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The Histories

Herodotus · *c. 430 BC* · *G. C. Macaulay, 1890*

Herodotus of Halicarnassos sets down an Inquiry so that the deeds of men may not be forgotten. The nine books, named for the Muses, run from Croesus and the rise of Persia to the invasion of Xerxes and the Greek stand at Thermopylai, Salamis, and Plataia. The hosted text is G. C. Macaulay's 1890 English, Project Gutenberg #2707 and #2456 joined, complete.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

How should a student read an Inquiry that records both the greatness and the ruin of cities, and that will not call a man happy before he has come to his end?

"it is well to hold back and not to call him yet happy but only fortunate."
Solon, to Croesus · Book I, the visit to Croesus

Macaulay's Herodotus is not a novel and not a simple patriotic pageant. Solon will not flatter Croesus. He will not call a man happy before the end. The Inquiry then shows how pride, custom, and the gods' portion work themselves out from Lydia to the Persian Wars. Teach the counsel, and teach the battles, as Herodotus wrote them.

KEY CHARACTERS

Herodotus of Halicarnassos
The inquirer, who sets down Greek and barbarian deeds so that they may not be forgotten

Croesus
The Lydian king who thinks himself happiest, and is taught to look to the end

Solon the Athenian
The lawgiver who will not flatter a king, and will not call a man happy before his end

Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes
The Persian kings whose power the Inquiry follows into Greece

Leonidas
The Lacedemonian king who holds the pass at Thermopylai

Dienekes
The Spartan whose saying about fighting in the shade Herodotus records as a memorial

NOT YET HAPPY, BUT ONLY FORTUNATE

> *"This is the Showing forth of the Inquiry of Herodotus of Halicarnassos"*
> Book I, opening

> *"it is well to hold back and not to call him yet happy but only fortunate."*
> **Solon** · Book I

Grades 9–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01 The Showing Forth of the Inquiry

THE OPENING OF BOOK I (CLIO)

Herodotus names his purpose: that the deeds of men may not be forgotten by lapse of time, nor the great works of Greeks and barbarians alike.

- The hosted opening is Macaulay's: "This is the Showing forth of the Inquiry of Herodotus of Halicarnassos"
- Spellings in this English include Halicarnassos, Lacedemonian, Thermopylai, and Tellos
- The nine books follow the Muse names in this edition
- Quote a continuous stretch and skip the small footnote numbers that sit in the line after "to the end that"

> *"This is the Showing forth of the Inquiry of Herodotus of Halicarnassos"*
> Book I, opening

02 Croesus, and Solon's Counsel

BOOK I

Croesus of Lydia, thinking himself the happiest of men, asks Solon who is happiest. Solon names Tellos the Athenian, and will not call a living man happy, only fortunate.

- Solon, using no flattery but the truth only, answers: "Yes, O king, Tellos the Athenian."
- The counsel is to look to the end: hold back, and do not call a man yet happy but only fortunate
- A retribution, Herodotus says, came upon Croesus, probably because he judged himself to be the happiest of all men
- The rise of Cyrus and the fall of Lydia follow from that pride

> *"it is well to hold back and not to call him yet happy but only fortunate."*
> **Solon** · Book I

03 Egypt, Scythia, and the Rise of Persia

BOOKS II–IV

The Inquiry turns aside into Egypt and the Scythian north, then follows the growth of the Persian power that will come against Greece.

- Book II is the long Egyptian account; teach it as Herodotus's inquiry, not as a modern textbook
- Books III–IV follow Persia under Cambyses and Darius, and the edges of the empire
- Customs, wonders, and wars are set down together; do not flatten the book into a single plot
- The hosted file is the complete Macaulay translation, both Gutenberg volumes joined

04 The Ionian Revolt, and the Coming of Xerxes

BOOKS V–VII

The revolt in Ionia draws Athens and Persia into war. Marathon comes first; then Xerxes leads the great host into Greece.

- Books V–VI carry the Ionian revolt and the first Persian landing
- Book VII brings Xerxes down through Thessaly to the pass at Thermopylai
- Leonidas son of Anaxandrides commands the Lacedemonians at the pass
- Teach the boast and the cost together; this is not a children's prize-story of easy victory

05 The Battle in the Shade

BOOKS VII–IX

At Thermopylai, Dienekes hears that Persian arrows will obscure the sun, and answers that the battle will be in the shade. The Inquiry then carries the war through Salamis and Plataia.

- The Spartan Dienekes is named the best man of all at the pass in this account
- Told that the arrows of the Medes will hide the sun, he is not dismayed: the battle will be in the shade and not in the sun
- The later books carry the sea-fight and the final battles on land
- Macaulay's spellings (Dienekes, Medes, Lacedemonian, Thermopylai) should be kept as printed

> *"if the Medes obscured the light of the sun, the battle against them would be in the shade and not in the sun."*
> **Dienekes the Lacedemonian** · Book VII, chapter 226

Pride and the End · Memory of Deeds · Courage in the Pass · Custom and Inquiry · Empire and Freedom · The Portion of the Gods

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 9–12

1. The hosted text is G. C. Macaulay (1890), PG #2707 and #2456 joined, complete through Book IX. An earlier incomplete file was replaced. Keep Macaulay's spellings: Halicarnassos, Tellos, Dienekes, Lacedemonian, Thermopylai.
2. Solon's counsel is the moral center of Book I: do not call a man happy before he has come to his end. Croesus learns this by ruin, not by flattery.
3. Dienekes does not boast that arrows cannot kill. He makes small account of the number of the Medes, and says the battle will be in the shade. Teach the courage, not a cartoon.
4. Footnote numbers sometimes sit in the line of the opening sentence. Quote a continuous stretch, not "to the end that 1 neither."
5. This is history for older students (9–12), not a novel. Teach Greek and Persian deeds with fairness, as Herodotus set them down together.

Quotations are verbatim from the G. C. Macaulay, 1890, Project Gutenberg #2707 and #2456 (joined), the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/the-histories/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.