

Lesson Eight: Ancient Greece

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will explore how democracy shaped Ancient Greece. They will make connections between past and present, exploring how the ideals of equity and fairness impacted, and continue to impact, the decision-making process. They will also compare the concepts of direct and representative democracy.

TEACHING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Complete the reading “Democracy: Athenian Style.” This can be done as a shared, guided or independent reading.
 2. Model “direct democracy” with students in the classroom. For example, choose ten students who will be the “500” of the Athenian democracy. Allow them to make one law each (a law that connects to everyday routines and expectations in the classroom would allow all students to connect to the example).
 3. Have all students be equal citizens and vote “yes” or “no” to the laws that were created by the ten students. Alternatively, have just the boys vote as citizens (representing less equity and the Athenian definition of “citizen.”)
 4. Discuss the differences between Athenian democracy and modern Canadian democracy.
- Suggested discussion questions:***
- What are the differences between direct democracy and representative democracy?
 - What is the difference between the terms “Canadian citizen” and “Athenian citizen?”
 - Are there equity and fairness issues in a direct democracy?
 - What are some other ways to model direct democracy in the classroom?
 - Would you rather live in a direct democracy or representative democracy? Explain.
 - Do you think it is important to talk about ancient forms of democracy? Explain.
 - How might the subtitles in the text help you further your understanding of democracy in Ancient Greece?
5. Record students’ thoughts on chart paper/ electronically so they can be used later when they apply their thinking to complete the activities.
 6. Have students complete Activity A and/or B.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Students could conduct further research on the topic of democracy in ancient Greece.
- Students could explore other forms of government in ancient civilizations.

ACCOMMODATIONS/MODIFICATIONS

- Have students use assistive technology to assist with the reading and responding process.
- Pair students who require assistance with a peer helper.

ANSWER KEY

Activity A

1. Direct democracy could be found in ancient Greece.
2. Men were considered citizens. They had to be 18 years and older.
3. 500 names were drawn each year.
4. Each group of 500 served for one year.
5. Women, children and slaves could not participate in the democratic process.
6. Direct democracy ended in Greece after they lost to Sparta in the Peloponnesian war.
7. We see representative democracy in Canada today.
8. Democracy was well-liked in ancient Greece.

Activity B

Sample answers:

What is a direct democracy? • a democracy where representatives are randomly drawn and must serve. • The people themselves participate.	Similarities and differences between ancient and modern democracy • direct democracy is more ancient and representative democracy more modern. • the definition of “citizen” has changed from just males to everyone over 18. • slavery is no longer allowed because everyone is equal.
The end of democracy in Athens • democracy in Athens ended after the Peloponnesian war. • Sparta won the war and took over Athens.	Democracy as a part of history • democracy is now common around the world even though it was created over 2400 years ago. • democracy has evolved, like human rights.





Democracy: Athenian Style

Did you know that democracy existed over 2400 years ago in Ancient Greece? Yes, the concept of “the people rule” was born that long ago! Democracy began as an experiment in Athens, Greece and lasted around 100 years before war brought it to an end. It was well-liked by the people and it played a very important role in shaping the Canadian government that exists today.



A Direct Democracy

Canadians are familiar with *representative democracy*. Representatives are elected to represent citizens at various levels of government. In ancient Greece, there was a *direct democracy*. Members of the government were selected randomly. Each year, five hundred names were randomly drawn and these five hundred citizens were given the responsibility of making laws and revising laws. When these laws were proposed, Athenian citizens all had an equal vote. They showed up on voting day and voted “yes” or “no” to the proposed laws. They voted by simply raising a hand. The majority of votes determined the outcome.

Citizens of Ancient Greece

While there are similarities in the type of democracy we are familiar with and that of ancient Greece, there are also differences. One of the biggest differences is the definition of “citizen.” In Athens, a “citizen” was a male who was over eighteen years old. Only free men were allowed to participate in the democratic process. There were many slaves in ancient Greece and they, along with women and children, were not considered citizens and therefore did not have a vote.



Another difference was that all adult male citizens were required to play an active role in the government. The men could not simply opt out of their required government duty, they had to participate if they were selected to do so.



The End of the “500”

Direct democracy ended in Athens after the Peloponnesian War. The Athenians lost the war against the Spartans and were subjected to their rule for a time period. This resulted in social change that temporarily ended democracy.



A Democratic Legacy

Thankfully, democracy was not permanently defeated! The democratic process lives on today and is one of the most important legacies of ancient Greece. Democracy has evolved along with human rights and freedoms. We can thank ancient Greece for the blueprint and modern-day charters such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for the democratic rights we have today.



Student Directions:

Respond to the short answer questions in complete sentences.

1. What type of democracy could be found in ancient Greece?

2. Who was considered a “citizen” in Athens?

3. How many citizens’ names were drawn?

4. How long did each group of 500 serve for?

5. Who could not participate in the democratic process?

6. How did direct democracy end in ancient Greece?

7. What kind of democracy do we see in Canada today?

8. How did the ancient Greeks feel about democracy?

Student Directions:

1. Re-read the text Democracy: Athenian Style.
2. For each main idea, find relevant evidence from the text and record it in the box.

What is a direct democracy?	Similarities and differences between ancient and modern democracy
The end of democracy in Athens	Democracy as a part of history