Men, Women and Children in Ancient Greece
**THE GOVERNMENT OF SPARTA**

The Spartans had two kings who shared power. Below them was a council of 28 nobles. The members of this council all had to be over 60 years old and they decided on the policies of Sparta. An assembly of all males born in Sparta selected the council. The council was run by a small group of men called the **eporate**.

**WOMEN IN CHARGE?**

Women were excluded from taking part in the assemblies in both Athens and Sparta. However, some women had a degree of influence, especially in Sparta where women were allowed to have their own property. Men could only become part of the assembly if both their mothers and fathers were citizens.

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**REAL LIVES**

**ASPASIA: A POWERFUL SPEECHWRITER**

Aspasia, shown here, lived in Athens in about 440 BC. She was one of the most powerful women in Ancient Greece. She lived with a statesman called Perikles and is thought to have written some of his speeches. She was admired by other Greek writers such as Plutarch. He wrote that she “managed as she pleased the foremost men of the state” with her intellect and knowledge.
They used these skills to entertain the rest of the family, particularly during a **symposium**. A symposium was a party during which men feasted, had discussions and recited poetry. Only men could take part.

**EDUCATION IN SPARTA**

The rulers of Sparta wanted to make sure that they always had a strong army to defend the city-state. Every boy was taken from his family at the age of seven and was sent to live in an army barracks. The boys learnt a little reading and writing, but most of their time was spent in physical exercise and learning military drill. Life for these boys was very hard. For instance, they were deliberately kept hungry and were encouraged to steal food. This taught them how to survive during times of war. If they were caught then they were beaten. This was not for taking the food but for being found out. We still use the word ‘spartan’ to describe something that is very simple or strict.

Just like their brothers, all Spartan girls were taken from their families at the age of seven and were trained in different sports. They even trained with the boys. The Spartans wanted girls to become healthy women so they could then have strong sons who would grow up to become good soldiers.