

World Studies Formative Writing Assessment

Prompt

After reading informational texts, write an essay in which you explain the democratic contributions of the the Greeks, Romans, English, and the Enlightenment to the American Revolution and the formation of the American republic. Support your discussion with evidence from the texts and your notes.

Source #1

Excerpt of the “Funeral Oration” by Pericles

As recorded by Thucydides in the History of the Peloponnesian War

Background Points on Pericles

- Pericles (490?-429 B.C.) was a Greek politician who was a prominent leader in Athens during the period of Athenian democracy.
- His name is usually used to represent the golden period of Athenian history just prior to the Peloponnesian War.
- Note that it was under his leadership that a number of Athenian landmarks were constructed, most notably the Parthenon, built between 447 and 432 B.C.

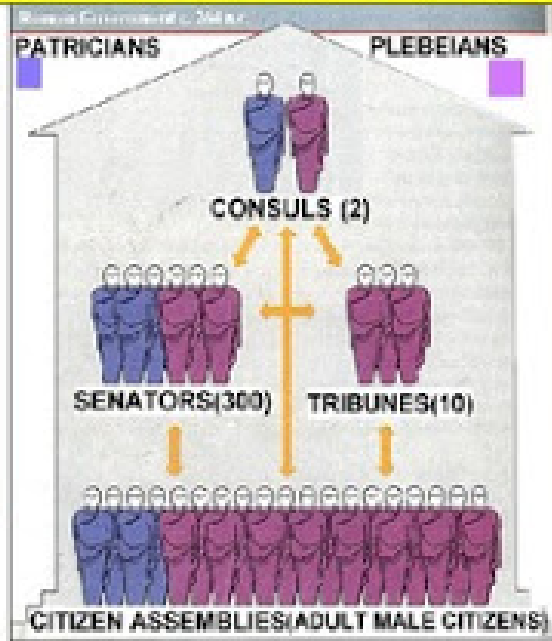
“For our system of government does not copy the systems of our neighbors: we are a model to them, not they to us. Our constitution is called a democracy, because power rests in the hands not of the few but of the many. Our laws guarantee equal justice for all in their private disputes; and as for the election of public officials, we welcome talent to every arena of achievement, nor do we make our choices on the ground of class but on the grounds of excellence alone. And as we give free play to all in our public life, so we carry the same spirit into our daily relations with one another. We have no black looks or angry words for our neighbor if he enjoys himself in his own way, and we even abstain from little acts of churlishness that, though they do no mortal damage, leave hurt feelings in their wake. Open and tolerant in our private lives, in our public affairs we keep within the law. We acknowledge the restraint of reverence; we are obedient to those in authority and to the laws, especially to those that give protection to the oppressed and those unwritten laws of the heart whose transgression brings admitted shame. . . .”

Source: Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1972).

Source 2: The Roman Republic

The Government of Ancient Rome

A republic is a form of government in which *citizens* have the power to elect their *leaders*



Source #3

The Magna Carta

An important primary source is the Magna Carta, written nearly 800 years ago in England. The Magna Carta said that even the king was not above the law, and that he must respect the rights of others.

The Magna Carta was an agreement between England's King John and wealthy landowners called barons. In the 1200's, people feared that powerful kings would become tyrants and use their power against the people. The Magna Carta proclaimed that even the king had to follow the law. It also established basic rights that people could expect for themselves. It was the first time that an English king had been forced to proclaim liberties for people under his rule.

It took more than the writing of the Magna Carta in 1215 to ensure the freedoms of all people.

The Magna Carta document had to be signed by different kings before the freedoms listed in it were considered part of the law of the land. Eventually, the freedoms extended beyond wealthy barons to everyday people.

To America

The principles of the Magna Carta crossed the Atlantic Ocean with the earliest English colonists who settled in North America. These people had come to understand their basic rights under the Magna Carta in England. When they become colonists and had these rights violated by England, this led to the Revolutionary War (1775-1783).

The Magna Carta was written hundreds of years before the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. But the writers of these newer documents used ideas from the Magna Carta. Its ideas about freedom helped shape the law and government of the United States.

Source: Baxter, Roberta. The Magna Carta: Cornerstone of the Constitution.

Source 4: Excerpt from “The Declaration of Independence”

“...We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States...”

Source: Jefferson, Thomas. "Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776." The American Revolution. Woodbridge, CT: Primary Source Media, 1999. American Journey. Student Resources in Context. Web. 2 July 2014.