In Ancient Greece there were two different major forms of government, oligarchy and democracy. Oligarchy refers to a small group of people who govern a nation together. Democracy refers to a system of government in which every person has the right to participate. The two city-states that best represent each form of government were Sparta (oligarchy) and Athens (democracy). Athens focused more on culture, while Sparta focused more on war. The oligarchy structure in Sparta enabled it to keep war as a top priority.

**ATHENS**

The Athenian democratic government gave the citizens in Greece more freedom. Ten percent of the total population of Athens had voting rights and all of these citizens were wealthy men who were over thirty years old.

The Assembly, which made the laws, was composed by five hundred wealthy men.

Women had no freedoms at all. Fathers owned their girls and then women became property of their husbands who then gave them the responsibilities of managing the household and educating the children.

Life was sophisticated and graceful in Athens but the Athenians were often mocked by opposing countries for lacking bravery, patriotism and courage. Athens was repeatedly attacked since Athenians didn’t have a war-like reputation. These conflicts eventually led to Athens losing power in Ancient Greece.
SPARTA

In the city-state of Sparta, an oligarchy controlled the power. The citizens had little say in the decisions made by the government but, at the time, this was the structure that existed. The Spartans gave up an emphasis on comfort and culture for a more disciplined military approach. This approach led to battles which eventually turned Sparta into a deadly war machine.

Over the years, the Spartans’ ruthless and brutal reputation in war grew, so that other nations and city-states chose not to attack Sparta, even though the Spartan army was not larger than eight thousand men. The Spartan men in the army started their military training at the age of seven and were trained to be tough. Every man in the army fought with a great deal of passion for his country. Life in Sparta may have been hard but the rest of the Greeks envied the Spartans for their simplicity and fanatical dedication to their country.

Unlike other Greek women, Spartan women had equal rights with men, except for voting rights. Since men were in the military and often away from home, the women had full authority over their households.

In 404 B.C. the Spartan army was able to conquer Athens during the Peloponnesian War. After its victory over Athens, the Spartan government was able to counter many attacks that were launched by its enemies and maintained power for over 40 years.