



## Greek Democracy: Lesson Plan

Topic	
<p>Democracy is derived from the Greek word <i>demokratia</i>, meaning “rule by the people.” One belief that was foundational to Greek democracy is the term <i>isonomia</i>, meaning “equality before the law.” When we talk about Greek democracy, we really mean <i>Athenian</i> democracy. The Athenian government consisted of three major institutions: the <i>ekklesia</i> (assembly), the <i>boule</i> (council of 500), and the <i>dikasteria</i> (popular law courts). Despite its flaws, Athenian democracy left a lasting impact in the form of its founding beliefs, namely the principle of self-governance and the idea that government exists for the people.</p>	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Government</li> <li>● History</li> <li>● Politics</li> <li>● Philosophy</li> </ul>	45-60 minutes
Video link:	
<a href="https://academy4sc.org/topic/greek-democracy-humble-beginnings/" style="color: #0056b3; text-decoration: underline;">https://academy4sc.org/topic/greek-democracy-humble-beginnings/</a>	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Describe the three major institutions of Athenian government.</li> <li>● List key flaws/inconsistencies in the Athenian system.</li> <li>● Identify the lasting impact of Athenian democracy on the world today.</li> </ul>	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
demokratia, isonomia, ekklesia, boule, dikasteria	
Materials Needed	
Worksheet, computers	
Before you watch	

**Think-pair-share:** What principles, procedures, and institutions do you think are characteristic of a democracy? Have students think about this question independently and write down some thoughts. Then, have students discuss their thoughts with a partner. Finally, have students share their thoughts with the class.

### While you watch

Complete the "While you watch" section of the worksheet.

### After you watch/discussion questions

1. What are some examples of ways in which current societies that claim to be democracies are not truly democratic?
2. Are there any modern societies that seem to share Athens' fundamental democratic values?
3. Is democracy inherently or always good? Can democracy go awry?

### Activity Ideas

- **What if?** Ask students to write a short essay about one change they would make to the Athenian government in order to make it more democratic.
- **Compare and Contrast:** Pick one modern country that is considered democratic (United States, Canada, Norway, &c.). Give students 10-15 minutes to briefly research the basic structure of that country's government and write down ways in which that country appears to be more or less democratic than Athenian democracy. Discuss as a class.

### Sources/places to learn more

1. "Ancient Greek Democracy." *history.com*, A&E Television Networks, LLC, 19 Aug. 2019, [www.history.com/topics/ancient-greece/ancient-greece-democracy](http://www.history.com/topics/ancient-greece/ancient-greece-democracy).
2. Carey, Christopher. *Democracy in Classical Athens*. 2nd ed., New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
3. Martin, Thomas R. *An Overview of Classical Greek History from Mycenae to Alexander*. [www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0009](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0009).
4. Pomeroy, Sarah B., et al. *A Brief History of Ancient Greece*. 3rd ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013.



5. Thucydides, "Pericles' Funeral Oration." *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book 2.34-46.