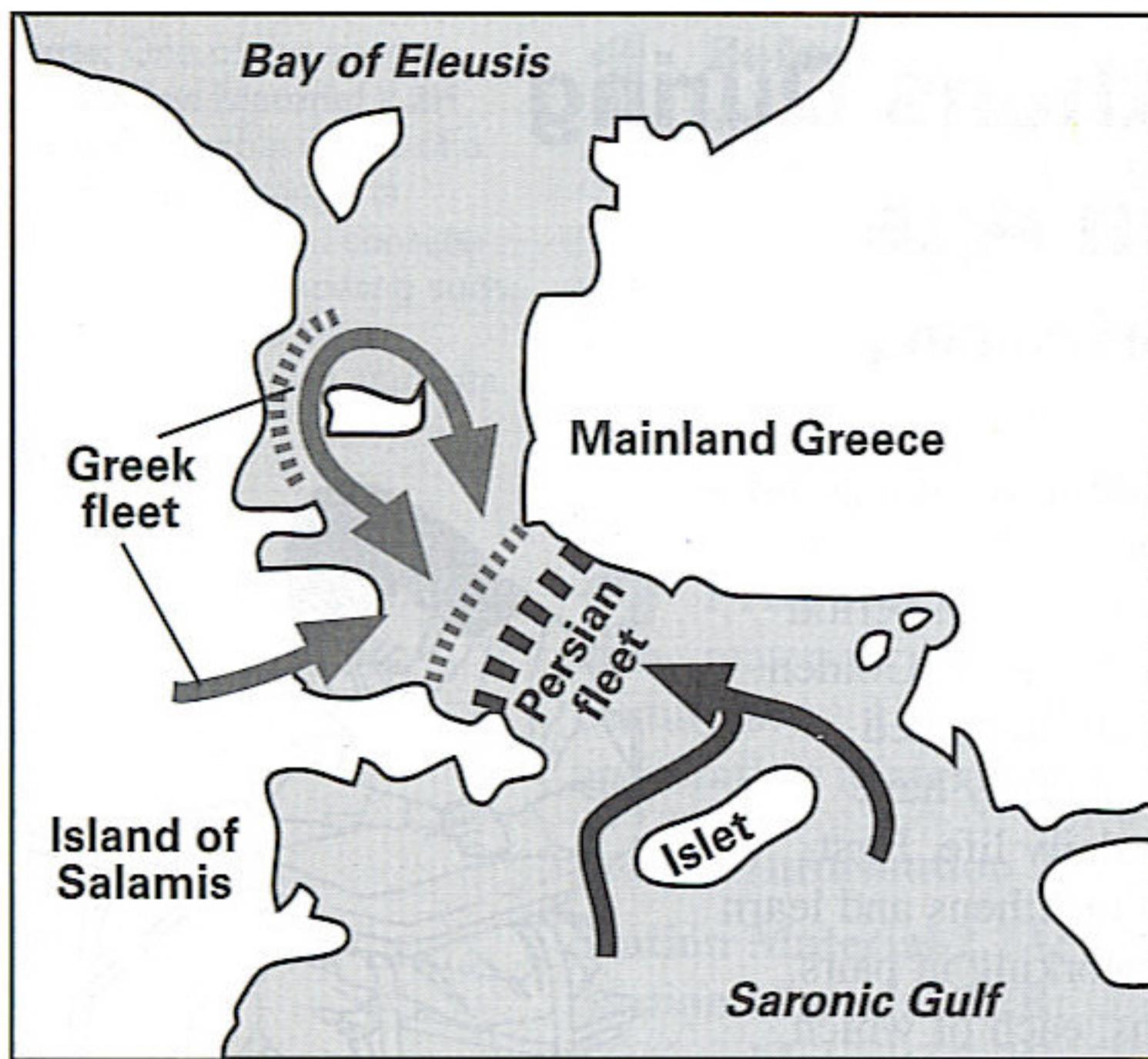


Event E: The Battle of Salamis



When news of the defeat at Thermopylae reached Athens, most Athenians fled to the island of Salamis (pronounced SAH-lam-iss) to avoid being captured. With no resistance, Xerxes and his troops marched to Athens and completely destroyed the city. Fearing the Persians' advance, officials of many other Greek city-states began to fortify their cities for battle. However, Themistocles (pronounced them-ISS-tah-kleez), an Athenian general, asked them to leave their cities and unite their forces near Salamis. He convinced the leader of the Greek navy that the only way to defeat the large Persian army would be to lure them into battle within narrow channels, where it would be

difficult for the Persians to maneuver their large, heavy ships. Also, he feared that Greek forces might sail off to defend the Peloponnese instead of mainland Greece. Therefore, he wanted to keep the Greek fleet on the island, where they would have no choice but to fight against the Persians.

Xerxes, whose navy had experienced great losses at Thermopylae, did not want to attack the Greeks by sea. When he consulted his advisors, all but one person, Queen Artemisia (pronounced ahr-tem-EE-zhah) of Persia, wanted to fight the Greeks at Salamis. Artemisia advised the king to wait, because she believed that the Greeks would eventually retreat due to disunity or a lack of supplies. However, Xerxes rejected her advice and stationed his warships at Salamis. Hoping that Greek troops would come out to fight in open waters, he waited for an opportunity to attack. However, instead of attacking the Persian forces, the Greeks decided to set a trap for Xerxes. Themistocles sent him a false message, saying that he had changed sides and now wished for a Persian victory. Xerxes, who had become impatient and was looking for any opportunity to attack, willingly believed the message. Assuming that the Greeks were not unified and ready to flee, he ordered his troops into the channel between Bay of Eleusis and the Saronic Gulf.

Once the Persian fleet had entered the channel, Greek warships surrounded them. The Greek fleet, which was lighter and easier to maneuver, attacked the heavier Persian warships, breaking their oars and ramming their hulls. The Persian ships were left entangled and unable to move. The Persians lost 200 ships, while the Greeks lost only 40. Devastated, Xerxes and the rest of his troops withdrew from Salamis and retreat to the Hellespont. For a few more months, a small Persian army carried out the military campaigns against Greece. Finally, in 479 B.C.E., the Greek army defeated the Persians at the Battle of Platea and forced them to retreat completely from Asia Minor.