

# HERODOTUS

*and the Road to History*

by JEANNE BENDICK

Pictures by the author

Bethlehem Books • Ignatius Press  
Bathgate San Francisco

Text and illustrations © 2009 Jeanne Bendick

Cover art by Jeanne Bendick

Cover design by Marie Leininger

All rights reserved

First printing September 2009

ISBN: 978-1-932350-20-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2009931271

Bethlehem Books • Ignatius Press

10194 Garfield Street South

Bathgate, ND 58216

[www.bethlehembooks.com](http://www.bethlehembooks.com)

1-800-757-6831

Printed in the United States on acid-free paper

# Contents

PREFACE	ix
1. I AM HERODOTUS	1
2. I GROW UP	5
3. MY TRAVELS BEGIN	15
4. TO THE NORTH	22
5. BACK TO SAMOS AND AWAY AGAIN, TO BABYLON	32
6. I GO TO EGYPT	41
7. I WRITE MY HISTORIES	51
8. TO ATHENS	63
9. TO THURII	70
EPILOGUE	74
PLACES, PEOPLE, AND MEASUREMENTS	75



## Author's Preface

Herodotus was born 2,500 years ago in the Greek town of Halicarnassus, on the Asian coast of what is now Turkey. He lived in a time in Greece when myth and legend, told in song and poetry, were considered history. But there was no Greek word for “history,” as we define it now—a record of the human past.

As far as we know, Herodotus wrote the first such record of this kind springing from the pure

thirst for knowledge. It was not only the first history, it was the first long work in prose—ordinary language. (The Greeks did not even have a word for prose.) Herodotus described his writing as a *historie*, which was the Greek word for “inquiry”—which means “finding out.”

You could call “finding out” the theme of Herodotus’ life. He had a fever for inquiring that was unique, even among the always-curious Greeks. He wanted to see things for himself, even if it meant going to the ends of the known earth.

To put myself in Herodotus’ sandals, I had to become a detective. Most of what we know about his inquiries and his travels comes from his own writing, his *Histories*. But what about the everyday world he lived in? What was it like to be a Greek in the fifth century BC? Even Herodotus, an extraordinary Greek, lived in a day-to-day world.

What did he do when he was growing up? What did he study? What did he eat and what did he wear? What was his house like, and his town?

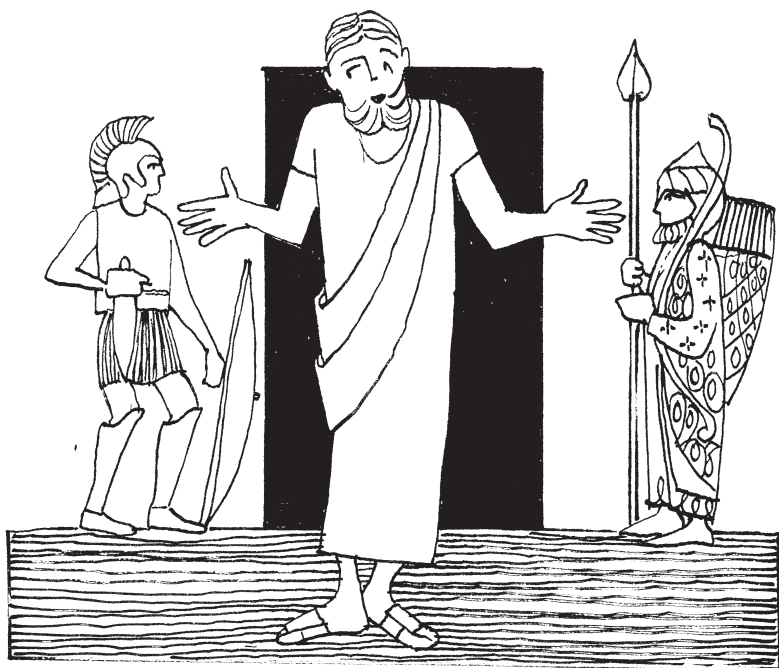
What did he look like? What did the people he wrote about look like?

What made him set out to explore his world?

I have drawn a number of maps so you can follow Herodotus in his travels and in the history he describes. They also let you compare his places with our world today. Over all these centuries the places are the same, though they may have different names. I have used modern place names, but a page at the back of the book shows you what those places were called in Herodotus’ time.

(When speaking as Herodotus, I have also used modern measurements instead of the ones used in his time. You can compare those at the back of the book, too.)

Traveling in Herodotus' time was difficult and dangerous. Usually he went by boat, but what were the boats like? Was a boat on the Nile dif-



ferent from a Phoenician trader?

Of course, putting myself in Herodotus' sandals took guesswork and imagination, but it also took research. Ancient Greek paintings and pottery show and tell vivid stories; so do portraits and sculptures of the people Herodotus wrote about.

The ancient Egyptians painted pictures of their lives and told about them in symbols called hieroglyphs. The Persians carved pictures of triumphs and described them in their own cuneiform writing.

Over the hundred generations since Herodotus lived, archaeologists have slowly discovered and recovered much of what we know now about the world he lived in. And many historians after him have added their own pieces to the puzzle. Using many sources, I have imagined a particular life 2,500 years ago.

Herodotus was a person of his own time. He wasn't every person, though. Herodotus was unique, doing something no one had ever done before. He was looking for a new way to explain the nature of things and to record his ideas about why they happened. And he wrote it all down!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "jeanne bendick". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "jeanne" in lowercase and the last name "bendick" in lowercase. The signature is written in a slightly slanted, right-leaning position.

Guilford, Connecticut  
July 2009





# 1

## I Am Herodotus

MY NAME is Herodotus. (Ha-ROD-ah-tus.)

Some people call me the Father of History.

Some people call me the World's Greatest Traveler.

Some unkind people call me the Father of Lies, but they haven't been to all the places I have been, or seen all the sights I have seen, or listened to all the stories I have heard.

484 B.C.

I am a Greek, born in the city-state of Halicarnassus (Hol-li-kar-NASS-us) at the edge of the Mediterranean Sea. A city-state is

## I AM HERODOTUS

just what it sounds like—a city that rules itself and the lands around it.

Halicarnassus is on the Asian shore of the sea, and when I was born it had been part of the Persian Empire for sixty years. That didn't matter to us; we still considered ourselves Greeks.



The Greeks were scattered all around the Mediterranean Sea. We Ionian Greeks lived on the Asian shore and on islands along that shore. There were other Greek city-states such as Thebes

## I AM HERODOTUS

and Corinth, Athens and Sparta, on the European mainland. We lived around our sea like frogs around a pond.

We weren't really a nation at all—just a collection of scattered city-states. Some were small, some bigger and more powerful, each making its own laws and ruling itself in its own way. Each city-state considered itself superior to the others and there was quarreling—even war—among us.

We were cut off from one another by water or by mountains. Still, we all spoke the same language, worshiped the same gods and kept the same customs. We were all Greeks. People who were not Greeks were considered barbarians.

The Persian Empire was the greatest power in the world. It stretched across Asia to India in the east; across Europe to Italy in the west; from the Black Sea in the north, across the Mediterranean Sea to Egypt in the south. Still, we scattered Greeks managed to defeat the mighty Persians.

How did we do that? I'll tell you how we did it, but that's only part of my story. Let's begin at the beginning.

