As you read the biography below, think about the dedication it must have taken Thucydides to devote himself to his important writing.

Thucydides (thoo-sid-uh-deez) was a citizen of Athens. He was probably in his twenties when he began to fight in the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides was appointed as a general. But he lost an important battle and was exiled from Athens. After that, Thucydides collected as much information about the war as he could. He wanted to write an accurate record of the great war between Sparta and Athens. Thucydides believed that it was important to document the war accurately because it was the “greatest the Greeks had ever fought.”

Thucydides said he started writing History of the Peloponnesian War as the war began, and that he worked very slowly. His goal was to write as accurately as possible, so he would change what he had written as he learned new or corrected information. Thucydides talked to survivors of the war, and visited sites where important battles took place. In his writing, Thucydides hoped to explain and understand the events of the Peloponnesian War in human terms.
Thucydides wrote using realism, a style of writing or point of view that tries to show people and events truthfully, without any personal bias. Other writers of his time did not write this way. They often explained events as actions of the gods or as the result of fate. Thucydides explains things in terms of human actions. He wanted to educate people, and to document the war for generations to come.

Thucydides left his work unfinished, though it is unknown why. What exists of History of the Peloponnesian War, even incomplete, shows a view of life in Ancient Greece during wartime.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. What are the enduring contributions made by Thucydides in his writing?

2. Make Inferences In what ways might History of the Peloponnesian War have affected people reading it in Ancient Greece?

ACTIVITY

Think of a current event that has taken place in your lifetime. This can be something well known in American history, or something local to your city or town. Write a paragraph explaining what you remember of this event. Include as many details as you can.