



The Battle of Arginusae: Victory at Sea and Its Tragic Aftermath in the Final Years of the Peloponnesian War (Witness to Ancient History)

By Debra Hamel

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A pivotal skirmish involving nearly three hundred Athenian and Spartan ships toward the end of the Peloponnesian War, the Battle of Arginusae was at the time the largest naval battle ever fought between warring Greeks. It was a crucial win for the Athenians, since losing the battle would have led to their total defeat by Sparta and, perhaps, the slaughter and enslavement of their entire population. Paradoxically, the win at Arginusae resulted in one of the worst disasters to befall the Athenians during the brutal twenty-seven-year war.

Due to a combination of factors?incompetent leadership, the weariness of the sailors, a sudden storm?the commanders on the scene failed to rescue the crews of twenty-five Athenian ships that had been disabled during the battle. Thousands of men, many of them injured, were left clinging to the wreckage of their ships awaiting help that never came. When the Athenians back home heard what had happened, they deposed the eight generals who had been in command during the battle. Two of these leaders went into exile; the six who returned to Athens were tried and eventually executed.

The Battle of Arginusae describes the violent battle and its horrible aftermath. Debra Hamel introduces readers to Athens and Sparta, the two thriving superpowers of the fifth century B.C. She provides a summary of the events that caused the long war and discusses the tactical intricacies of Greek naval warfare. Recreating the claustrophobic, unhygienic conditions in which the ships' crews operated, Hamel unfolds the process that turned this naval victory into one of the most infamous chapters in the city-state's history. Aimed at classics students and general readers, the book also provides an in-depth examination of the fraught relationship between Athens' military commanders and its vaunted sovereign democracy.

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Editorial Review

Review

A captivating account of the battle of Arginusae and its fateful consequences for the Athenians in their great struggle with Sparta. Hamel is well-versed in Greek (and Athenian) history of the classical era and is an authority on the Athenian *strategia*, the board of generals who commanded armies and fleets. *The Battle of Arginusae* is a gripping read.

(Lawrence A. Tritle, Loyola Marymount University, author of *A New History of the Peloponnesian War*)

Hamel combines hip writing for the general reader with a scholar's ability to size up the sources of our knowledge of the past.

(Tim Morris *Lecton*)

About the Author

Debra Hamel is the author of *Trying Neaira: The True Story of a Courtesan's Scandalous Life in Ancient Greece* and *Reading Herodotus: A Guided Tour through the Wild Boars, Dancing Suitors, and Crazy Tyrants of The History*.

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