When Darius, great King of Persia, ruled the Greeks in Asia Minor, the Athenians helped those Greeks to revolt. They failed, and Darius sent messengers, demanding that the Athenians should send him earth and water, as a sign that they would submit to him on land and sea. The Athenians threw the messengers into a well. -You will find plenty of earth and water there-, they said and prepared for war.

In 490 B.C., Darius attacked. The Athenians sent a runner named Pheidippides to Sparta, the state with the finest soldiers in Greece, to ask for help.

The Spartans said that it would be unlucky to send any troops until after the full moon. Pheippides ran back with the bad news, and arrived in time to take part in one of the most important battles in history. Ten thousand Athenians faced fifty thousand Persians on the plain of Marathon. Suddenly the Athenians attacked. The Persians were thrown back to their ships. Greece was saved. Pheidippides ran at full speed to Athens to tell the good news. -Rejoice, we have conquered-, he gasped, and fell dead from exhaustion.

Ten years later, the Persians attacked again, this time led by King Xerxes. A bridge of boats was constructed across the narrow sea of the Hellespont. A storm broke up the bridge, and Xerxes ordered the sea to be beaten with three hundred lashes as punishment. The men who built the bridge were put to death. The bridge was repaired, and the huge army crossed, taking seven days and nights.
Leonidas, King of Sparta, led an army of Greeks to bar the way at the narrow pass of Thermopylae. For three days the Persians were held at bay, and thousands were killed. Then a Greek traitor led some Persians by a steep mountain path so that they could attack Leonidas in the rear. When Leonidas learned of this, he sent most of the other Greek soldiers back to safety, but stayed himself with three hundred Spartans.

Again the Persians attacked. Fighting desperately, Leonidas retreated to a hillock and there, assaulted from all sides, the Spartans fought until every one was killed. Later a memorial was set up at the place with the simple sentence, -Stranger bear word to the Spartans that we lie here, keeping their charge.

The Persians swept on. Athens was abandoned, and the Persians almost completely destroyed it, but in a great naval battle at Salamis the Persian fleet was utterly defeated.

The huge Persian army offered to make terms with the Athenians, but they replied, -Tell your king that so long as the sun moves in its course the Athenians will never make terms with Xerxes. Instead they again asked the Spartans for help. The Spartans left the shelter of their fortifications, and joined a great Greek army. The Persians were defeated at the battle of Plataea, and only remnants of their mighty hot struggled back to Persia. Greece was free.

Glossary

At bay: acorralado
Bar: bloquear, impedir
Bear: llevar
Conquer: conquistar, vencer
Gasp: jadear
Hillock: altozano
Keep their charge: cumplir sus mandatos
Make terms: hacer un tratado o pacto
Memorial: monumento
Put to death: ser ejecutado
Rear: retaguardia
Safety: lugar seguro
Shelter: refugio
Steep: empinado
Utterly: completamente

Irregular verbs

Beat-beat-beaten
Break-broke-broken
Build-built-built
Hold-held-held
Lead-led-led
Run-ran-run
Say-said-said
Send-sent-sent
Choose the correct answer

1- When King Darius sent messengers to Athenians

a) The Athenians obeyed King Darius  
b) The Athenians revolted against Persians  
c) The Athenians rejected to obey King Darius  
d) The Athenians sent earth and water to Darius

2- In 490 B.C. King Darius invaded Greece

a) Pheidippides ran to Athens after victory in Marathon  
b) Pheidippides led the Athenian army in Marathon  
c) The Persians defeated the Greeks in the battle of Marathon  
d) Ten thousand Greeks were defeated by fifty thousand Persians in Marathon

3- Ten years after Marathon, Persians tried to invade Greece again.

a) The Persians broke up a bridge built by the Greeks in Hellespont  
b) The Persians built a great bridge to cross the narrow sea of Hellespont  
c) A big storm prevented the Persians from constructing a bridge in Hellespont  
d) The Greeks broke up the bridge of Hellespont built by the Persians.

4- The battle of Thermopylae

a) Leonidas betrayed the Greeks  
b) Leonidas stopped the Persians in Thermopylae Pass and saved the Greece  
c) Leonidas died in Thermopylae with his three hundred Spartans  
d) Leonidas moved back with all of the Greek army to safety

5- Persian Wars end

a) The Persians were defeated in the naval battle of Salamis but conquered and destroyed Athens.  
b) The Persians were defeated in the naval battle of Salamis but they conquered in the battle of Plataea.  
c) The Persians conquered in Salamis but they were defeated in the battle of Plataea  
d) The Persians were defeated in Salamis and Plataea and they never entered Athens.