

In the classical period of Greece, some say it was the gods who vied for power, some say it was kings. But no matter how passionately they argue about gods and men, they all agree on the means to power:

Blood and Bronze.

Blood and Bronze is a role-playing game set in the classical period of Greek supremacy. When each city was a kingdom, with its army, lead by kings and heroes of legend, watched over by a patron god or goddess, and each desiring greater glory.

Players each take on the role of one of these cities and work to have their city reign unchallenged.

Before Play: What do you need?

The game works best with between 3 and 5 players. Each player will need a copy of the City Sheet and something to write with. You will also need around 25 Blood and Bronze tokens per player and probably another 20 or so to last out the course of the game. Blood and Bronze tokens are available from Blank Shield Press, or you can improvise your own by painting pennies red on one side. A big brass pot to hold them will add atmosphere, but any largish bowl or pot will do.

Chapter 1: Where do you stand?

Each player chooses one city from the following list:

Athens (Hero: Theseus. King: Aegeus. Goddess: Athena)  
Corinth (Hero: Bellepheron. King: Sisyphus. God: Apollo)  
Thebes (Hero: Herakles. King: Oedipus. God: Hermes)  
Argos (Hero: Perseus. King Inachus. Goddess: Hera)

And writes the corresponding Hero, King, and God(dess) on their city sheet.

Each player draws 20 tokens from the pool of Blood and Bronze; the side showing doesn't matter for this stage of the game. Players then begin a round of competitive boasting to determine who has the greatest in each of the four arenas: Army, Hero, King and God.

Starting with the youngest player and proceeding clockwise, each player makes a single statement about their Army and openly bids some of their 20 tokens. You must bid at least one more than the previous player, or pass. If you pass, you are out of the bidding for that arena. All tokens bid are considered spent. Bidding continues around the table until all players but one have passed. That player takes a token from the common pot and places it into the Army – Without Peer! spot on their army record. By all means, lord it

over your fellow players; you've paid for that right. Also, make sure to record your honor (and, if you like, some of the boasts that brought you there) in the history of your city.

The oldest player begins bidding for the greatest Hero, which proceeds in the same fashion. The bidding for King is started by the second youngest, and the bidding for God by the second eldest.

Once all four arenas have been bid on, there remains one decision to make:

Blood or Bronze?

For each arena that a player has tokens in, they must secretly choose either Blood or Bronze. Using tokens from the pot, place them underneath the appropriate tracks on the city sheet. Once all players have placed, all tokens are revealed at once.

Record the tokens (correct face up!) bid on the appropriate tracks on the city sheets (pulling from the pot if necessary) and return any excess tokens to the common pot.

Each player should also place a token in the Oracle at Delphi – Unused spot.

#### *Chapter One Example of play*

*Jake, David, Martin and Lisa are sitting down to a game of Blood and Bronze. Jake spraypainted one side of a whole bunch of pennies last night and Martin brought a battered old brass bowl to throw them in. They each choose a city, with Martin wanting Corinth and Lisa wanting Argos. Jake and David arguing for a bit over who got Thebes, but Jake decided it wasn't worth arguing over and took Athens. They wrote the relevant information on the sheets and started the bidding. As the youngest, David started the bidding for the greatest army in Greece.*

*He declared: "Thebes was a mighty city, and no man born there was allowed past the age of 5 without a spear being placed in his hand!" and slapped down 2 of his tokens. Martin laughed. "Ha! Boys with spears. The men of Corinth are fearless in battle, for they know Apollo favours them with his light!" and puts 5 tokens down.*

*"Men. You bluster and strut, but when it comes to the battle, your army will be only half the size of Argos, for our women fight alongside their men." Lisa bid 6 tokens.*

*"Athens has no need of great armies. When our people need to fight, they do." Jake passes.*

*The bidding continues in a similar fashion until everyone except Lisa has passed. The final spending on Armies is Lisa: 11, David 9, Martin 5, and Jake 0.*

*Lisa reaches forward and pulls a token from the bowl, and holds it up to the group.*

*"Remember this, when the armies of Argos sweep you into the sea. Remember that you could have held this honor, but the cost was too high. I wonder, when you're being slaughtered like lambs, will the cost seem light?"*

*After the other rounds of bidding have been completed, Lisa would place one token in the tens spot and one under the ones spot. With the token on Without peer!, this makes her total value for the army twelve.*

## Chapter Two: The Passage of Time

Each turn in the game represents the passage of one year for the cities. The first turn is year one of the Age of Legends. Each year begins with plotting, moves to accusations and war, and concludes with triumph and boasting.

**Plotting:** The cities are free to make whatever deals and arrangements they wish, either for the coming year, or for as many years to come as they like. The deals can be discussed and agreed openly at the table, or in secret. However, by the end of the plotting phase, they must be written down in the history of both cities. Deals can be as specific (Theseus will go with the Army of Corinth if they invade Thebes this coming year) or general (Argos will always accompany Corinth when Blood and Bronze allow it) as the players like. There is absolutely no constraint within the game to keep your written agreements: your word is as good as you want it to be.

The plotting phase shouldn't take more than about 15 minutes; if it becomes necessary, time it. If you are timing the phase, allow a little bit after the clock has stopped for people to write down the deals they have made; anyone who abuses this extra time by continuing to plot must immediately pay a token from one of their arenas into the common pot.

**The Oracle at Delphi:** Between the plotting and the accusations, cities have the option to send someone to the Oracle at Delphi. Only one city may visit the Oracle in any given year, and a city may only visit the Oracle once in a game. One of the players (doesn't matter who) takes a token from the pot and throws it back in. The first city to declare a visit to the oracle after the token hits the pot must do so; no other city may visit the Oracle this year. In the event that two or more cities both declare visits at the same time, the first one to throw one of their own tokens (from any arena) into the pot makes the visit. When you visit the Oracle write down (and declare to the table) the prophecy you are given, and move your Oracle token from Unused to Prophesied and choose which face is showing. If the face is Blood, you may add 10 to the Blood side of any conflict in this year, but at the end of the year, will need to pay 5 Bronze tokens to the pot. If the face is Bronze, the colors are reversed, but it otherwise behaves the same.

**Accusations and War:** Even the most ambitious of cities cannot simply start a war; there must be some pretext. An offended God, a stolen daughter, some excuse or reason is needed. To start a war, a city must make an Accusation against another city, and record it in their history. No city may make more than one accusation per year, and each accusation must be taken to war and the war concluded before another accusation may be made. There is no set order to the accusations phase: if it's longer than about a minute and no one has made an accusation, start goading other cities into action by mocking their arenas and their lack of ambition. Cities that do not go to war do not become legends.

After an accusation is made, the accuser declares which arena will be the primary aspect of the war for both accuser and defender. They are constrained in that Blood may not fight Blood and Bronze may not fight Bronze.

Both cities may then invite other cities to accompany them into the field. The invitations can be as open or narrow as the cities like.

Exception: A city (either defending or attacking) in its arena of strength may not call for company in the field – they are, after all, without peer.

A city that chooses to accompany another on the field must do so with a single arena that is not the main arena under conflict. All arenas on the same side of a war must show the same color: Blood to Blood and Bronze to Bronze.

A single war cannot have more than one city on each side in each Arena.

After sides have been finalized, the tokens on each side are counted, and the higher total wins. The winner of a battle and all their companions gain tokens in the arena they used equal to half the strength of the loser's primary arena (round down). The loser of a battle and all their companions lose tokens in the arena they used equal to half the strength of the winner's primary arena. Tokens lost must come from the arena put forward. If there are not enough, the city must pay from the rest of their arenas at a 2:1 ratio. If they can't pay at that ratio, they are out of the game, forgotten by history.

Exception: If one of the sides in a war is without peer in the primary arena, then do not count the tokens: the city without peer cannot lose. They will win, unless they are opposed by cities showing every arena. In that case, the battle is a stalemate. In a stalemate, the losing city (but not their companions) gains 3 tokens in the primary arena.

In addition to this, if the winner of a battle is without peer, they may either choose to shift their tokens among piles of the same color, or choose to change the color of some or all of their piles; they cannot do both.

After all the cities that wish to start wars have done so, the accusations and wars phase is over. Mock anyone who didn't start a war this year.

**Betrayal and Loyalty:** During Accusations and War, the first city to break a written deal gains a single Blood token from the pot. They may place this token into any of their arenas. If that arena was previously Bronze, it is flipped to Blood, and the betrayal is recorded in their history. The first city to uphold a written agreement gains a single Bronze token, which may be placed into any of their arenas. If the arena was previously Blood, it is now Bronze, and as with betrayal, record the loyalty in the city's history. One city cannot both be loyal and treacherous in the same year; if a city has already received one it cannot receive the other – the next city to betray or show loyalty will gain the appropriate token instead. If a city happens to both be loyal and treacherous with the same action, they may choose which to be remembered for.

*Chapter Two example of play*

*During the plotting phase, David turns to Lisa and notes “we both picked Blood on three out of four arenas, and the arenas we have Bronze are different. Obviously fate has made Thebes and Argos into allies for the times to come. Whadya think?”*

*Lisa nods and agrees. “It is obvious that our futures are intertwined in this coming year. After that, who knows?” They both write the alliance in their History. Some other plotting happens, but nothing gets written down as a result.*

*Lisa pulls a token out of the bowl and throws it back in. The tang echoes and fades with no one taking the plunge, and after a few seconds more just in case, she calls “Ok, accusations.”*

*David slaps his hand down on the table. “I can stay silent no longer! All the world knows that Thebes has the finest wine in Greece, and yet that dog Sisypheus of Corinth has the gall to spurn our trade and go across the sea to fill his glass. The honor of Thebes demands war!” He grins. “Primary arena is Kings, my Bronze to your Blood. Who’s with me?”*

*“Bah. Corinth trades across the sea because the wine of Thebes is fouled water! Who will stand with us?”*

*Jake looks at the numbers and sees that David has 5 in Kings while Martin has 6. Lisa can throw Argos’ army in on the side of Thebes, which will overmatch the 3 in Gods that he could add to Corinth. “We stand with Thebes. Theseus once tasted the wine of Thebes and swore on oath to drink no other.” His 6 in Hero will be added to David’s 5 for Thebes’ King*

*Lisa looks at the table and grins. “Argos has no stomach for the wines of Thebes. They give it to us freely, and we water our dogs with it.” She takes a token from the bowl, Blood side up, and adds it to her Army, flipping the rest of the tokens. “Treachery!” She writes it down in the history of Argos. The 13 from her Army along with the 6 from Corinth’s King easily beat the 11 that Thebes King and Athens’ Hero total.*

*Corinth adds 2 to their King and Argos adds 2 to their Army (half of 5, rounded down). Thebes removes 3 from their King and Athens 3 from their Hero.*

Triumph and Boasting: First, if a city visited the Oracle this year, they must pay the price. Move their Oracle marker to the Paid spot, and pay five tokens of the appropriate color from their arenas. If they cannot pay the appropriate color of tokens, they must pay 2:1 from the other color. If they still cannot pay, they are doomed by prophecy. They are out of the game, and while their city will be remembered by history, it is as a place cursed by the gods.

Next, the totals in each arena are compared, and the city with the highest total, if it was not already, becomes the city without peer in that arena, and the former holder loses the honor. In the case of a tie, the honor remains with the current holder, even if they aren’t one of the ones tied. The cities without peer declare their honors to all of Greece, preferably loudly and at the same time. Should any city be so fortunate as to be without peer in two arenas, they are truly a great city of legend, and should boast appropriately. If any city manages to achieve supremacy in three or more arenas, then history will judge them as the greatest of the Grecian cities; their shadow will be cast throughout the ages,

and the whole world will know their legends. They have won, and the other cities of Greece must bend the knee and acknowledge them, however grudgingly, as their better. If no city holds this legendary stature, the year advances, a new plotting phase begin and the game continues. If, by the end of the evening, no city has achieved three or more arenas without peer, then the Greeks must face the dawning truth that all their achievements, glories and culture will be stolen or overshadowed by those young upstarts in Rome.

# Sample City Sheet

City: _____				
Army	History:			Hero
Without Peer!				Without Peer!
Ones				Ones
Fives				Fives
Tens				Tens
King				God
Without Peer!				Without Peer!
Ones				Ones
Fives				Fives
Tens	Oracle at Delphi			Tens
	Unused	Prophesied	Paid	