

Freedom and the Polis

Analyze how a fictional Classical Greek civic speech develops connected ideas.

ELA.11.R.2.2 "Analyze the central idea(s) of speeches and essays from the Classical Period."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline sentences that state or develop a major claim, circle concrete examples or warnings that support those claims, and write 1 or 2 beside evidence for each central idea.

Speech to the Assembly

- ① Citizens of Athens, our city is not held together by its stone walls or its ships alone. A city endures when those who benefit from its laws also accept the labor of protecting them. Some men come to the Assembly only when a tax troubles them or a neighbor angers them. Yet public decisions shape the safety of every household. If we leave judgment to a small group, we trade the strength of many minds for the convenience of a few. Let each citizen listen, question, and vote with the whole city in mind.
- ② Consider the water fountain near the market. No single family built the channels, cleared the silt, or guarded the supply during drought. Generations paid and worked because each household needed water. Our common life is like that fountain. Courts, roads, and defenses serve us only if citizens contribute money, service, and careful judgment. A man who demands these benefits while refusing every public duty weakens the source from which he drinks. Wealth may buy private comfort, but it cannot buy a just decision from a court or courage from an army that no one supports.
- ③ Still, participation must be guided by law. A crowd can cheer a clever speaker and condemn a neighbor before hearing the facts. For this reason, written laws and orderly debate protect both the city and the individual citizen. They require us to give reasons, hear opposing voices, and judge the same act by the same rule. Do not mistake freedom for doing whatever pleases us at the moment. Freedom in a city means sharing power under rules that prevent power from becoming the weapon of the loudest or richest man. By defending those rules, we defend our own voice.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 What are the speech's two central ideas? State each idea in your own words.

2 How does the fountain near the market develop the idea about civic duty?

3 How does the final paragraph connect to the speech's earlier call for citizens to participate?

4 Why does the speaker contrast private wealth with a just court and a supported army?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write an 80 to 100 word analytical response that explains one central idea of the speech and how two details develop it. Include one detail from the first two paragraphs and one detail from the final paragraph.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline sentences that state or develop a major claim, circle concrete examples or warnings that support those claims, and write 1 or 2 beside evidence for each central idea. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What are the speech's two central ideas? State each idea in your own words.	A strong city requires citizens to share public duties and participate in decisions. Civic freedom also requires laws and orderly debate that protect people from unfair or concentrated power.
2	How does the fountain near the market develop the idea about civic duty?	The fountain is a comparison for public life. Because many people must maintain it for everyone to have water, it shows that public institutions need shared contributions from citizens.
3	How does the final paragraph connect to the speech's earlier call for citizens to participate?	It qualifies that call by explaining that participation alone is not enough. Citizens must participate under written laws and orderly debate so that power is used fairly.
4	Why does the speaker contrast private wealth with a just court and a supported army?	The contrast shows that individual wealth cannot replace shared civic responsibility or provide the public institutions that protect the whole city.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

One central idea of the speech is that civic freedom depends on citizens accepting duties under fair laws. The speaker first compares public life to the market fountain, which survives because many generations pay and work to maintain it. This image shows that courts, roads, and defense cannot last if citizens only take benefits. The speaker then warns that a crowd may condemn someone without hearing facts. That warning explains why participation also needs written laws and orderly debate. Together, these details present freedom as responsible shared self-government, not private convenience.

Accept equivalent statements of the two central ideas when students explain the relationship between shared civic duty, participation, and law. For the open response, look for a valid central idea, two relevant details from the required sections, and explanation rather than summary alone.