# Who Holds Power?

Trace political change in Greek city-states

**SS24.7.14b** "Trace the development of Greek city-states' political systems, including democracy, that influenced the governments of modern nations."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline each change in who held power in Athens, then number the changes in order. Circle one detail that shows Sparta followed a different path.

### From Kings to Citizen Votes

1. Imagine standing in an Athenian marketplace around 600 BCE, hearing neighbors argue over debt and land. Earlier, Athens had kings, but powerful families later held most political power through councils and offices. Ordinary farmers who owed money could even be forced into slavery. In 594 BCE, Solon ended debt slavery for Athenians and gave more male citizens a role in the assembly, where public matters were discussed. Wealth still shaped who could hold top offices. His changes did not create full democracy, but they weakened the grip of a few families.

2. Later, Peisistratos seized power as a tyrant, a single ruler who took control outside the usual rules. His rule and his sons' rule showed that political change did not move in a straight line. After their rule ended, Cleisthenes reorganized citizens into ten new tribes in 508/507 BCE. Each tribe sent members to a Council of 500, which prepared business for the assembly. In the democracy that grew, male citizens voted directly on many public decisions. Women, enslaved people, and resident foreigners could not vote, so participation remained limited.

3. Across Greece, Sparta took another path. Its two kings led armies, while a council of elders and elected officials called ephors held powers. An assembly of male citizens could vote on proposals, but it could not debate or change them. Greek city-states showed different ways to share or limit power. Modern nations have borrowed ideas such as citizen voting and councils, but most use elected representatives rather than asking citizens to vote on every law. Many also extend voting rights beyond the small group recognized in ancient Athens.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did power shift in Athens before Solon's reforms, and what problem did his reforms address?

2. How did Solon's changes widen participation without giving everyone equal power?

3. Why does Peisistratos's rule interrupt a simple story of Athens becoming more democratic?

4. How did Sparta's path differ from Athens's later democracy? Name one way modern nations changed an idea found in Greek government.

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a city that begins with a few families in charge. In four or five sentences, describe two changes that spread power over time, connect one change to a Greek city-state, and explain how a modern nation could adapt that idea to include more people.

ANSWER KEY

# Who Holds Power?

GRADE 7 · SS24.7.14b

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each change in who held power in Athens, then number the changes in order. Circle one detail that shows Sparta followed a different path. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did power shift in Athens before Solon's reforms, and what problem did his reforms address? | **Power shifted from kings to powerful families. Solon's reforms addressed debt slavery and the limited political role of other male citizens.** |
| 2 | How did Solon's changes widen participation without giving everyone equal power? | **More male citizens could take part in the assembly, but wealth still affected who could hold top offices.** |
| 3 | Why does Peisistratos's rule interrupt a simple story of Athens becoming more democratic? | **After Solon widened participation, Peisistratos seized power as a single ruler.** |
| 4 | How did Sparta's path differ from Athens's later democracy? Name one way modern nations changed an idea found in Greek government. | **Sparta kept two kings and other powerful officials, and its assembly could not debate or change proposals. Athens's male citizens voted directly on many decisions. Most modern nations use elected representatives instead of direct votes on every law.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In my invented city, five families choose every law and judge. First, citizens create an assembly that can vote on laws, borrowing from Athens. Next, they choose a council from different neighborhoods to prepare proposals, so no single family controls the agenda. A modern nation could elect council members and let all adult citizens vote, unlike ancient Athens, where only male citizens could vote.

Accept historically accurate comparisons that trace changes in who held power. Part 3 should show two distinct changes, a clear Greek connection, and a modern adaptation that widens participation.