

Democracy in Ancient Greece

Name: _____

Handout 2.3a Helena "For the Parthenon"

As a woman living in **Athens**, I spend all my time at home with my daughters and slaves. I am not allowed to go shopping in the **marketplace** or exercise in the **gymnasia**. All day, I watch the slaves grind wheat and work in the fields. I spin wool and teach my daughters how to cook. My husband, Xenophon, says that I must spend this week making sure that the "dry corn is in good condition for making food." The only excitement in my day is solving the fights that break out between the slaves.

The daily life of a woman in **Athens** only changes during religious festivals. Then, we are allowed to go up to the **Acropolis** and celebrate. I remember how exciting it was to see Athenians celebrate at the **Acropolis**. Unfortunately, since the **Persian Wars** destroyed our religious temples, I can no longer look forward to the religious festivals. It is so sad to look out my window and see our **Acropolis** in ruins.

Athena, the goddess of wisdom and protector of **Athens**, saved us from the **Persian Wars** but we have no temple to honor her. She is the reason my husband and sons did not die in battle. They took a soldier's **oath** before going off to battle. In that **oath**, they promised to "honor the temples and the religion my forefathers established." Will **Athena** continue to protect **Athens** if we do not build a temple to honor her?

I hear my husband and sons talking about **Pericles**, our brilliant general and leader of the **Assembly**. He has a plan to rebuild the **Acropolis**. He wants to build a temple for **Athena** that is much nicer than anything we had before the **Persian Wars**. He calls it the **Parthenon**. His plan sounds amazing. He wants to hire the great sculptor, **Phidias**, to



Helena
Wife and Mother

create a thirty-nine-foot-tall statue of **Athena** covered with gold and ivory. It is about time that we have a public place to honor our goddess **Athena**.

I wish I had a say in the Athenian **Assembly**. If I did, I would vote to build the **Parthenon**. I hope that my husband and sons will vote for **Pericles'** plan. If **Pericles** builds the **Parthenon**, maybe my daughter will be chosen to sing in the chorus during the religious festivals.

Questions:

1. Who is Helena and what does she think about building the Parthenon?
2. Do you agree with Helena? Why or why not?