

# Life in Sparta



Physical fitness was important, as only strong, healthy men could be soldiers. Each new baby was examined by officials. If it showed signs of weakness, it was left to die.



A boy was educated until he was 20 (see pages 52-53). Then he had to join the army and be elected to a military club. He lived in the club's barracks in very harsh conditions.



Soldiers were allocated land, and *helots* to work it, by the state. Each soldier supported his family and helped to supply his barracks from the produce of his land.



Spartan men didn't usually marry until they were 30. Even then they spent most of their time at the barracks. Only old men were allowed to live in their own homes.



Women had to keep fit so they would have strong babies. They competed against each other in athletic events, wearing short tunics. Other Greeks were often shocked by this.



Foreigners were not allowed into Sparta. Only the *perioikoi* had any dealings with outsiders. The Spartans did not use coins and usually bartered for goods.

## Government in Sparta

The Spartan government included a monarchy, a council of elders and a popular assembly. Their various functions are shown on this diagram.

According to legend, government institutions and laws were set up by a leader named Lycurgus. But experts disagree about whether or not he was a real person.



Sparta had two royal families and two kings, who always ruled together. Their main responsibility was to lead the army in war. At home, their powers were strictly limited to religious duties.



More actual power lay with the five *ephors*, or overseers, who were elected annually by the Assembly (see below). They looked after the day-to-day running of the state.



The *gerousia*, or Council, was made up of the two kings and 20 councillors. Councillors were men over 60 who had been elected for life by the Assembly. The councillors decided which policies Sparta should adopt. They also created the laws and acted as judges.



The Council's proposals had to be passed by the *apella*, or Assembly, which consisted of all citizens over 30. The Assembly could not debate or amend a measure, it could only vote on it. Spartans voted by shouting 'yes' or 'no': the loudest group won.

## The Peloponnesian League

The Spartans didn't have enough soldiers to fight abroad and suppress a *helot* uprising at the same time. In the 6th century BC, they made alliances with the peoples of the Peloponnese (the southern part of mainland Greece). This is known as the Peloponnesian League. Sparta's allies remained independent, but they had to give Sparta military assistance when required.

