

# Cradle of Democracy

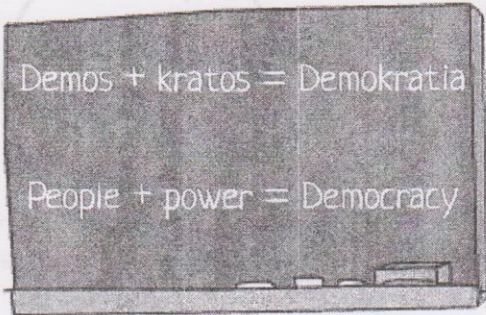
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Who invented democracy?

No *one* person invented the type of democracy that we have today. The building blocks were created in the classical period and developed over the centuries. The **classical period** covers the long history of the region that surrounds the Mediterranean Sea. Democracy was just one of the many different types of governments that the Greeks and Romans tried over the centuries. Political thinkers, including America's Founding Fathers, studied the history of these civilizations closely for lessons on government.



Athens was a city-state in ancient Greece. The Roman Republic covered almost all the land surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.



## It's all Greek to me!

Almost 2,500 years ago the leader of Athens (a Greek city-state) decided to try something different – rule by the people, or **direct democracy**. This kind of democracy required all the citizens to participate directly in the actions of government. The assembly created laws and directed foreign policy, the council oversaw the actions of government, and the courts acted as police, judges, and jury! Back then, only male citizens of Athens over 18 were considered part of the *demos*, or government.

## Good idea, but it needs some work.

In Athens, the citizens had a hand in all of the decisions and actions of government. This system only lasted about 200 years, but it made an impact on future civilizations. This approach worked as long as it did because Athens had a small population that allowed for close cooperation. Another major civilization in the neighborhood was Rome. The Roman government had a larger territory and more people, so direct democracy wasn't going to work as well. They would have to make some improvements without losing the power of the people.



## Big Idea: Consent of the Governed

When citizens participate in government they give their permission for that government to operate. Participation includes *doing government* like in Athens, and *voting for representatives* like the Romans.



These letters are found all over Rome and represent "The Senate and People of Rome".

## When in Rome...

In 508 BCE, the leaders of Rome wanted democracy, but knew they'd never be able to get *every* citizen to participate in government. So, a republic was born. In a **republic**, the citizens elect representatives to run the government for them. These representatives were responsible to the people that elected them. The people still had power, but now it was handed off to a group of citizens that could act on their behalf. The Roman Republic lasted almost 500 years!

## So What?

You can see the influence of Greek democracy and the Roman Republic in the government we have today. Even in the 1700s, America was too big to work as a *direct* democracy. The Founding Fathers established a system that gave power to the people, and did so with elected representatives. The final product is called a **representative democracy**.



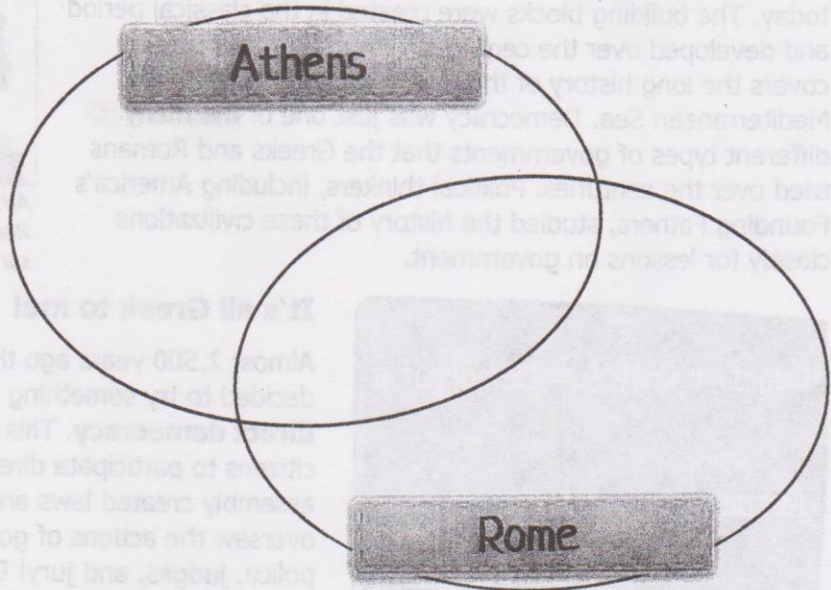
Campaign signs in Arizona.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**A. Compare.** Complete this Venn diagram to see how Greek and Roman versions of democracy compare. Write the letter of the statement in the correct area of the diagram.

- A. Direct democracy
- B. Republic
- C. Citizens involved with government
- D. Existed during the classical period
- E. Studied by later political scholars
- F. Large territory and population
- G. People elected other citizens to represent them in government
- H. Citizens participated directly in the government
- I. Small territory and population
- J. Experimented with democracy



**B. Which is best?** Read each scenario and decide which type of government makes the most sense. Would a direct democracy like in Athens work best, or would a republic like in Rome make more sense?

It's the end of the school year, and your class of 250 students must decide the best place for the yearbook signing party.

- Everybody votes in a direct democracy!
- Select representatives for groups of students.

Why?

A new nation just created a constitution, and needs the approval of the residents. At last count, the population was at five million.

- Everybody votes in a direct democracy!
- Select representatives from different regions to speak for their neighbors.

Why?

Your neighborhood needs to choose a spot for building a new dog park. How should you and the residents of the other 30 homes decide?

- Everybody votes in a direct democracy!
- Select one representative from each home to speak for their family.

Why?