

Voices of the Polis

Read how Greek city-states shaped democratic government.

SS.6.W.3.2 "Explain the democratic concepts (i.e., polis, civic participation and voting rights, legislative bodies, written constitutions, rule of law) developed in ancient Greece."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, number six pieces of evidence in the passage. Label them polis, civic participation, voting rights, legislative bodies, written constitutions, and rule of law.

Democracy in Greek City-States

- ① In ancient Greece, people did not live in one united country. They lived in independent city-states called poleis, or polis in singular. A polis included a city and the nearby land, but it was also a community of citizens. In Athens, citizens were expected to care about public decisions, not only private life. This civic participation could include attending meetings, serving on juries, debating proposals, or holding public office. Greek thinkers connected citizenship with duties to the polis.
- ② At Athens's Assembly, eligible citizens gathered to debate and vote on laws, war, and other public matters. The Assembly was a legislative body, a group that helped make laws. A smaller Council prepared business for the Assembly, and large juries decided many court cases. Voting rights were limited. Adult male citizens could take part, but women, enslaved people, and resident foreigners could not vote. Athens was democratic for its citizens, yet its democracy did not include everyone who lived there.
- ③ Earlier Greek communities often relied on customs known by a few powerful people. In Athens, lawgivers such as Draco and Solon had laws written down and displayed publicly. Written laws made rules easier for citizens to know and discuss, although some were harsh or later changed. Greeks developed constitutional rules, some recorded in writing, about offices, laws, and citizen rights. These ideas helped support the rule of law, which means laws, rather than one ruler's wishes, should guide the community. Later governments used these ideas when creating written constitutions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 How was a polis more than just a city?

2 Name two ways Athenian citizens could practice civic participation.

3 What were the jobs of the Assembly and the Council in Athens?

4 How did written laws and constitutional rules support the rule of law?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Invent a small polis and write exactly four sentences describing its government. Include civic participation, voting rights, a lawmaking body, and written laws that limit leaders.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

As you read, number six pieces of evidence in the passage. Label them polis, civic participation, voting rights, legislative bodies, written constitutions, and rule of law. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How was a polis more than just a city?	A polis included a city and nearby land, but it was also a community of citizens with shared public duties.
2	Name two ways Athenian citizens could practice civic participation.	Answers include attending meetings, serving on juries, debating proposals, or holding public office.
3	What were the jobs of the Assembly and the Council in Athens?	The Assembly debated and voted on public matters and laws. The Council prepared business for the Assembly.
4	How did written laws and constitutional rules support the rule of law?	They made rules public for citizens to know and discuss, organized government, and helped laws guide the community instead of one ruler's wishes.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In Harbor Polis, adult citizens may attend monthly meetings and vote on major decisions. A Council of 30 citizens will propose laws, and the Assembly will vote to approve or reject them. Voting rights belong to adult citizens, while the polis must state clearly who qualifies. Every law will be written and displayed, so leaders and citizens must follow the same rules.

Accept equivalent descriptions that accurately connect each Greek concept to democratic government. For the open response, check for exactly four sentences and all four required elements.