**Interwar Source Analysis**

Read each of the sources below and answer the questions that follow:

**Source 1**

**Xerxes’ preparations for another invasion of Greece:**

[19] Xerxes being thus desirous to make the expedition, there came to him after this a third vision in his sleep, which the Magians, when they heard it, explained to have reference to the dominion of the whole Earth and to mean that all men should be subject to him; and the vision was this: Xerxes thought that he had been crowned with a wreath of an olive-branch and that the shoots growing from the olive- tree covered the whole Earth; and after that, the wreath, placed as it was about his head, disappeared. When the Magians had thus interpreted the vision, forthwith every man of the Persians who had been assembled together departed to his own province and was zealous by all means to perform the commands, desiring each one to receive for himself the gifts which had been proposed: and thus Xerxes was gathering his army together, searching every region of the continent.

[20] …in the course of the fifth year he began his campaign with a host of great multitude. For of all the armies of which we have knowledge this proved to be by far the greatest; so that neither that led by Dareios against the Scythians appears anything as compared with it... For what nation did Xerxes not lead out of Asia against Hellas? and what water was not exhausted, being drunk by his host, except only the great rivers? For some supplied ships, and others were appointed to serve in the land- army; to some it was appointed to furnish cavalry, and to others vessels to carry horses, while they served in the expedition themselves also; others were ordered to furnish ships of war for the bridges, and others again ships with provisions.

Herodotus. *Histories*. VII.19-20.

1. What did the Magians do to inspire Xerxes’ attempted invasion of Greece?
2. How did different nations help support Xerxes’ plans?
3. From what [perspective](http://www.historyskills.com/source-criticism/analysis/perspective/) is Herodotus writing?
4. Based upon how you answered the previous question, how [accurate](http://www.historyskills.com/source-criticism/evaluation/accuracy/) would Herodotus be regarding the events of the Persian empire at this time?

**Source 2**

**Xerxes’ major engineering works in preparation for the invasion:**

[22] Then in the first place, since the former fleet had suffered disaster in sailing round Athos, preparations had been going on for about three years past with regard to Athos… men of all nations belonging to the army worked at digging, compelled by the lash; and the men went to the work regularly in succession... Now Athos is a mountain great and famous, running down to the sea and inhabited by men: and where the mountain ends on the side of the mainland the place is like a peninsula with an isthmus about twelve furlongs across…

[24] It seems to me, making conjecture of this work, that Xerxes when he ordered this to be dug was moved by a love of magnificence and by a desire to make a display of his power and to leave a memorial behind him; for though they might have drawn the ships across the isthmus with no great labour, he bade them dig a channel for the sea of such breadth that two triremes might sail through, propelled side by side…

[33] After this he made his preparations intending to march to Abydos: and meanwhile they were bridging over the Hellespont from Asia to Europe…

[34] As a result, the people began constructing bridges, starting from Abydos, the Phenicians constructing the one with ropes of white flax, and the Egyptians the other, which was made with papyrus rope. Now from Abydos to the opposite shore is a distance of seven furlongs. But when the strait had been bridged over, a great storm came on and dashed together all the work that had been made and broke it up. Then when Xerxes heard it he was exceedingly enraged, and ordered them whip the Hellespont with three hundred lashes and let down into the sea a pair of iron shackles… Xerxes ordered them, as they were beating, to say barbarian and presumptuous words as follows: "Thou bitter water, thy master lays upon thee this penalty, because thou didst wrong him not having suffered any wrong from him: and Xerxes the king will pass over thee whether thou be willing or no; but with right, as it seems, no man doeth sacrifice to thee, seeing that thou art a treacherous and briny stream." The sea he enjoined them to chastise thus, and also he bade them cut off the heads of those who were appointed to have charge over the bridging of the Hellespont.

Herodotus. *Histories*. VII.22-4, 33-4.

1. What did Xerxes order constructed to avoid another naval disaster at Mount Athos?
2. What did Xerxes have constructed in order to march his men over the Hellespont?
3. What appears to be Herodotus’ opinion of Xerxes’ character? Provide two [direct quotes](http://www.historyskills.com/quoting/direct-quotes/) to support your answer:

**Source 3**

**Athenian preparations for the invasion:**

[138] Now the march of [Xerxes] army was in name against Athens, but in fact it was going against all of Greece: and the Greeks being informed of this long before were not all equally affected by it; for some of them having given earth and water to the Persian had confidence, supposing that they would suffer no hurt from the Barbarian; while others not having given were in great terror, seeing that there were not ships existing in Greece which were capable as regards number of receiving the invader in fight, and seeing that the greater part of the States were not willing to take up the war, but adopted readily the side of the Medes…

[140] The Athenians had sent men to Delphi to inquire and were preparing to consult the Oracle; and after these had performed the usual rites in the sacred precincts, when they had entered the sanctuary and were sitting down there, the Pythian prophetess, whose name was Aristonike, uttered to them this oracle:

*"Why do ye sit, O ye wretched? Flee thou to the uttermost limits,*

*Leaving thy home and the heights of the wheel-round city behind thee!*

*Lo, there remaineth now nor the head nor the body in safety,*

*Neither the feet below nor the hands nor the middle are left thee,*

*All are destroyed together; for fire and the passionate War-god,*

*Urging the Syrian car to speed, doth hurl them to ruin.*

*Not thine alone, he shall cause many more great strongholds to perish,*

*Yes, many temples of gods to the ravening fire shall deliver,*

*Temples which stand now surely with sweat of their terror down-streaming,*

*Quaking with dread; and lo! from the topmost roof to the pavement*

*Dark blood trickles, forecasting the dire unavoidable evil.*

*Forth with you, forth from the shrine, and steep your soul in the sorrow!*

[141] Hearing this the men who had been sent by the Athenians to consult the Oracle were very greatly distressed; and as they were despairing by reason of the evil which had been prophesied to them, Timon the son of Androbulos, a man of the Delphians in reputation equal to the first, counselled them to take a suppliant's bough and to approach the second time and consult the Oracle as suppliants. The Athenians did as he advised and said: "Lord, we pray thee utter to us some better oracle about our native land, having respect to these suppliant boughs which we have come to thee bearing; otherwise surely we will not depart away from the sanctuary, but will remain here where we are now, even until we bring our lives to an end." When they spoke these words, the prophetess gave them a second oracle as follows:

*"Pallas cannot prevail to appease great Zeus in Olympos,*

*Though she with words very many and wiles close-woven entreat him.*

*But I will tell thee this more, and will clench it with steel adamantine:*

*Then when all else shall be taken, whatever the boundary of Kecrops*

*Holdeth within, and the dark ravines of divinest Kithairon,*

*A bulwark of wood at the last Zeus grants to the Trito-born goddess*

*Sole to remain unwasted, which thee and thy children shall profit.*

*Stay thou not there for the horsemen to come and the footmen unnumbered;*

*Stay thou not still for the host from the mainland to come, but retire thee,*

*Turning thy back to the foe, for yet thou shalt face him hereafter.*

*Salamis, thou the divine, thou shalt cause sons of women to perish,*

*Or when the grain is scattered or when it is gathered together."*

[142] This seemed to them to be (as in truth it was) a milder utterance than the former one; therefore they had it written down and departed with it to Athens: and when the messengers after their return made report to the people, many various opinions were expressed by persons inquiring into the meaning of the oracle, and among them these, standing most in opposition to one another:--some of the elder men said they thought that the god had prophesied to them that the Acropolis should survive; for the Acropolis of the Athenians was in old time fenced with a thorn hedge; and they conjectured accordingly that this saying about the "bulwark of wood" referred to the fence: others on the contrary said that the god meant by this their ships, and they advised to leave all else and get ready these. Now they who said that the ships were the bulwark of wood were shaken in their interpretation by the two last verses which the prophetess uttered:

*"Salamis, thou the divine, thou shalt cause sons of women to perish, Or when the grain is scattered or when it is gathered together."*

In reference to these verses the opinions of those who said that the ships were the bulwark of wood were disturbed; for the interpreters of oracles took these to mean that it was fated for them, having got ready for a sea-fight, to suffer defeat round about Salamis.

Herodotus. *Histories*. VII.138-42.

1. What was said in the first response from the Oracle that displeased the Athenians?
2. What did the Athenians specifically ask for after they received the first response?
3. What do you notice about the format of the two responses from the Oracle?
4. What were some of the competing interpretations of the Oracle’s second response?
5. Based upon the fact that Herodotus spent significant time in Athens, how reliable would this account be? Explain how you reached your answer:

**Source 4**

**Themistocles’ proposal:**

[143] Now there was one man of the Athenians who had lately been coming forward to take a place among the first, whose name was Themistocles, called son of Neocles. This man said that the interpreters of oracles did not make right conjecture of the whole, and he spoke as follows, saying that if these words that had been uttered referred really to the Athenians, he did not think it would have been so mildly expressed in the oracle, but rather thus, "Salamis, thou the merciless," instead of "Salamis, thou the divine," at least if its settlers were destined to perish round about it: but in truth the oracle had been spoken by the god with reference to the enemy, if one understood it rightly, and not to the Athenians: therefore he counselled them to get ready to fight a battle by sea, for in this was their bulwark of wood. When Themistocles declared his opinion thus, the Athenians judged that this was to be preferred by them rather than the advice of the interpreters of oracles, who bade them not make ready for a sea-fight, nor in short

raise their hands at all in opposition, but leave the land of Attica and settle in some other.

[144] Another opinion too of Themistocles before this one proved the best at the right moment, when the Athenians, having got large sums of money in the public treasury, which had come in to them from the mines which are at Laureion, were intending to share it among themselves, taking each in turn the sum of ten drachmas. Then Themistocles persuaded the Athenians to give up this plan of division and to make for themselves with this money two hundred ships for the war, meaning by that the war with the Eginetans: for this war having arisen proved in fact the salvation of Hellas at that time, by compelling the Athenians to become a naval power. And the ships, not having been used for the purpose for which they had been made, thus proved of service at need to Hellas. These ships then, I say, the Athenians had already, having built them beforehand, and it was necessary in addition to these to construct others. They resolved then, when they took counsel after the oracle was given, to receive the Barbarian invading Hellas with their ships in full force, following the commands of the god, in combination with those of the Hellenes who were willing to join them.

Herodotus. *Histories*. VII.143-4.

1. How did Themistocles interpret the Oracle’s response?
2. What did Themistocles do before this event that made Herodotus believe he was a wise leader?