Who Should Govern?

Compare classical ideas about leadership, law, and the common good

MWH.C.1.1.E "Compare the impact of Greek and Roman philosophers (e.g., Plato, Aristotle and Cicero) including their lasting influence on principles of government."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, number Plato's, Aristotle's, and Cicero's main ideas about government 1, 2, and 3. Underline one lasting influence of each thinker, then circle a phrase that shows a difference between two of them.

Three Views of Good Government

(1) Suppose a city must choose who will set rules for a shared garden. Plato, writing in ancient Athens, feared that popular leaders could win support with pleasing speeches rather than good judgment. In *The Republic*, he imagined a just city governed by philosopher rulers trained to seek knowledge of what is good. He did not offer a plan for modern elections. Instead, his argument left a lasting question for governments: should expertise carry more weight than public opinion? Later political thinkers have used his challenge to debate the qualifications and education of leaders.

(2) Aristotle, Plato's student, studied constitutions of Greek city-states rather than designing one ideal city. He argued that humans are political beings and that laws should serve the common good. Unlike Plato, he gave citizens a role in governing, although his idea of citizenship excluded women and enslaved people. He warned that any simple form of government could be corrupted when rulers served themselves. He favored a stable constitution that combined elements of government and drew strength from a substantial middle group. Later writers drew on his comparisons of constitutions when discussing balanced government and the rule of law.

(3) Cicero was a Roman statesman and writer who defended the republic as Roman leaders competed for power. He argued that a true republic is a community bound by shared agreement about justice and the common good. Like Aristotle, he held that public life should serve more than rulers' private interests. But Cicero stressed natural law, the claim that standards of justice can be discovered through reason and apply beyond any single city's written laws. His writings later influenced debates about legal rights and limits on rulers. Unlike Plato's trained philosopher rulers, his ideal depended on citizens and officials acting with civic duty under law.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Plato and Aristotle differ on who should take part in governing?

2. How did Aristotle and Cicero connect law to the common good? What was distinctive about Cicero's view?

3. Compare the lasting influence of Plato's argument with that of Cicero's writings.

4. What concern about government links all three thinkers? Explain one different way they addressed it.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A town is creating a youth council to decide how to spend money on a public park. In five or six sentences, propose a decision rule that draws on two thinkers from the passage, explain a tension between their ideas, and justify your choice.

ANSWER KEY

Who Should Govern?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, number Plato's, Aristotle's, and Cicero's main ideas about government 1, 2, and 3. Underline one lasting influence of each thinker, then circle a phrase that shows a difference between two of them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Plato and Aristotle differ on who should take part in governing?	**Plato imagined trained philosopher rulers governing. Aristotle gave citizens a role, though his definition of citizenship excluded women and enslaved people.**
2	How did Aristotle and Cicero connect law to the common good? What was distinctive about Cicero's view?	**Both held that government should serve the common good. Aristotle favored the rule of law; Cicero also argued that standards of justice exist beyond a city's written laws.**
3	Compare the lasting influence of Plato's argument with that of Cicero's writings.	**Plato's argument shaped debates about leaders' expertise and education. Cicero's writings influenced debates about legal rights and limits on rulers.**
4	What concern about government links all three thinkers? Explain one different way they addressed it.	**All were concerned with just government rather than rule for private gain. For example, Plato emphasized knowledgeable rulers, while Aristotle examined constitutions and laws that serve the common good.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would let residents elect a youth council, then require council members to study costs and listen to park users before voting. This combines Aristotle's support for citizen participation with Plato's concern that leaders need knowledge. Council members would have to give public reasons for each vote. Expert advice might conflict with what most residents want. I would let the elected council make the final decision after hearing experts, because residents should have a voice in a shared space.

Accept comparisons that accurately distinguish the thinkers without treating their ideas as identical to modern democracy. For Part 3, look for a workable rule, accurate use of two thinkers, a genuine tension, and a reasoned choice.