Who Rules Here?

Citizenship, participation, and power in Greek city-states

9-12.WC.3 "Examine the Hellenic concept of the polis in Greek city-states, including, but not limited to the ideas of democracy, citizenship, civic participation, and the rule of law."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one way citizens took part in governing in each polis, and circle one group denied a vote in each. Write 1 beside an Athenian practice that limited power and 2 beside a Spartan practice that limited power.

Inside a Greek Polis

1. Imagine standing near the Pnyx, a hill where Athens held its citizen assembly in the fifth century BCE. A speaker argues that the city should fund more warships. Other speakers challenge the cost before the assembled citizens vote. This public debate was one part of the *polis*, a self-governing city-state and its surrounding land, not simply a cluster of buildings. In Athens, adult male citizens could speak and vote in the assembly. Women, enslaved people, and resident foreigners could not. A decision made by those present affected many people who had no voice in making it.

2. Voting was not the only form of civic participation in Athens. A council of 500 citizens, chosen by lot each year, prepared business for the assembly. Citizen jurors, also selected by lot, heard disputes in large courts. Laws were recorded and publicly available, so officials and speakers could be challenged under rules that were meant to outlast a single vote. Yet access to these institutions depended on citizenship. A resident foreigner might pay taxes and serve in the military but could not sit on the council or on a jury. Public rules did not mean equal political rights for everyone.

3. Sparta was also a polis, but its civic order worked differently. Spartan male citizens met in an assembly and voted on proposals, while a council of elders shaped what the assembly considered. Five elected officials, called ephors, had powers that included supervising kings. Spartan citizenship required a demanding military upbringing, and women and the much larger population of unfree helots lacked a citizen's vote. Thus both cities linked civic duties to citizenship, but neither gave all inhabitants a share in government. Asking who could act under a city's laws, and who could help make them, reveals the limits of its political community.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could an Athenian assembly vote be democratic for some people but leave others without political power?

2. Why did publicly available laws not give every person in Athens equal political rights?

3. How did the Athenian council and juries give citizens ways to participate beyond voting in the assembly?

4. How did the councils in Athens and Sparta shape what happened in each city's assembly?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Design a fictional polis in five or six sentences. Explain who can become a citizen, how citizens help make decisions, and how a written law or an official limits power; then identify one group your system leaves out or one other weakness.

ANSWER KEY

Who Rules Here?

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.WC.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one way citizens took part in governing in each polis, and circle one group denied a vote in each. Write 1 beside an Athenian practice that limited power and 2 beside a Spartan practice that limited power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could an Athenian assembly vote be democratic for some people but leave others without political power?	**Adult male citizens could debate and vote, but women, enslaved people, and resident foreigners could not, even though decisions affected them.**
2	Why did publicly available laws not give every person in Athens equal political rights?	**Citizenship still determined who could serve on the council or a jury. Resident foreigners, for example, could do neither.**
3	How did the Athenian council and juries give citizens ways to participate beyond voting in the assembly?	**Citizens chosen by lot prepared assembly business on the council or heard disputes as jurors.**
4	How did the councils in Athens and Sparta shape what happened in each city's assembly?	**Athens's council of 500 prepared business for its assembly, while Sparta's council of elders shaped the proposals its assembly considered.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In my fictional polis, Harbor City, adult residents who have lived there five years may become citizens, including women and immigrants. Citizens vote on laws in an assembly, while a council chosen by lot prepares proposals. A written law requires officials to publish spending records, and citizen juries can investigate complaints against them. These rules give more residents a political voice than Athens or Sparta did. Enslaved workers still cannot vote in this system, so its claim to serve the whole community remains limited.

Accept other passage-supported contrasts and examples of participation. For the marking job, Athens's public laws and Sparta's ephors supervising kings are suitable practices that limited power.