

MARATHON LEGACY

SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

HISTORIAN CARTLEDGE ON THE MARATHON LEGACY

The Athenian dead were treated as heroes—not merely in our generic sense of that word, but in the very specific cultural, that is religious, sense of the word ‘Hero’. They were all buried together under a massive mound of earth and worshipped thereafter as semi-divine, more than merely mortal beings, functioning thereby as talismans and protectors of Athenians present and to come.

🔍 SOURCE 4.23

Paul Cartledge, After Thermopylae (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

HISTORIAN FREEMAN ON THE MARATHON LEGACY

Tradition relates that the death toll at Marathon was 6400 Persians and only 192 Athenians, most of them lost in the struggle in the center. It was a stunning achievement, transcending the most epic of heroic legends. No single event was ever to exercise such grip on the imagination of Athens.

🔍 SOURCE 4.24

Charles Freeman, The Greek Achievement (New York: Viking, Penguin Group, 1999), 175.

HISTORIAN LACEY ON THE MARATHON LEGACY

In the decades after the battle, no Greek doubted its importance. In Athens itself there was a cult of Marathon, and the men who fought that day were honored until their death. They were the equivalent of Athens’s ‘greatest generation’.

🔍 SOURCE 4.25

Jim Lacey, The First Clash: The Miraculous Greek Victory at Marathon and its Impact on Western Civilization (New York: Bantam Books, 2011).



🔍 SOURCE 4.26

Helmet found at Olympia inscribed with ‘Miltiades’.



🔍 SOURCE 4.27

The burial mound at Marathon for 192 Athenian dead.

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AESCHYLUS' EPITAPH

Beneath this stone lies Aeschylus, son of Euphorion, the Athenian, who perished in the wheat-bearing land of Gela; of his noble prowess Marathon can speak, or the long-haired Persian, who knows it well.

SOURCE 4.28

Aeschylus' epitaph fragment in Stanley Hochman, McGraw Hill Encyclopaedia of World Drama: An International Reference Work in Five Volumes, Vol. 1, (New York: McGraw Hill Publishing, 1972), 11.



SOURCE 4.29

A nineteenth-century reconstruction of the Stoa Poikile painting of the Battle of Marathon. Note the presence of gods and mortals.

ARISTOPHANES' ARCHARNIANS

Amphitheus: I was hurrying back here with a load of truces,
When some Archarnian veterans got to hear of it.
They're tough old blighters:
Hard as oak or maple—they fought at Marathon.
They started shouting: 'Traitor, you dare bring treaties
When our vines are being hacked to pieces?'
That's when I bolted,
And they came after me—yelling.
Dicaeopolis: Let them yell ... You've got the pledges [of peace]?
Amphitheus: I have indeed.

SOURCE 4.30

Aristophanes, Archarnians 179–186 in Aristophanes: The Complete Plays, trans. Paul Roche (New York: Penguin Books, 2005).

SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

Using Sources 4.23–4.30 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Compare the historical interpretations (Sources 4.23 to 4.25) and the evidence based on archaeology and texts (Sources 4.26 to 4.29). How does this evidence help support the historians' views?

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ACTIVITY

2. The number of casualties in Source 4.24 comes from Herodotus (*The Histories* 6.117). Why are historians wary of taking these numbers at face value?

3. Why might the ancient Athenians have considered the Battle of Marathon so important? What consequences might the Athenians have faced if they had lost?

EXTENSION

What was a 'Mediser'? What does this suggest about the ways Athenians now saw themselves and the Persian Empire?
