

# THE BATTLE OF THERMOPYLAE, 480 B.C.

[To accompany Wheelock, Ch. 5]



Leonidas at Thermopylae, 1814  
 Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825)  
 Oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris

In 480 B.C. a contingent of 300 Spartan soldiers under the leadership of their king, Leonidas, held off a huge army of invading Persians in the narrow pass of Thermopylae (“Gates of Fire”); the courage of these Spartans—every one of whom ultimately fell in battle, but not before slaying thousands of Persian troops—helped save Greece from being overwhelmed by allowing time for other Greek forces to prepare for their eventual victory at the Battle of Salamis later in the year.



Interior of a Greek kylix (drinking goblet), 5<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.



Battle of Thermopylae, Stanley Meltzoff

Herodotus tells of an epitaph to the 300 Spartans (trans. Michael Dodson, 1951):

Friend, tell the Spartans that on this hill  
 We lie obedient to them still.



Leonidas monument  
 Thermopylae

