

The City-State and Governments of Greece



Rise of the City States

- Geography divided Greece into small regions. Because of this, the basic form of government was the city-state.
- A city-state is a state made of a city and its surrounding lands.
- The colonies founded by Greeks around the Mediterranean were also city-states.

Greek City-States

- City-states became common in Greece about 700 B.C. In Greek, the word for city-state was polis.
- Most city-states were small. Geographic features, such as mountains, limited their size.
- Athens and Sparta were the largest Greek city-states. Their lands included the plains that surrounded the center city.
- Most Greek cities had fewer than 20,000 residents. Because a city-state was fairly small, the people who lived there formed a close community.

Layout of the City

- The center of city life was the agora. The agora was an open space where people came for business and public gatherings.
- Male citizens met there to discuss politics. Festivals and athletic contests were held there.
- Statues, temples, and other public buildings were found in and around the agora.
- Many cities had a fortified hilltop called an acropolis. The word means "highest city." At first, people used the acropolis mainly for military purposes; high places are easier to defend.



https://www.360cities.net/embed_iframe/acropolis-late-afternoon-athens?r=nearpod&fullscreen=true



Merle Layden / 360cities.net



<https://cf.nearpod.com/neareducation/new/3d/player2/AncientTimes-Parthenon/index.html>

Forms of Government

- Each city-state of Greece was independent. The people of each one figured out what kind of government worked best for them.
- As a result, different city-states used different political systems.
- Some city-states kept the same system of government for centuries. Others slowly changed from one system to another.

Democracy

- Athens moved toward an early form of democracy.
- Democracy is a government in which the citizens make political decisions.
- In a direct democracy all the citizens meet to decide on the laws.
- In an Indirect democracy, people elect representatives to make laws. This is more common today. The United States is an example.

Limited Democracy

- Athens had a limited democracy.
- It did not include all of the people who lived in the city-state.
- Only free adult males were citizens who could take part in the government.
- Women, slaves, and foreigners could not take part.
- Non citizens were not allowed to become citizens.



<https://www.youtube.com/embed/0fivQUIC7-8>

Monarchy

- The earliest form of government in Greece was monarchy.
- A monarch is a king or queen who has supreme power.
- Therefore, a monarchy is a government that a king or queen rules.
- Most Greek city-states started out as monarchies but changed over time.

Oligarchy

- Some city-states developed a political system called oligarchy
- Oligarchy means "rule by the few." It is similar to aristocracy because in both cases, a minority group controls the government.
- The main difference between the two is the basis for the ruling class's power.
- When aristocrats rule, they do so because of their inherited social class.
- In an oligarchy, people rule because of wealth or land ownership.

Aristocracy

- Aristocracy is another name for the upper class or nobility.
- In Greece, the aristocracy were people who were descended from high-born ancestors.
- Some aristocrats believed that their ancestors were mythical heroes.
- By the 700s B.C., most of the Greek city-states had moved from monarchy to rule by an aristocracy.

Tyrants

- Poor people were not part of government in either monarchy, aristocracy, or oligarchy.
- Often, the poor came to resent being shut out of power. At times, they rebelled.
- Sometimes a wealthy person who wanted to seize power made use of that anger. He would ask poor people to support him in becoming a leader.
- Such leaders were called tyrants.
- In Greece, a tyrant was someone who took power in an illegal way.
- To the Greeks, a tyrant was simply someone who acted

Most famous tyrant in history?

- Under the command of Genghis Khan, the Mongols swept through China, Central Asia and across Eastern Europe.
- By the time of Genghis Khan's death, his empire extended across Asia, from the Pacific Ocean to the Black Sea, and his descendants maintained power in the region for hundreds of years.
- Genghis Khan's military conquests were often characterized by the utmost cruelty and wholesale slaughter of the defeated.



Quiz

Which of the governments is the same government currently used in the United States?

- ☐ Tyrant
- ☐ Democracy
- ☐ Oligarchy
- ☐ Aristocracy
- ☐ Monarchy

Which of the governments is led by a king or queen?

- ☐ Tyrant
- ☐ Democracy
- ☐ Oligarchy
- ☐ Aristocracy
- ☐ Monarchy

Which of the governments are ruled by a small group of people? Choose two.

- ☐ Tyrant
- ☐ Democracy
- ☐ Oligarchy
- ☐ Aristocracy
- ☐ Monarchy

Which of the governments is ruled by someone who takes power illegally?

- ☐ Tyrant
- ☐ Democracy
- ☐ Oligarchy
- ☐ Aristocracy
- ☐ Monarchy

Now it's your turn....

Draw It

Illustrate a scene showing your type of government in action. Be sure to title your picture, and use as much detail as possible to explain the main characteristics of your government.