



Leonidas of Sparta: A Boy of the Agoge

Helena P. Schrader

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The smaller of twins, born long after two elder brothers, Leonidas was considered an afterthought from birth -- even by his mother. Lucky not to be killed for being undersized, he was not raised as a prince like his eldest brother, Cleomenes, who was heir to the throne, but instead had to endure the harsh upbringing of ordinary Spartan youth. Barefoot, always a little hungry, and subject to harsh discipline, Leonidas had to prove himself worthy of Spartan citizenship. Struggling to survive without disgrace, he never expected that one day he would be king or chosen to command the combined Greek forces fighting a Persian invasion. But these were formative years that would one day make him the most famous Spartan of them all: the hero of Thermopylae.

This is the first book in a trilogy of biographical novels about Leonidas of Sparta. This first book describes his childhood in the infamous Spartan agoge. The second will focus on his years as an ordinary citizen, and the third will describe his reign and death.

Leonidas of Sparta: A Boy of the Agoge Details

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From Reader Review Leonidas of Sparta: A Boy of the Agoge for online ebook

Natalie says

detail rich without a text-book or teachy-feel.

I enjoyed the treatment of equestrian details, but also the consideration for different generations & genders as in the author's other books I've read.

Matt says

Fantastic - couldn't put it down!

Bettie? says

Wait for some authentic ratings to come in.

Misty Dietz says

A fabulous, richly detailed story backed by solid historical research. I loved it!

John Warren says

i really enjoyed this book. going through the years of leonidas going through the agoge was really cool the author made me feel like i was there

Helen Hollick says

This book has received a Discovering Diamonds Review:

" the author knows her subject very well, so for readers who prefer historical detail over imaginative fiction this is ideal."

Helen Hollick
founder #DDRevs

Josephine Cox says

Just about the Best Novel about Ancient Sparta

Most novels about ancient Sparta are about how brutish they were. There is a perception that Sparta was nothing more than a society of mindless warriors. This novel breaks the model and shows that archaic Spartan society was vibrant. Don't get me wrong, the author does show how brutal the agoge (the Spartan public education system) could be. We have a story about the early years of the future King Leonidas. Leonidas had to go through the agoge because he wasn't the crown prince. Young Leonidas has just started the agoge. You see his life long friendships form. These friendships become particularly important in later novels. We get to find out what resilient boy he is. The novel is fast paced. It's full of political intrigue and action. I enjoyed this book so much, I couldn't put it down. I highly recommend it.

Helena Schrader says

The death of Leonidas is legendary. His last days have inspired great works of art and popular enthusiasm. The stand of "the 300" at Thermopylae has been harnessed to a hundred modern causes pitting East against West, and Leonidas with his 300 Spartans have come to symbolize what is good and noble in war: self-sacrifice for the sake of one's country and family. But who was Leonidas? And what was he before he became the incarnation of Freedom fighting Tyranny?

Herodotus gives us some tantalizing tidbits -- the story of his father's forced second marriage, the tensions between his elder brothers, the precociousness of his wife. But he is silent on many other key points, from the date of Leonidas' birth to his role in Sparta prior to becoming king later in life. Only one thing about his early life do we know for certain: because he was not the heir apparent to the Agiad throne in his youth, he would have been subjected to the full Sparta agoge. Knowing that, knowing how he ended, and building on the fascinating insights into his personality provided by the few sayings attributed to him, I have created a young Leonidas.

Nothing in this novel contradicts known facts about Leonidas, but the novel is quite candidly fiction.

Marina Costa says

This was an amazing and insightful read. It's fascinating to follow Leonidas's growth, his struggles and concerns and see him more as a boy, a human being, than a legend. The author made an excellent work of both creating an engaging fiction while teaching the reader a lot of interesting facts and cultural peculiarities of the Spartan culture. 5/5!

Jonathan says

Excellent book, I hardly ever read anything fiction historical or otherwise but this book is EXCELLENT!

Jane says

More like 4.5

Not quite a should-be classic, but I might change my mind after reading the rest of the trilogy. This first volume of Schrader's trilogy on life of Spartan King Leonidas was enthralling from first page to last. There's not much on his life historically; the author tells us she has invented most of this *Bildungsroman*. It's also a way for the author to explain different aspects of Spartan life. This particular novel concentrates on Leonidas's school years in the *agoge*, from admission at 7 to full Spartan citizenship at 21: "graduation ceremony", as it were. Each chapter covers one full school year focusing on a major adventure and Leonidas's growth from boy to man. Along with a poor but intelligent classmate for whom Leonidas pays tuition and other fees, Alkander, Leonidas's other best friend, Prokles, is also a classmate, the latest generation of the author's fictional Spartan family from other novels unrelated to this trilogy. The three boys are inseparable.

Schrader's done a marvelous job in painting a picture of ancient Sparta and her people. Her characters were so lifelike and realistic I felt I got to know them. I haven't read the other books in the trilogy yet, but I can see where the values inculcated in Leonidas's childhood will influence the rest of his life.

Outstanding were his *phouxir* or fox-time [part of the curriculum--period of time he was given a small knife and told to survive on his own in the wild] and, due to his own [he admits it] stupidity, kidnapping but fortuitous rescue. As an *eirene*, a young man on the verge of becoming a citizen, he supervises a group of teenage boys; this is his first taste of leadership.

This novel is most highly recommended. I have the other two sequels in hand to read.

Linda says

I recommend this book. The first hundred pages were not good reading. Some words and phrases were equivalent to saying 'okey dokey' or 'hi gal' to the queen of England. The final two hundred pages were redeeming.

The storyline was about Leonidas and his two friends in the Agoge from ages seven to twenty-one. I compared our present day military schools to the Agoge. These boys were trouble coming down the road, but they redeemed themselves in the end by one method or another. Over the course of Leonidas' life in the Agoge, I could see Leonidas growing mentally and physically. I wish I did not know what would become of him in the future.

Thank you, Ms. Schrader, for a good read.

Charline Ratcliff says

While I enjoyed reading "Leonidas of Sparta: A Boy of the Agoge" by author Helena P. Schrader, I'm going to be honest and admit that it wasn't quite what I was expecting. I thought I was going to be reading a fictional story about the legendary Leonidas. I did count on historical facts being woven throughout the book but I figured they would only be used to provide that "realistic" feel. What I got was a book that seemed to focus on education, culture, laws and the Spartan way of life. Leonidas was present, but at times he seemed

almost an afterthought... Superfluous as his mother would say...

When I finished, and being slightly dissatisfied, I decided to look at this book from a different point of view. "Leonidas of Sparta: A Boy of the Agoge" is the first book in a trilogy about Leonidas. Hmm... Maybe the author really intended to focus more on Leonidas's surroundings as a child rather than Leonidas himself. After all, one can hypothesize that ultimately Leonidas's childhood is what shaped him into the man he became.

Unfortunately I wasn't completely thrilled with the writing style either. While I did find "Leonidas of Sparta: A Boy of the Agoge" to be a decent book I definitely was not sitting on the edge of my seat as I read it. It flowed like a non-fiction book. It seemed to be mainly facts and figures with hardly any suspense, drama or humor. Every now and again there was a glimmer of something but then it vanished almost as quickly as it had appeared. At this point I remembered reading that Schrader had previously published four non-fiction books. I realized that this would help explain the writing style.

As far as a rating, I give "Leonidas of Sparta: A Boy of the Agoge" three stars. It is a solid book and I would classify it as an interesting read. Schrader does have a good writing style – it's just a bit on the dry side. She is also descriptive but, because of her writing style, her words tend to come across as if they belong in a college textbook or...the "Journal of Ancient Spartan and Greek History."

I am however looking forward to reading the final two books in this series. My only hope is that Leonidas plays a more exciting and interesting role in them...

(Reviewed in association with Rebecca's Reads).

A. Sweeny says

I really enjoyed this book in more ways than one. The story was compelling and interesting, the characters were multidimensional and believable, the pace was exciting, and the history lessons and finally the truth about the real Sparta abundant!

The author does a wonderful job creating the character of young Leonidas and following him as he develops into a young man is very entertaining. I highly recommend this to those who enjoy historical fiction with real historical information of the highest quality. I will be ordering the rest of the series shortly.

*The only improvement that I felt was needed, was in the description of the topography. It is obvious that the author knows the area very well and can describe it in minute details. However, for someone who has never been there a map would have been very helpful. With so many names of areas and rivers and mountains, my mind couldn't envision it all-but of course that could be my own personal shortcoming.

Geoffrey says

Leonidas of Sparta: A Boy of the Agoge, by Helena Schrader, is an excellent book that tells an excellent story about Leonidas of the Agiads (of the modern day movie 300 fame) during his childhood. Considering what historians and archeologists have discovered about that time and region, the author does a great job collecting and cobbling together a compelling story. Not only does she provide a story about a young Spartan prince that later becomes a king, but she tells his story in context during the years he transitions from a young boy into a citizen through the Spartan Agoge education process.

While this is a work of fiction, the story she tells really deserves more credit than that. Since so little information is available to give any fine details about Leonidas's life, the author had to critically analyze what we have discovered in stone and text, and add believable context to the story. It is not just a story about Leonidas, but also about life in Sparta and the people of that region in that time.

The book includes a list of characters within the front cover that lists the several relevant families and friends. The author notates which characters are real and which are supporting, fictional characters. The chapters split to cover progressing years (classes) in school. Be sure to read the beginning "Introduction and Acknowledgements" section, as well as the "Historical Note" at the end of the book. Both these sections explain what the Schrader is accomplishing by writing this book and contextualizing the timeline in the way she does.

I read a short review from someone who seemed to feel cheated that this was a fictional biography (which the author explains as early as the first page). I challenge that reader to find any other book that tells a more thorough story about Leonidas that is any more accurate. The truth is that he lived so long ago, and such details simply are not available, so historians have to take the facts and build a story that does not make falsehoods out of those facts. Schrader does a wonderful job of making the story interesting and not overly dramatic. This storytelling deserves as much credit (if not more) than those other works of art on the same character (like 300).

I thoroughly enjoyed this book! The author did a great job telling a story that was easy to read and follow. If you are interested in learning about a society that dates back 2500 years, this book is perfect! After reading it, I am actually going to read it to my son over time since there are great lessons within the covers that seems to have been forgotten by today's society.

Leonidas of Sparta: A Boy of the Agoge is the first book of a trilogy Schrader is writing about Leonidas. The author just recently published her next book, Leonidas of Sparta: A Peerless Peer, which continues the story. On to Leonidas's duration as a rank and file soldier and citizen ...

Thanks for writing such a great story!
