeks won. After all, winning the Persian war set off the cultural flourishing that gave us the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ age. And plus, if the Persians had won with their monarchy that might have strangled democracy in its crib and gave us more one -man rule.
16. But as a counter argument, let’s consider three things:
* First, it’s worth remembering that life under the Persians was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and if you look at the last five thousand years of human history, you’ll find a lot more successful and stable empires than you will democracies.
* Second, life under the Athenians wasn’t so awesome, particularly if you were a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or a slave and their government was notoriously \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And ultimately the Athenian government derived its power not from its citizens but from the imperialist belief that “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”. It’s true that Athens gave us \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but they also killed him or they forced him to commit suicide. Whatever, Herodotus, you’re not the only one here who can engage in historical bias.
* And lastly, under Persian rule the Greeks might have avoided the Peloponnesian War, which ended up weakening the Greek city states so much that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ “Coming Soon” the Great’s father was able to conquer all of them and then there were a bunch of bloody wars with the Persians and all kinds of horrible things and Greece wouldn’t glimpse democracy again for \_\_\_\_\_ millennia. All of which might have been avoided if they’d just let themselves get beaten by the Persians.