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*larger barbarian army that included elite Asian cavalry and infantry, and troops from as far away as India, with thousands of Greek hoplites and cavalry also fighting on the Persian side. At points in the*

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*several days of combat, the Persians with their greater mobility and more fluid, missile tactics came close to breaking the Greek defensive line and succeeded in cutting off their supplies. But, in a fatal*

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soldiers stood three hundred strong. Theirs was a suicide mission, to hold the pass against the invading millions of the mighty Persian army. Day after bloody day they withstood the terrible onslaught, buying time

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resonates throughout history as a battle involving extreme courage and sacrifice. It was in this rocky pass in northern Greece that Leonidas, king of the Spartans and commander-in-chief of the Greek force, delayed

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the Persian hordes for three days against overwhelming odds. Finally overcome by treachery, the remaining Spartans refused to retreat in the face of inevitable defeat, being slaughtered by the elite

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*of identically equipped infantry. At Marathon the Athenians equipped all their fighters, including archers and horsemen, as hoplites for the first time. Because their equipment weighed only half as much as is usually*



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Cartledge argues, can be found in a little-known oath reputedly sworn by the leaders of Athens, Sparta, and several other Greek city-states prior to the battle-the Oath of Plataea. Through an analysis of this oath, Cartledge

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provides a wealth of insight into ancient Greek culture. He shows, for example, that when the Athenians and Spartans were not fighting the Persians they were fighting themselves, including a propaganda war for

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control of the memory of Greece's defeat of the Persians. This helps explain why today we readily remember the Athenian-led victories at Marathon and Salamis but not Sparta's victory at Plataea. Indeed, the Oath

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illuminates Greek anxieties over historical memory and over the Athens-Sparta rivalry, which would erupt fifty years after Plataea in the Peloponnesian War.

The Spartan legend has inspired

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promoted democracy, individualism, culture and society, their great rivals Sparta embodied militarism, totalitarianism, segregation and brutal repression. As ruthless as they were self-sacrificing, their



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said that on the eve of battle, he was told by a native of Trachis that the Persian archers were so numerous that their arrows would block out the sun. Dienekes, however, undaunted by this prospect, remarked with a laugh, 'Good. Then we will fight in the shade...' - Herodotus The names of history's most famous battles still

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ring in our ears today, their influence immediately understood by all. Marathon lent its name to the world's most famous race, but it also preserved Western civilization during the First Persian War. Saratoga, won by one of the colonists' most renowned war heroes before he became his nation's most vile traitor.

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Hastings ensured the Normans' success in England and changed the course of British history. Waterloo, which marked the reshaping of the European continent and Napoleon's doom, has now become part of the English lexicon. In Charles River Editors' Greatest Battles in History series, readers can get caught up to speed on

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history's greatest battles in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known. There are few battles in history in which the vanquished are better remembered and celebrated than the victors, and even fewer where a defeat is considered a victory. But that has become



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the enduring legacy of the Battle of Thermopylae, a battle as unique as it is famous. The story of the battle and the willing sacrifice of the Greek defenders to buy the rest of the retreating Greeks time is well known across the world and still resonates with audiences to this day. Last stands are the stuff of martial legends, and

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Thermopylae is the greatest of them all. Though there was another contingent of Greeks fighting alongside them, Thermopylae is remembered for the stand of the 300 Spartans, who, with no compulsion binding them, chose to fight and die in the remote mountain pass against insurmountable odds. Their story

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has been told in literature, art, film, and even in graphic novels. But the battle was more than the ultimate self-sacrifice, the embodiment of the famous statement that "greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends". It was also a veritable clash of civilizations, and one that, though in and of itself it was a

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defeat, helped set the stage for the eventual Greek victory that might very well have changed the course of history. It was a showdown between various Greek city-states, including Sparta and democratic Athens, against the autocratic, absolutist Persian Empire. Had the Persians triumphed, the Golden Age of

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Athens would have been snuffed out, and Ancient Greece would never have formed the backbone of Roman and Western culture. Simply put, the West as we know it today might never have existed. The Greatest Battles of History: The Battle of Thermopylae separates the facts from the legends to explain who fought the battle,

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how the battle was fought, and the results and aftermath of the battle. Along with art depicting important people, places, and events, you will learn about the Battle of Thermopylae like you never have before, in no time at all.

An account of the ancient battle between Persia and the alliance of Greek city-

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states, including the legendary 300 Spartans. In 480 BCE, Persian king Xerxes led a massive invasion of Greece. A critical point in this invasion was the battle for the pass at Thermopylae—Hot Gates in Greek. Xerxes had amassed one of the largest armies yet known to man, while Leonidas's troops, a group of united

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Spartans, Thespians, Thebans, and others, including slaves, were a small fraction of the Persian horde. Despite the overwhelming odds, Leonidas and his men stood their ground for three days in a historic display of patriotism and courage. In *Thermopylae: Battle for the West*, acclaimed author Ernie Bradford covers



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the entire era of the invasion—from the foundation of the Persian empire to the accession of Darius all the way to the final, bloody battles—in a fascinating and accessible look at warfare in ancient times.

Battles That Changed History

The Battle of Thermopylae

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*The Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC is one of the most famous battles in history.*

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*The heroism of the 300 Spartans who opted to remain behind to face the full might of the Persian host while their Greek allies made good their escape has become the stuff of legend.*

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*The story still inspires novelists and film-makers today (Frank Miller's fanciful 300 was a huge hit in 2007 and the film rights to Steven Pressfield's more historical novel Gates of Fire*

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*were bought by George Clooney, the film expected to finally surface in 2011 or 2012). But what is the truth behind the legends and why was this bloody defeat immediately accorded a halo*

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*of glory that has endured for nearly two-and-a-half millennia? Beyond the Gates of Fire brings together experts on the classical period from Australia, New Zealand and the United*

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*States to take a fresh look at various aspects of the battle. A substantial introductory section by the editors outlines the background to the conflict as well as the arms, armor and fighting*

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*styles of the opposing sides. The following chapters (9 of them) then discuss such questions as whether the defense of the pass really was a suicide mission; the exact topography of the*



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*original battle on the conduct of later battles in the pass, right up to the German invasion of 1941. For the classical scholar or the general reader whose interest has been piqued by*

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*the popular books and films, this book is sure to shed refreshing new light on the most famous last stand in history.*

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*Empire and the fragmented yet culturally advanced Greeks. It also included some of history's most famous leaders, such as the Persian king Xerxes I and the Spartan king and*

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*military general*

*Leonidas. The drama of this battle has been glorified by people almost since the moment it occurred. More recently, it has been the subject of many famous*

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*paintings which usually depict the famous last stand made by the Greeks, specifically Leonidas and his Spartan soldiers. Plus, the film 300 (2006) is based on the Battle of Thermopylae,*

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*showing how this event still lives on in our collective memory. This glorification is apt only because the battle was indeed an important moment in the much larger conflict known as the Greco-*



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*Persian Wars. However, the Greeks lost this battle. In fact, it was a slaughter. Had it not been for some good fortune as well as an advantage in terms of equipment and fighting*

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*techniques, the Battle of Thermopylae could have gone down in history as the beginning of the end for one of the world's great civilizations. But this didn't happen. The Greeks*

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*managed to turn the tables on the Persians shortly after the Battle of Thermopylae, and this battle became understood more as a symbol of Greek pride and independence than of true*

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*military prowess. Indeed, the story of the Greeks at the Battle of Thermopylae is heroic. Up against unfathomable odds, the Greeks defended the narrow Pass of Thermopylae for*

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*seven days, and the majority of the soldiers who were there managed to escape to fortify the rest of the Greek line. Only a small contingent of soldiers stayed with the Spartan king Leonidas, and*

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*they were eventually overrun and destroyed. That these soldiers were more willing to die than to surrender to the Persians is part of the reason why this battle has become so*

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*famous. It serves as a symbol of what people will do to protect their freedom and their homeland. Sure, much of our memory of the Battle of Thermopylae is glorified untruth, but no one*

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*can deny that the Greeks and the Persians, in late August or early September of 480 BCE, fought one of the most important battles in one of the most important wars of the ancient era. Here*



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*significantly shaped the development of the modern world.*

*In 480 BC, Xerxes, the King of Persia, led an invasion of mainland Greece. Its success should have been a*

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*formality. For seventy years, victory - rapid, spectacular victory - had seemed the birthright of the Persian Empire. In the space of a single generation, they had swept across the Near East,*

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*shattering ancient kingdoms, storming famous cities, putting together an empire which stretched from India to the shores of the Aegean. As a result of those conquests, Xerxes ruled as*

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*the most powerful man on the planet. Yet somehow, astonishingly, against the largest expeditionary force ever assembled, the Greeks of the mainland managed to hold out. The Persians were*

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*turned back. Greece remained free. Had the Greeks been defeated at Salamis, not only would the West have lost its first struggle for independence and survival, but it is*



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*courage under fire, Overy presents engaging essays on each battle that together provide a rich picture of how combat has changed through the ages, as well as highlighting what has remained consistent despite advances in*



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*technology.*

*Herodotus was an ancient Greek historian who lived in the fifth century BC (c.484 - 425 BC). He has been called the "Father of History", and was the first historian known to collect his*

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*materials systematically, test their accuracy to a certain extent and arrange them in a well-constructed and vivid narrative. The Histories- his masterpiece and the only work he is known to have produced-is a record of his "inquiry", being an*

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*investigation of the origins of the Greco-Persian Wars and including a wealth of geographical and ethnographical information. The Histories, were divided into nine books, named after the nine Muses: the "Muse of History", Clio,*

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*representing the first book, then Euterpe, Thaleia, Melpomene, Terpsichore, Erato, Polymnia, Ourania and Calliope for books 2 to 9, respectively.*

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*also discover a society dedicated to militarism not in service to Greek unity or to the Spartan state itself, but as a desperate measure intended to keep its*

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*massive population of helots (a near-slave underclass) in line. What successes there were, such as in the Peloponnesian Wars, gave Sparta only a brief*

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*period of hegemony over Greece. Today, there is no greater testament to this than the relative position of modern Sparta and its famous rival Athens. The Bronze*

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*displayed by the entire corps of Spartans and Thespians, yet bravest of all was declared the Spartan Dienekes. It is said that on the eve of battle, he was told by a*

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*native of Trachis that the Persian archers were so numerous that their arrows would block out the sun. Dienekes, however, undaunted by this prospect, remarked*

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*with a laugh, 'Good.*

*Then we will fight in  
the shade...- -*

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our ears today, their*

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*culturally advanced  
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some of history's most  
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