

The Funeral Oration of Pericles from History of the Peloponnesian War
by Thucydides(431 BCE)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/7142/7142-h/7142-h.htm>



In the same winter the Athenians gave a funeral at the public cost to those who had first fallen in this war. It was a custom of their ancestors, and the manner of it is as follows. Three days before the public

men in war are always buried;
and extraordinary valour
when laid in the earth, a man
pronounces over them an
oration at the burying; and throughout
the custom was observed.

Xanthippus, was chosen to
be raised from the sepulchre to an
elevation as possible, and spoke as follows:

He made this speech part of the
oration of those who fall in battle.
He said that his own life and
deeds would be
set forth in this funeral
oration of many brave men
who had died or fall according as he
thought. He said that
where it is even difficult to
understand, the friend who is familiar
with the man set forth with that fullness
that a stranger to the matter may be
of his own nature. For men can

vigour of life; while the mother country has been furnished by us with everything that can enable her to depend on her own resources whether for war or for peace. That part of our history which tells of the military achievements which gave us our severest ~~experiences~~, or of the ready valour with which either we or our fathers stemmed the tide of Hellenic or foreign aggression, is a theme too familiar to my hearers for me to dilate on, and I shall therefore pass it by. But what was the road by which we reached ~~our~~ our position, what the form of government under which our greatness grew, what the national habits out of which it sprang; these are questions which I may try to solve before I proceed to my panegyric upon these men; since I think this to be a subject upon which on the present occasion a speaker may properly dwell, and to which the whole assemblage, whether citizens or foreigners, may listen with advantage.

“Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighbouring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favours the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford ~~equal~~ justice to all in their private

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nature, we are still willing to encounter danger, we have the double advantage of escaping the experience of hardships in anticipation and of facing them in the hour of need as fearlessly as those who are never free from them.

“Nor are these the only points in which our city is worthy of admiration. We cultivate refinement without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy; wealth we employ more for use than for show, and place the real disgrace of poverty not in owning to the fact but in declining the struggle against it. Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters; for, unlike any other nation, regarding him who takes no part in these duties not as unambitious but as useless, we Athenians are able to judge at all events if we cannot originate, and, instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling block in the way of action, we think an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all. Again, in our enterprises we present the singular spectacle of daring and deliberation, each carried to its highest point, and both united in the same persons; although usually decision is the offspring of ignorance, hesitation of reflection. But the palm of courage will surely be adjudged most justly to those, who best know the difference between hardship and pleasure and yet are never tempted to shrink from danger. In generosity we are equally singular; acquiring our friends by conferring, not by receiving, favours. Yet, of course, the doer of the favour is the firmer friend of the two, in order by continued kindness to

an age to beget children must bear up in the hope of having others in their stead; not only will they help you to forget those whom you have lost, but will be to the state at once a reinforcement

The Plague of Athens from History of the Peloponnesian War
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Such was the funeral that took place during this winter, with which the first

cases, on the seventh or eighth day to the internal inflammation, they had still some strength in them. But if they passed this stage, and the disease descended further into the bowels, inducing a violent ulceration there accompanied by severe diarrhoea, it brought on a weakness which was generally fatal. For the disorder first settled in the head, ran its course from thence through the whole of the body, and, even where it did not prove mortal, it still left its mark on the extremities; for it settled in the privy parts, the fingers and the toes, and many escaped with the

became utterly careless of everything, whether sacred or profane. All the burial rites before in use were entirely upset, and they buried the bodies as best they could. Many from want of the

The Next Speech of Pericles from History of the Peloponnesian War
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After the second invasion of the Peloponnesians a change came over the spirit of the Athenians. Their land had now been twice laid waste; and war and pestilence at once pressed heavy upon them. They began to find fault with Pericles, as the author of ~~the~~ and the cause of all their misfortunes, and became eager to come to terms with Lacedaemon, and actually sent ambassadors thither, who did not however succeed in their mission. Their despair was now complete and all vented itself upon Pericles. When ~~the~~ them exasperated at the present turn of affairs and acting exactly as he had anticipated, he called an assembly, being (it must be remembered) still general, with the double object of restoring confidence and of leading them from these angry feelings to

and brought up, as you have been, with habits equal to your birth, you should be ready to face the greatest disasters and still to keep unimpaired the lustre of your name. For the judgment of mankind is as relentless to the weakness that falls short of glorified renown, as it is jealous of the arrogance that aspires higher than its due. Cease then to grieve for your private afflictions, and address yourselves instead to the safety of the commonwealth.

“If you shrink before the exertions which the war makes necessary, and fear that after all they

"But you must not be seduced by citizens like these or angry with me, if I voted for war, only did as you did yourselves in spite of the enemy having invaded your country and done what you could be certain that he would do, if you refused to comply with his demands; and although besides what we counted for, the plague has come upon us, the only point indeed at which our calculation has been at fault. It is this, I know, that has had a large share in making me more unpopular than I should otherwise have been—quite undeservedly, unless you are also prepared to give me the credit of any success with which chance may present you. Besides, the hand of heaven must be borne with resignation, that of the enemy with fortitude; this was the old way at Athens, and do not you prevent it being so still. Remember, too, that if your country has

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*.+ , e e e cts of the plague: Giovanni Boccaccio, !
Decameron(+./*&+.0+). Original in Italian.



Giovanni Boccaccio (+.+&+.10) was the illegitimate son of a wealthy Florentine merchant who, like Francesco Pegolotti (see above, 22), worked for the Bardi bank. Boccaccio spent a formative thirteen years at the court of Naples, apprenticing for his father, studying the liberal arts, learning canon law, and meeting aristocrats of the Neapolitan ruling house, the Angevins. He gravitated to poetry and literature, was influenced by the poet Petrarch, and in the 1340s began composing his first major works. In 1348, back in Florence after much travel, he witnessed the effects of the Black Death and wrote Decameron as a sort of tribute both to the horror of the experience and to the ability of the Florentines to wrest delight, wit, and humor out of tragedy. The book purports to relate the one hundred tales told by seven young women and three young men during a ten-day retreat from Florence to escape the plague. The excerpt here begins on the very first day and, in explaining the reasons for the retreat, reveals the physical, social, and emotional effects of the Black Death.

- +. What were the plague's effects on Florentine burial customs according to Boccaccio?
7. Given that Boccaccio was critical of Florentine reactions to the plague, what would he have had the Florentines do instead?

[Source: The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio, trans. Richard Aldington (New York: Dell, 1924), pp. 148-8 (notes added.)]

! e First Day

Here begins the first day of the Decameron,
 wherein, after the author has showed the
 reasons why certain persons gathered to tell
 tales, they treat of any subject pleasing to them,
 under the rule of Pampinea.

Most gracious ladies, knowing that you are all by nature
 pitiful, I know that in your judgment this work will seem
 to have a painful and sad origin. For it brings to mind
 the unhappy recollection of that late dreadful plague, so
 pernicious to all who saw or heard of it. But I would not
 have this frighten you from reading further, as though
 you were to pass through nothing but sighs and tears in
 your reading, is dreary opening will be like climbing
 a steep mountainside to a most beautiful and delightful
 valley, which appears the more pleasant in proportion to
 the difficulty of the ascent. The end of happiness is pain,
 and in like manner misery ends in unexpected happiness.

This brief fatigue (I say brief, because it occupies
 only a few words) is quickly followed by pleasantness
 and delight, as I promised you above; which, if I had not
 promised, you would not expect perhaps from this open-
 ing. Indeed, if I could have taken you by any other way
 than this, which I know to be rough, I would gladly have
 done so; but since I cannot otherwise tell you how the
 tales you are about to read came to be told, I am forced
 by necessity to write in this manner.

In the year, after the fruitful incarnation of the
 Son of God, that most beautiful of Italian cities, noble
 Florence, was attacked by deadly plague. It started in the
 East either through the influence of the heavenly bodies
 or because God's just anger with our wicked deeds sent
 it as a punishment to mortal men; and in a few years
 killed an innumerable quantity of people. Ceaselessly

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they both fell dead almost at once on the rags, as if they had been poisoned.

From these and similar or greater occurrences, such fear and fanciful notions took possession of the living that almost all of them adopted the same cruel policy, which was entirely to avoid the sick and everything belonging to them. By doing so, each one thought he would secure his own safety.

Some thought that moderate living and the avoidance of all superfluity would preserve them from the epidemic. They formed small communities, living entirely separate from everybody else. They shut themselves up in houses where there were no sick, eating the finest food and drinking the best wine very temperately, avoiding all excess, allowing no news or discussion of death and sickness, and passing the time in music and suchlike pleasures. Others thought just the opposite. They thought the sure cure for the plague was to drink and be merry, to go about singing and amusing themselves, satisfying every appetite they could, laughing and jesting at what happened. They put their words into practice, spent day and night going from tavern to tavern, drinking immoderately, or went into other people's houses, doing only those things which pleased them. This they could easily do because everyone felt doomed and had abandoned his

Hippocrates and Esculapius themselves would have said and friends, and at night supped with their ancestors in were in perfect health, at noon dined with their relatives the next world!

*.7 Warding off the plague through processions: Ibn Battuta, Travels (before 1384). Original in Arabic.



Pilgrim and adventurer Ibn Battuta (1304-1384) left his home in Tangiers (today Morocco) in 1325 and had covered most of the Arab world by the end of his travels. He later dictated his observations about culture, geography, and customs. Interspersed with his descriptions were personal experiences, which he called *ʿAnecdotes*. He recounted here recalled his trip to Damascus in July 1327, when he witnessed fasts, prayers, and processions meant to ward off the plague.

- +. What does this source incidentally tell us about everyday life in Damascus?
- 7. Who joined the processions at Damascus?

[Source: The Travels of Ibn Battuta, trans. Hamilton A.R. Gibb, vol. 1 (Cambridge:

their way to the Mosque of the Footprints and remained there in supplication and invocation until near midday, and then returned to the city and held the Friday service to God Most High lightened their; the number of

*.. Warding off the plague through prayer: Archbishop William, Letter to His Official at York (July 1349). Original in Latin.



During the same month as the Damascus processions, the English archbishop of York William de la Zouche (1307-1360) wrote from his residence at Cawood, a few miles southwest of York, to arrange for special processions, prayers, and masses to be held in his diocese to ward off the plague, which had already hit France.

1. What commonalities and what differences were there in York's and Damascus's responses to the plague?
2. What explanation for the plague does William give?

[Source: *The Black Death*, ed. and trans. Rosemary Horrox (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 117-118.]

Since the life of man on earth is a war, no wonder if those fighting amidst the miseries of this world are unsettled by the mutability of events: now favorable, now contrary. For Almighty God sometimes allows those he loves to be troubled while their strength is perfected in weakness by the aid of his grace.

them, or perform other offices of pious devotion. And



Excerpt from Bartolomé de Las Casas, *History of the Indies* (1561)

Bartolomé de Las Casas was acutely aware of the dimensions of the tragedy. Las Casas began his tenure in the New World as part of the problem, participating in the conquest of Cuba. As one of the colonizers, he was granted an *encomienda* by the Spanish governor of the island. In theory, the *encomienda* system gave individual Spaniards jurisdiction over a group of Indians who were to supply the colonists with tribute and labor. In return, the *encomendero*, or the Spaniard receiving an *encomienda*, assumed responsibility for protecting the Indians, supporting a parish priest, and defending the colony. In practice, the *encomienda* became a brutal form of slavery, as *encomenderos* forced native peoples to work in mines to enrich the Spaniards. Las Casas repented his ways, and in 1514 he gave up his *encomienda* to become a Dominican friar. In his *History of the Indies*, he raised an angry voice against the *encomienda*, which he thought destroyed the humanity of the Indians and often destroyed their lives as well. In so doing, he joined a group of reformist clergy who valorized the native peoples and demonized the Spaniards and their imperialist enterprises. Las Casas stipulated that his manuscript was not to be made public until forty years after his death (he died in 1566). It is known, however, that his *History of the Indies* circulated in Spain beforehand. While analyzing the excerpt below from *History*, be sure to keep in mind the friar's perspective.

The Indians of each region [of Hispanola] were allotted to the Spanish residents; and every Spaniard, according to the degree of his thirst for gold and the laxness of his conscience, not considering that Indians were people of flesh and blood, heaped them

7,000 in three months, as someone who investigated the situation informed King Ferdinand [the Spanish monarch]. Once too, 300 Indians allotted to an official of the King were reduced by nine tenths in three months because they were driven relentlessly.

Greed increased everyday and every day Indians perished in greater numbers and the clergyman Bartolomé de las Casas, whom we mentioned earlier, went about his concerns like the others, sending his share of Indians to work fields and gold mines, taking ~~take~~ ^{care} of them as much as he could. [Las Casas referred to himself in the third person whenever he meant to speak of his life before becoming a friar.] He always tried to maintain them well, treat them mildly and pity their misery but, like everyone else, he neglected the fact that they were infidels in need of indoctrination into the Christian fold.

As I said, he began to consider the suffering and servitude of these people and he remembered having heard that the Dominican friars of Santo Domingo could not own Indians with a clear conscience and would neither confess nor absolve Indian owners, which the said clergyman disapproved. [Las Casas goes on to describe how he renounced his ownership of Indians and how he conveyed his decision to the Cuban governor.]

Excerpt from Fray Toribio de Benavente's The Ten Plagues (1541)

Fray Toribio de Benavente, better known by his Indian name, Motolinía, was one of a group of

Eleven years later there came a Spaniard who had measles, and from him the disease was communicated to the Indians; if great care had not been taken to prevent their bathing, and to use other remedies, this would have been as terrible a plague and pestilence as the former. Even with all these precautions many died. They called this the year of the 'little leprosy.'

The second plague was the great number of those who died in the conquest of New Spain, especially around Mexico. For you must know that when Hernando Cortés landed on the coast of this country, with the energy which he always showed, he scuttled his ships to rouse the courage of his men, and plunged into the interior. After marching forty leagues he entered the land of Tlaxcallan, one of the largest provinces of the country and most thickly populated. Entering the inhabited part of it, he established himself some temples of the devil in a little town called Tecocautzinco (the Spaniards called it Torrecilla, 'the little tower,' because it is on a height) and while there he fought for two weeks with the Indians roundabout. They are called Otomíes and are people of low condition, like peasants. A great number of them came together, for the country is thickly populated. The Indians who live farther in the interior speak the languages of Mexico.

As the Spaniards were fighting valiantly with these Otomíes, the news reached Tlaxcallan; whereupon the lords and principal men came out, formed a great friendship with the Spaniards, took them to Tlaxcallan, gave them presents and supplies in abundance and showed them great affection. Not content to remain in Tlaxcallan, after resting for a few days they took the road to

The seventh plague was the building of the great city of Mexico, which, in the first years, employed more people than the building of the of Jerusalem. So many were the people engaged in the work that could scarcely make his way along some streets and highways, broad as they are. In the construction some were crushed by beams, others fell from heights, others were caught beneath buildings which were being torn down in one place to be built up again in another; especially did this illicit when they tore down the principal temples of the devil. Many Indians died there, and it

Excerpt from Fray Diego Durán, Aztecs: The History of the Indies of New Spain (

Below is an excerpt from a history of New Spain written by Father Diego Durán, a Dominican missionary sent to Mexico to convert the Indians after the fall of Tenochtitlán. He was one of the colonial scholars who, in the sixteenth century, learned the language and investigated and recorded the history and culture of the native peoples. Durán's work was based on Aztec picture writings and a chronicle by an Indian noble (written in Nahuatl, the native language). These scholars—Motolinía was another, as was Fray Bernardino de Sahagún—made impressive contributions that are still used by historians to understand Aztec life before and after the conquest. In this excerpt, Durán describes the fall of Tenochtitlán, how the Spaniards rebuilt the city, and the treatment of the native people at the hands of the Spanish conquerors.

When Cortés saw the great number of people covering the flat roofs and filling the streets of the city, he was amazed and became afraid that he would not be able to conquer without bringing much harm to his Spaniards and friends. But he urged the Chalaca, Texcocans, Tlaxcalas, n(t)-2 (h

not rise from his seat, he spoke soft and consoling words in Cuauhtemoc and made him sit next to him.

The entire city then surrendered to Cortés, and when he took possession of it, he went to live in the principal palace of Monteczoma which now belongs to the heir of the Spanish captain. He put guards about the city and gave liberty to Cuauhtemoc to go whomever he wished, telling him to ask for whatever he might desire. Cuauhtemoc asked him to free the men, women and children whom the Spaniards had captured, many of whom had fled from the famine. Cortés then gave orders that, under pain of death, all the Spaniards liberate those who were being held captive. So it was done and all the refugees, men and women, returned to the city and resettled in it. But the dead on that day were over forty thousand men and women who, rather than fall into the hands of the Spaniards, threw themselves and their children into the canals. The stench of the corpses was so great that even though bodies were carried out of the city continually, many were left and the evil spell was unbearable for a long time...

The valorous Cortés conquered Mexico on the feast of Saint Hippolytus, three days before the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin, Our Lady. It is said that the latter appeared during the conquest in order to aid the Spaniards. It is also told that the Patron of Spain, Saint James, appeared just as his image appeared in the church of Tlatelolco. The Indians claim that they saw him in the greatest of the battles when the Spaniards were losing and their banners had been taken from them and torn, to their great shame. At that moment the glorious Saint James appeared, frightening away the Indians and favoring the Spaniards through divine permission. Once Mexico had been taken in the name of His Majesty, Cortés ordered that the pyramid be demolished, the idols broken, the city razed and the canals filled in. He divided the land into lots, having ordered the people of Chalco, Texcoco, Xochimilco, and Tacuba to bring stakes, stone, earth and other materials to fill in the lagoons and pools that existed. He also built houses and laid out the streets to the best of his knowledge. He considered it safer to found a city where Mexico had been — within the lake instead of outside of it — as the strength of the country was concentrated in the capital and all the inhabitants were ruled from there. He was afraid that if the site of the city were to be changed there might be a rebellion...

After the city had been leveled, after the Spaniards had begun to build their homes in it, the most Christian Don Hernando, Marqués del Valle, saw to it that the natives were instructed in the things of the Faith. He pointed out the site where the church was to be built, he set up crosses and images and ordered that the Indians be taught the doctrines of our Holy Catholic Faith. All of this had been started by a cleric whom Cortés brought with him, though it is my opinion that this man should have been suspended or excommunicated since I have heard that he was more eager to wash his hands in the blood of innocents than Pilate to wash his hands on the death of Christ.

But let us forget my moralizing. In order to convert the natives, a ship was sent to Spain to inform his Catholic Majesty, the Emperor Charles V, then king of Spain, that this land had been conquered in his most serene name. I have heard a trustworthy report, however, that some advised Cortés not to send any messages to Spain, but to crown himself king of the New World. These persons promised to pay allegiance to him and obey him, but like a true vassal of His Majesty he refused to commit such an act against his oath of obedience.

Cortés also asked that the friars be sent to administer the sacraments, and the latter were chosen carefully and dispatched to Mexico. So it was that the twelve friars of the order of the glorious Saint Francis arrived in this land three years after the quest. The twelve gained many converts because of their religious and holy lives, like the original apostles who they imitated in everything. They preached and baptized in all the provinces with apostolic zeal, filled with spirit and divine fervor. Each barefooted friar went off on foot to a different region and each was such a perfect example of virtue that in this way they attracted the natives. The latter were much moved by the words, labors, and abnegation which the friars chose.

Two years after these holy monks had come, men from the order of Our Glorious Father Saint Dominic also arrived, and they were no less holy or zealous in promoting the honor of God and gaining souls. These friars came from the Island of Santo Domingo, which is also called Hispaniola. They took charge of the work of conversion and obtained privileges and exemptions
iards, by

still others died in different ways. Some Spaniards who attempted to kill Cortés and steal his ship were also hanged.

Excerpt from Bernardino de Sahagún, The Florentine Codex (16

responsibilities were then divided; there, there was a division. Pedro de Alvarado's [a lieutenant of Cortés] responsibility became the road coming to Tlatilulco. And the Marquis [Cortés] went to settle himself in Coyoacan, and it became the Marquis's responsibility, as well as the road coming from Acachinanco to Tenochtitlan. The Marquis knew that the man of Tenochtitlan was a great warrior.

And in Nextlatilco, or Ilyacac, there indeed war first began. There [the Spaniards] quickly came to reach Nonoalco. The brave warriors came following after them. None of the Mexicans died. Then the Spaniards turned their backs. The brave warriors ~~waged war~~; the shield-bearers shot arrows at them. Their arrows rained upon the Spaniards. They entered [Nonoalco]. And the Marquis thereupon threw [the Spaniards] toward those of Tenochtitlan; he followed along the Acachinanco road. Many times he fought, and the Mexicans contended against him.

Excerpt from Bernal Díaz del Castillo, The True History of the Conquest of Mexico (c. 1560s)

Bernal Díaz del Castillo was a young member of Cortés's army who had come to Cuba, like Cortés, to seek his fortune. He joined Cortés in the expedition to Tenochtitlán. He wrote The True History of the Conquest of Mexico in the 1560s as a corrective to a very flattering biography of Cortés published in the preceding decade. This chronicle represents the perspective of a foot soldier; perhaps Bernal Díaz intended to valorize the men who explored and fought alongside Cortés. Although written earlier, The True History was not published until 1632 (decades after the death of the author).

Now as all the towns in the neighbourhood of Tepeaca were at peace, Cortés settled that one Francisco de Orozco should stay in our town of Segura de la Frontera as captain, with a batch of twenty soldiers who were wounded or ill, and that all the rest of our army should go to Tlaxcala [the Tlaxcalans had allied with the Spaniards to defeat the Aztecs in Tenochtitlán].

When we arrived at Tlaxcala our great friend Mase Escasi had died of smallpox. We all grieved over his death very much and Cortés said he felt it as though it were the death of his own father, and he put on mourning of black cloth, and so did many of our captains and soldiers. Cortés and all of us paid much honour to their children and relations of Mase Escasi. As there were disputes in Tlaxcala about the Caciquiship and command, Cortés ordered and decreed that it should go to a legitimate son of Mase Escasi, for so his father had ordered before he died, and he had also said to his sons and relations, that they should take care always to obey the commands of Malinche [the interpreter who accompanied Cortés] and his brethren, for we were certainly those who were destined to govern the country, and he gave them other good advice.

Xicotenga the elder and Chichimecatecle and nearly all the other caciques of Tlaxcala offered their services to Cortés, both in the matter of cutting wood for the launches [to be used in the siege of

Sandoval soon returned with all his army to Texcoco and took in his company the sons of the Lord of Chalco and the other chieftains, and the eight Mexican prisoners and Cortés was overjoyed at his arrival. The Caciques presented themselves at once before him, and, after having paid him every sign of respect, they told him of the willingness with which they would become vassals of His Majesty, as their father had commanded them to do, and begged that they might receive the chieftainship from his hands. Wh

Excerpts describing the 1576 Cocoliztli Epidemic

Smallpox was not the only epidemic to strike the New World after the arrival of the Spaniards. Cocoliztli is the Nahuatl word for pestilence and both word and concept appeared in the native language only after the arrival of the Spaniards. Cocoliztli probably describes a form of hemorrhagic fever that was new to central Mexico after the conquest, though the exact diagnosis remains unknown.

[Fray Juan de Torquemada's account below of the situation in Mexico City in 1576]

In the year 1576 a great mortality and pestilence that lasted for more than a year overcame the Indians. It was so big that it ruined and destroyed almost the entire land. The place we know as New Spain was left almost empty. It was a thing of great bewilderment to see the people die. Many were dead and others almost dead. 22 0-2 ()1(.)2 (l)158,2 (he)4 (nobody h4 (pd ot)-2pe)4 (opl)-2 h. lui