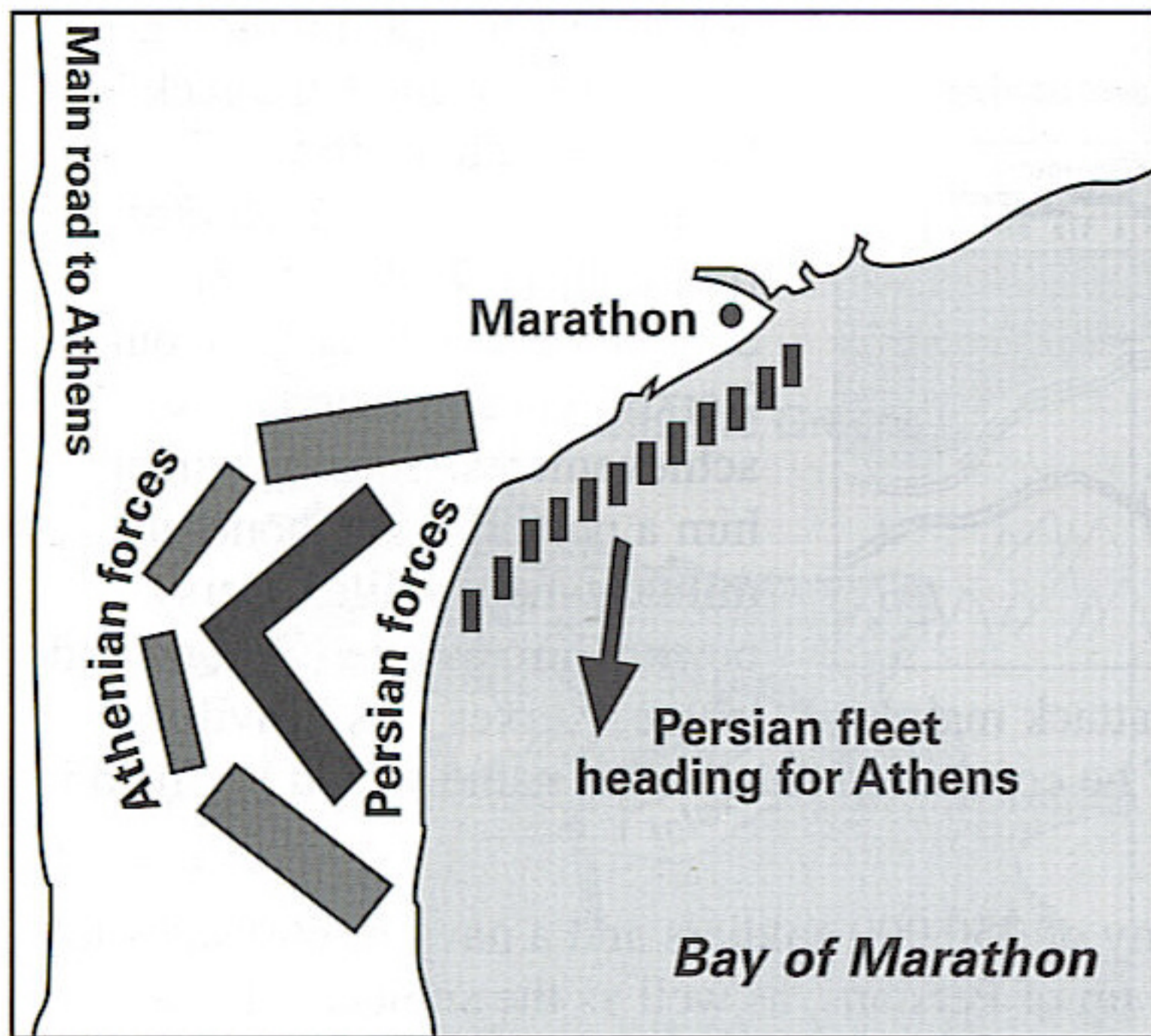


Event C: The Battle of Marathon



After the Ionian Revolt, Darius decided to attack the city-states of mainland Greece to prevent any further rebellions and to take revenge on Athens. In 490 B.C.E., Darius sent his forces of approximately 200 ships and 20,000 troops south across the Aegean Sea to Marathon (pronounced MA-RA-thon), a town 26 miles north of Athens.

The Athenians, who had an army of 9,000 soldiers, were heavily outnumbered. They sent one of their famous runners, Pheidippides (pronounced fy-DIP-ih-deez), to Sparta to ask for help. However, the Spartans replied that they were in the middle of an important religious festival, and could

not send troops for several days. Dismayed, the Athenians tried to choose the best military strategy. Some of the Athenian generals wanted to stay in Athens and protect the city's walls. One leader, named Miltiades (pronounced mill-TY-ah-deez), however, argued that the Athenians' only hope was to stop the Persian advance before it reached Athens. He led the Athenian army north to Marathon, where they met the Persian troops.

For two days nothing happened. The Athenians were not willing to attack the Persian cavalry out in the open, where they would be easily slaughtered. On the other hand, the Persians did not want their weaker foot soldiers, or *infantry*, to fight against the heavily armed Greek soldiers. On the third day, the Persian commander decided to take a chance and sail to Athens to attack the city by sea before the Spartan troops arrived. He ordered the cavalry, the Persians' most powerful military resource, onto ships, which set off for Athens.

When the Athenians learned that the Persian cavalry was gone, Miltiades immediately took advantage of the opportunity to attack the remaining Persian infantry. Without their cavalry, the Persian troops were weakened, and therefore unable to attack the enemy from an advantageous point. As a result, the Persian army suffered severe casualties, losing 6,400 of their men while Athens lost only 192. According to legend, Pheidippides ran from Marathon back to Athens to announce the victory, and died from exhaustion upon arrival. He became known as the first "Marathon runner." The Greeks consider the battle at Marathon one of the most important events in their history. Their ability to defeat such a large army with their small forces gave them confidence that they could protect Greece from all future Persian invasions. Despite the Persian defeat, however, Darius was still confident that with more military power, he could successfully conquer Greece.