



# **Spartan Women**

*Sarah B. Pomeroy*

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Sparta, which existed from 800 B.C. until A.D. 200, was renowned in the ancient world as a stoic and martial city-state, and most of what we know about Sparta concerns its military history and male-dominated social structure. Yet Spartan women were in many ways among the most liberated of the ancient world, receiving formal instruction in poetry, music, dance, and physical education. And the most famous of mythic Greek women, Helen of Troy, was originally a Spartan. Written by one of the leading authorities on women in antiquity, *Spartan Women* seeks to reconstruct the lives and the world of Sparta's women, including how their legal status changed over time and how they held on to their surprising autonomy.

In this book, Sarah Pomeroy covers over a thousand years in the lives of Sparta's women from both the elite and lower classes. This is the first book-length examination of Spartan women, and Pomeroy comprehensively analyzes ancient texts and archaeological evidence to construct the history of these elusive though much noticed women. *Spartan Women* is an authoritative and fresh account that will appeal to all readers interested in ancient history and women's studies."

## **Spartan Women Details**

Date : Published July 11th 2002 by Oxford University Press, USA (first published January 1st 2002)

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Author : Sarah B. Pomeroy

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# From Reader Review Spartan Women for online ebook

## Pilar Erika says

A well documented, interesting and useful book.

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## Mathew Powers says

This is not my field, but I understand why Pomeroy is so well known and respected. This book is, in my view, extremely well done and highly informative. If I could understand sources from antiquity better, I'd give it 5 stars. I just am never sure about methodology during this time period. But, from what I can tell -- it's flawless! :)

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## Luthien says

Was a very informative book on the lives of Spartiate women in classical Greece. I used it as my main secondary source on a college research project. However, I feel that it could have provided a little more information on Sparta during the Roman period.

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## Georgene says

I started out liking the premise of this book. A book on the women of Sparta! What is not to like if you're a bit of an ancient history buff.

Then as I was reading it, I noticed many, many footnotes with the author's name on them. Although Pomeroy has a 12 page list of works cited, the ones she uses quite a lot (I really can't say most) are from articles she herself has written. This is supposed to convince me that this is a scholarly work?

To be perfectly fair, I must note that there are not very many references in the bits and pieces of ancient, somewhat contemporaneous literature that discusses women of any city state or country. (Outside of Egypt, of course.) And Pomeroy does use those bits and pieces quite a bit, extrapolating her conclusions from what those sources don't say, which is quite common in scholarly works. But relying heavily on her own work just rubs me the wrong way and leads me to the conclusion that there is something deeply flawed in her research and perhaps her conclusions.

Too bad. I REALLY wanted to like this book. But I can't help but think that Pomeroy started out with a premise and used what was available to prove that premise. That is faulty scholarship.

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## Daniel says

Good job. Thoroughly researched for a field with so few records. A bit dry at times, but that is in the nature of the subject and its sources. Very good overall.

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### **Martine says**

There are clearly but few sources about Spartan women. Judging by this work, too few to justify a whole book dedicated to the subject. When you add to that Pomeroy's tendency to overemphasize dramatic information, this work is not an asset to modern scholarship. For instance, the practice of wife-sharing or husband-doubling is so contrary to what we know from the rest of Greece at this time and of history in general that it should be discussed with a highly critical view, but instead she repeats it as a fact and refers to it over and over. This tendency does seem to decrease the further we get into the book. Furthermore, the book lacks a good introduction into Sparta or the time period in general, which would be very beneficial to the casual reader, yet also is not informative enough to capture the eye of an expert.

I don't really think this book adds much. However, if the topic interests you, the conclusion isn't half bad.

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### **Sandy says**

I've always felt akin to that people and times. People have a funny idea of what life was like many many centuries ago but people have the same wants, desires, fears and tragedies and triumphs. A spare life does not mean an unfulfilled life. And one gets a taste of that and especially from a female perspective. They were afforded many "luxuries" we do not have this day.

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### **Lyc Davis says**

Researching the lives of Spartan women can be a difficult task at best, with most (if not all) of the historical sources coming from not just outside observers of Spartan culture but from men who would have little to no understanding of the intimate lives of women in their own social circles (let alone in a city-state they're often so at odds with). However, Sarah B. Pomeroy's meticulous research and careful pulling together of multiple sources of historical and archaeological evidence has created a very readable and very informative text on the lives of these women. It was, in fact, one of the central sources I used for my own bachelor's thesis on the lives of ancient women in militaristic societies, and is one that I would recommend to any interested in women and their place in history.

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