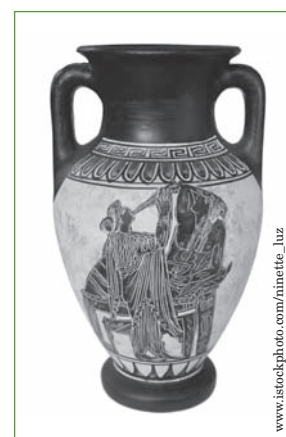


## ACTIVITY 9.1

**Agriculture in Athens**

The 630,000 acres of land in Attica, the region in which Athens was located, were rocky and unproductive. In fact, one-third of it was not suitable for any kind of farming. Even with careful land management and irrigation, the region only produced 675,000 bushels of grain per year—hardly enough to supply a quarter of its population. Without imported food, Athens would have starved.

Although the terrain of Attica was not well suited for growing grain, it was well-suited for olives. An olive tree took 16 years of growing to produce useable olives and 40 years to reach full productivity. Olive trees were so valuable in Athens that cutting one down was a crime punishable by exile or death. While the olive tree and its leaves became symbols of peace, wisdom, and victory, it was **olive oil** that was the source of Athens' wealth. Olive oil was considered liquid gold, and Greek olive oil was considered the finest in the ancient world. The oil had many uses: as a food and in cooking, in religious ceremonies, as lamp fuel for lighting homes, as a skin conditioner and a cleanser instead of soap, and as a medicine. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, referred to it as “the great therapeutic” with more than 60 uses as a medicine. Olive oil was applied to the skin of Olympic athletes before competitions.



Olive oil was as valuable to the ancient world as petroleum oil is to the modern world. In Greek mythology, olives and olive oil were considered gifts from the goddess Athena to the Athenian people. Because of her gift of olives, one myth says, Athena was selected as the city's patron saint over Poseidon (god of the sea).

**SOURCES**

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## ACTIVITY 9.2

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

Aescylus

Ares (Greek god of war)

Athenian Trade Representative #1—abbreviated “Athenian T.R. #1”

Athenian Trade Representative #2—abbreviated “Athenian T.R. #2”

Athenian Trade Representative #3—abbreviated “Athenian T.R. #3”

Demetrios

Egyptian Merchant #1

Egyptian Merchant #2

Hermes (Greek god of trade)

Narrator

Pericles

The Archon

Themistocles

4 Greek Slaves

4 Athenian Slaves

### PART A: THE ATHENIAN ASSEMBLY, AROUND 408 B.C.E.

Narrator: The Athenian assembly has been called to discuss trade policy. Let’s listen in on the discussion.

Aescylus: Athens is a mighty city-state. I don’t think we should be dependent on trading with other nations for food.

Pericles: I agree! We defeated the mighty Persians; we should not have to be dependent on others for food!

Demetrios: We have been trading for food for centuries. Why would we stop now? What do you propose?

Pericles: The Persians control Egypt. Now they have entered into an alliance with Sparta against us. They would like nothing better than to punish us by cutting off our food supply.

- Ares: *(Whispering into the ear of Aescylus)* We defeated the Persians once before – maybe we should be planning war!
- Aescylus: Perhaps we should invade Egypt instead of trading. They have lots of grain. We defeated the Persians; we can conquer the Egyptians.
- Ares: *(Louder, more excitedly)* Conquer the Egyptians!
- Hermes: *(Whispering into the ear of Demetrios)* Why do we need war? We have the best olive oil in the world. We can trade for the grain.
- Demetrios: No, how about we continue to **trade** with the Egyptians?
- Ares: *(To Aescylus)* What?! Trade is for weak countries that grow dependent on others!
- Aescylus: We are Greeks; we don't need to depend on the Egyptians.
- Demetrios: *(Laughing)* If we don't trade we can only consume what we produce. With trade, we end up with more.
- Pericles: Do you think that trade is some sort of trick of the gods?
- Demetrios: No, but tell me, Pericles, what do you do for a living?
- Pericles: I am a blacksmith. I make tools and weapons out of hot metal.
- Demetrios: Do you grow your own food?
- Pericles: No. I spend my workday in my workshop. I take the profit and go to the market to buy my food.
- Demetrios: Why wouldn't it be worth your time to take part of your day and grow some food behind your workshop?
- Pericles: I can make enough money in a day in my workshop to buy food for many days. If I were to grow my own garden, I would give up time in my workshop. I wouldn't be nearly as well off.
- Demetrios: But aren't you dependent on the farmers who sell at the market?
- Pericles: What's with all the questions? Do you think you're Socrates or something? *(Laughing; the assembly also laughs)*
- Demetrios: Very funny. Socrates is a good friend of mine. But tell me, aren't you dependent on the farmers who sell at the market?
- Pericles: I guess I am.

- Demetrius: Isn't trading with Egypt the same? We are good at growing olives and we make the best olive oil in the world. The Egyptians love our olive oil. I think we are better off spending our time and effort growing olives and producing olive oil and continuing to trade for grain from the Egyptians.
- Pericles: Maybe. I'm not sure. What if the Egyptians decide to cut us off and grow their own olives and produce their own olive oil?
- Demetrius: They are just as dependent on us for olive oil as we are on them for wheat. Why would they stop trading with us if it benefits them, too?
- Pericles: They have very rich farmland and irrigation provided by the Nile. They can probably grow wheat **and** olives better than we can. If they grow their own olives and produce their own olive oil, they won't need to trade with us.
- Demetrius: I doubt anyone could grow olives as well as Athens. It is the fruit of the olive tree, given to us by Athena, the goddess of our great city. But, I will humor you. Tell me Pericles, from whom do you buy your food at the market?
- Pericles: I buy most of my food from Themistocles.
- Demetrius: Is Themistocles here?
- Themistocles: I am here.
- Demetrius: Tell me Themistocles, why do you spend your time farming?
- Themistocles: I inherited good farmland from my father. He taught me the skills I need. I make a good living growing food and selling it in the market.
- Demetrius: Do you ever buy tools or weapons from Pericles?
- Themistocles: Yes, he makes great tools.
- Demetrius: Why don't you take some time away from the fields and make your own tools?
- Themistocles: As it turns out, I am a very talented blacksmith. Some say I am even better than Pericles.
- Pericles: I admit, he is a better blacksmith. I am fortunate he spends his time farming.

- Themistocles: Thank you for the compliment, Pericles. I choose to farm because my farm is so productive. Every hour I would spend making my own weapons and tools is an hour that I cannot farm. I would be giving up too much in terms of farm produce if I spend my time making tools. It is more benefit to me to farm and take my profits and buy my tools from Pericles.
- Demetrios: So you are an excellent farmer and blacksmith, maybe the best in Athens in both tasks; but you still choose to spend all your time farming and buy your tools from Pericles?
- Themistocles: Yes. Even though I am very good at both, I am better off farming.
- Demetrios: Would you ever think of not trading with Pericles?
- Themistocles: Why would I? I benefit from our trade, too.
- Demetrios: So tell me, citizens of Athens, could it be possible that even if the Egyptians could grow olives very well, they would still trade with us?
- Hermes: *(To Demetrios)* If the Persians and Spartans continue to make our lives difficult, it will be important to have a strong trade partner. I think Greece can arrange a trade deal with Egypt—maybe even get a better deal than we are getting now!
- Demetrios: I think Greece should look into trade with Egypt. Let's send a trade ship of olive oil to Egypt with some of our finest traders from the market. Let's see if we can find a way that will benefit both of us.
- The Archon: Let's put it to a vote. The question is: shall we send a trade delegation to Egypt to strengthen our trade partnership. You will be given one pebble, put it in either the "yes" jar or the "no" jar.
- Narrator: All members of the assembly vote by putting their pebble in one of the two jars. All but Aeschylus (who under advice from Ares still wants war) vote to send the trade delegation.
- The Archon: The assembly had decided to send a trade mission to Egypt. Their goal is to bring back a trade agreement that benefits Athens.
- Aeschylus: Darn, I was hoping for war.
- Ares: *(Disappointed)* So was I.

**PART B: TRADE MEETING IN EGYPT**

*Note: Behind each delegation, four slaves now stand with cards. Behind Egypt, the cards have 4 wheat on one side and 1 olive oil on the other side. Behind Athens, cards have 1 wheat on one side and 2 olive oil on the other side. In the beginning, two Athenian slaves have the wheat side of their card showing and two have the olive oil side of their card showing. In Egypt, three slaves have the wheat side showing and one slave has the olive oil side showing.*

Narrator: The scene is now in Egypt, where Egyptian merchants are meeting with the Athenian trade merchants.

Athenian T.R. #1: Thank you for meeting with us today. We have a ship loaded with our finest Athenian olive oil in the harbor. We want to work out a trade agreement for the olive oil in our ship and for olive oil in the future.

Egyptian Merchant #1: We like your olive oil. It is the best in the Mediterranean. What are you proposing? What—in terms of wheat—will we have to pay for your olive oil?

Athenian T.R. #1: We are prepared to pay one jar of olive oil for each bushel of wheat.

Athenian T.R. #2: Wait, can we talk privately for a minute?

*Each side huddles to discuss the terms of trade.*

Athenian T.R. #1: What's the matter, #2?

Athenian T.R. #2: Are you sure that we benefit from that deal? One jar of our finest olive oil for one bushel of wheat?

Athenian T.R. #1: Let's see. *(Pointing to the Greek slaves.)* Currently, two bushels of wheat and four jars of olive oil are being produced. If you have the slaves produce only olive oil, how much would you have?

Athenian T.R. #2: *(To the Greek slaves)* Produce only olive oil. *(The slaves should turn their cards to olive oil.)* I can produce eight jars of olive oil.



- Athenian T.R. #1: And if you produce only wheat, how much can you produce?
- Athenian T.R. #2: *(To the Greek slaves)* Produce only wheat. *(The slaves should turn their cards to wheat.)* I can produce only four bushels of wheat.
- Athenian T.R. #1: So, if you were to produce eight jars of olive oil—*(To Greek slaves)* go back to eight oil—and trade one for one, you could have eight bushels of wheat, or twice as much as you could have if you grew it. Or you could trade four olive oil jars for four units of wheat—you would have the same amount of olive oil as before trade, plus gain two bushels of wheat—you would have four bushels of wheat instead of the two you had with no trade!
- Athenian T.R. #2: Wow, it's like a gift from Hermes, the god of trade!
- Hermes: You're welcome!
- Athenian T.R. #1: Well #3, what do you think?
- Athenian T.R. #3: Sounds like we will benefit from the deal. Let's do it.

*Meanwhile, over in the Egypt huddle ...*

- Egyptian Merchant #1: Can we benefit from a one-bushel-of-wheat-for-one-jar-of-olive-oil trade?
- Egyptian Merchant #2: Egyptian farmers can grow as much as 16 bushels of wheat ...

*Egyptian slaves flip cards so all are showing wheat.*

- Egyptian Merchant #2: Or produce as many as four jars of olive oil.

*Egyptian slaves flip cards so all are showing olive oil.*

- Egyptian Merchant #2: Currently, the Egyptian farmers produce about 12 bushels of wheat and one jar of olive oil.

*Three Egyptian slaves show the wheat side of their card, one shows the olive oil side.*

- Egyptian Merchant #1: We could increase production of wheat by four bushels.

*The Egyptian slave showing olive oil flips to wheat, so all are showing wheat.*

Egyptian Merchant #1: The four bushels of wheat could be traded to the Greeks for four jars of olive oil—we would have the same amount of wheat, 12 bushels, but have more olive oil, four jars instead of one!

Egyptian Merchant #2: Yes, we can benefit from this trade deal.

*Huddles break up and representatives meet in the middle of the space.*

Athenian T.R. #1: Again, we would like to trade with you on the following terms: one jar of olive oil for one bushel of wheat.

Egyptian Merchant #1: You have a deal.

*They shake hands. The Athenian traders can be seen doing arm pumps and giving high-fives as they leave. Egyptians look at each other and shrug.*

Hermes: I love it when a plan comes together!



ACTIVITY 9.3

**Production Card: Athens**



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ACTIVITY 9.3, CONTINUED

**Production Card: Athens**



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ACTIVITY 9.4

**Production Card: Egypt**



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ACTIVITY 9.4, CONTINUED

**Production Card: Egypt**



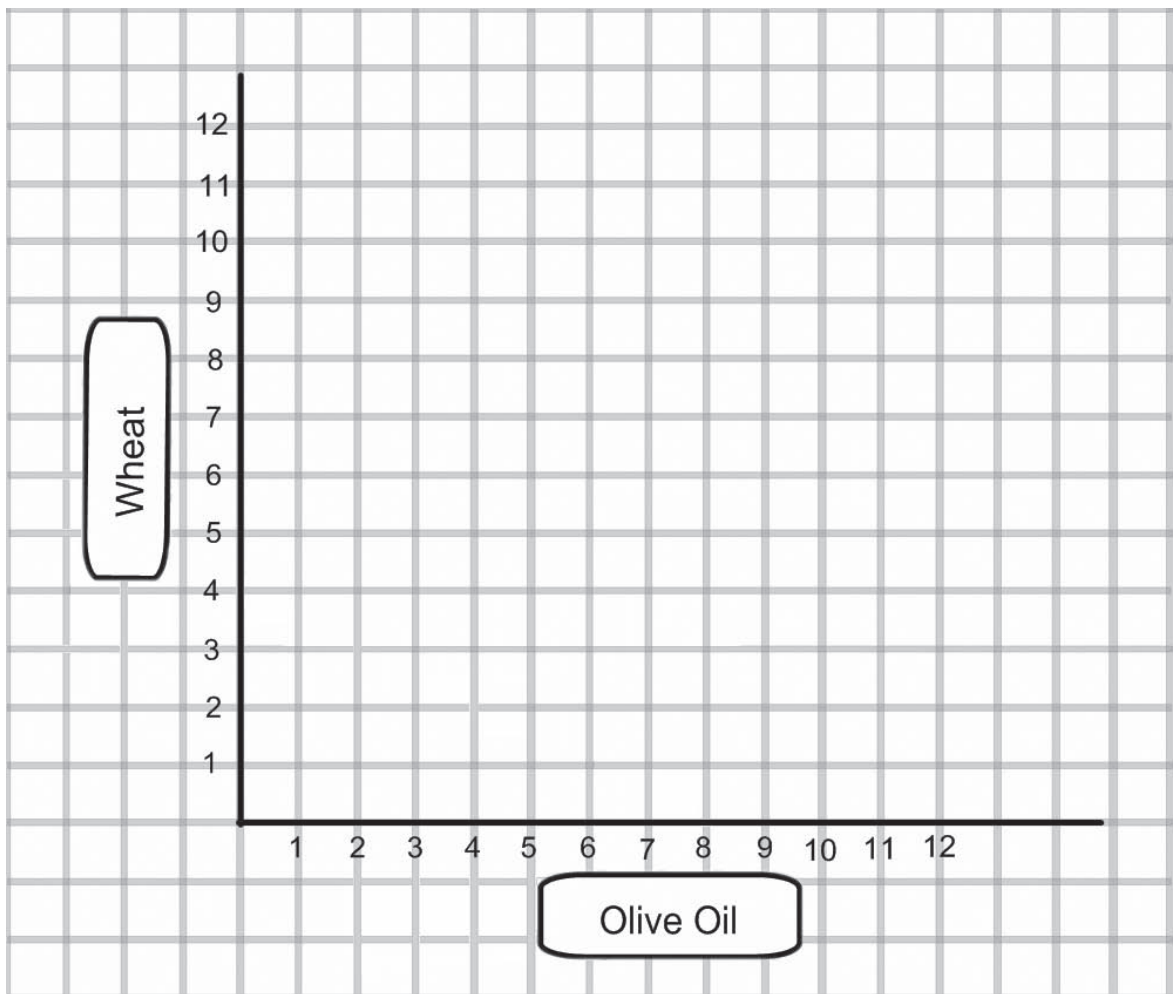
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ACTIVITY 9.5

**Athens (optional activity)**

**Production Possibilities Frontier** – A table or graph that shows the various combinations of two goods it is possible to produce with a given amount of resources.

Athens	All cards wheat	Flip one card	Flip second card	Flip third card	Flip last card
Wheat					
Olive Oil					



ACTIVITY 9.6

**Egypt (optional activity)**

**Production Possibilities Frontier** – A table or graph that shows the various combinations of two goods it is possible to produce with a given amount of resources.

<b>Egypt</b>	All cards wheat	Flip one card	Flip second card	Flip third card	Flip last card
Wheat					
Olive Oil					

