

## Explore More—Government and the Idea of Citizenship

**Directions:** Listen to your teacher talk about the transition from tyranny and oligarchy to early democratic forms of government and back to dictatorship in ancient Greece. You will learn about the significance of the invention of the idea of citizenship. Refer to the maps in your Explore Geography Picture Dictionary to locate the places your teacher mentions. Circle any words you don't understand. Underline or highlight important ideas in the text. Write notes in the margins to help you understand key points. Then answer the questions in your own words.

### Tyranny and Oligarchy

At first, kings ruled the newly developing Greek city-states. However, this began to change around 800 B.C. One new system that they tried was an oligarchy. An oligarchy is a type of government where only a small number of people rule. These people were usually nobles, or as Greeks called them, *aristoi*. In English, the word *aristoi* is “aristocrat.” Sometimes, one of the ruling members in an oligarchy tried to seize more control. Sometimes, the people supported that individual who was called a *tyrrano*. In English, this word is “tyrant.” When we think about the word “tyrant” now, we associate it with someone who rules harshly and oppressively. However, in ancient Greece, being a tyrant just meant that the ruler had absolute power. Tyrants in early Greece often ruled successfully. Often, they lost power when they tried to pass on their power to a family member.

### Democracy and Dictatorship

The Greeks also tried early forms of democracy. Democracy is a form of government in which the people rule themselves. The Greek form of democracy was direct—that is, all citizens met to discuss and then vote on laws. This is different from a representative democracy. In Athens, only citizens could vote. Citizens were free-born men from Athens over the age of 18. Women, slaves, and men born in other city-states could not vote. Sparta also was a democracy, but very few people were eligible to be citizens and run the government. Only about 10% of Spartans had this right.

*Find Athens and Sparta on a map in the textbook or historical anthology.*

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The government of Sparta was made up of two kings, five elected officials called ephors, a senate composed of approximately 30 men, and an assembly of all citizens. Even though modern democracies have borrowed ideas from the Athenian model, the ideas have been adapted. For example, the United States uses a representative form of democracy rather than a direct democracy. In a representative democracy, citizens choose officials to represent them in the government. It is the representatives who make and create laws, not the citizens themselves.

Democracy in ancient Greece did not last because war broke out between Athens and Sparta. This was called the Peloponnesian War. Sparta won the war and established its form of government in Athens. The Spartan democracy was less equal and less democratic than the Athenian model. In time, Alexander the Great conquered the Greek city-states and became their king. Greece then had a dictatorship—absolute power and control by a single ruler.

## **The Idea of Citizenship**

Before the Peloponnesian War, a man named Pericles was a leader in Athens. During the time of Pericles, Athens experienced a golden age where Greek drama, architecture, and philosophy flourished. There were also advances in the concept of democracy, including the development of the idea of citizenship.

*Point to the time line in the historical anthology that shows when Pericles led Athens.*

In a speech in 431 B.C. known as the “Funeral Oration,” Pericles talked about Athenian democracy and honored the soldiers who had died during the Peloponnesian War. Pericles discussed the idea that every citizen is equal before the law. In the “Funeral Oration,” Pericles outlined a system of government that greatly influenced later generations. He talked about how government leadership should not be determined by a person’s social class, but by a person’s accomplishments. He also described how in the Athenian democracy, power is shared by the people. ❖

## YOUR TURN!

Write your answers to the following questions.

1. Define the following terms:

Tyranny: \_\_\_\_\_

Oligarchy: \_\_\_\_\_

Democracy: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictatorship: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How did Pericles describe citizenship?

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### **Questions for further discussion:**

- What would you like to know more about in terms of government in ancient Greece or the ideas Pericles discussed in his “Funeral Oration”? Frame questions that you can answer by historical study and research. Conduct this research and discuss your findings.
- How was the spread of democracy affected by the geographical location of the Greek city-states? How did historical events like the Peloponnesian War and the war against Macedonia contribute to the end of democracy in Athens? Use a variety of maps and documents to identify physical and cultural features of the Greek city-states to explain both their expansion and disintegration and the expansion and disintegration of democracy in the region.
- Reread the “Funeral Oration” in the historical anthology. Also read the text in the historical anthology that deals with Pericles and the “Funeral Oration.” What conclusions can you draw from these views of historical events? Assess the credibility of these primary and secondary sources and draw sound conclusions from them.
- Distinguish fact from opinion in Pericles’s “Funeral Oration.”