

Written Primary Source Document 1

Information on Document 1

From 431 to 404 BCE, Athens and its allies fought Sparta and its allies in the Peloponnesian War. After the first year of the war, the Athenians held a customary funeral for all those killed. The great Athenian politician and general Pericles spoke at the ceremony. His Funeral Oration is perhaps the most famous statement of Athenian democratic and patriotic ideas. The Greek historian Thucydides lived during and wrote a history about this conflict. In it, he recorded Pericles's Funeral Oration based on what he knew about Pericles and the speech, not on an exact record of it. Below is a portion of Thucydides's version of this oration.

• Document 1 •

Our form of government does not enter into rivalry with the institutions of others. Our government does not copy our neighbors', but is an example to them. It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few. But while there exists equal justice to all and alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognized; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as the reward of merit. Neither is poverty an obstacle, but a man may benefit his country whatever the obscurity of his condition. There is no exclusiveness in our public life, and in our private business we are not suspicious of one another, nor angry with our neighbor if he does what he likes; we do not put on sour looks at him which, though harmless, are not pleasant. While we are thus

unconstrained in our private business, a spirit of reverence pervades our public acts; we are prevented from doing wrong by respect for the authorities and for the laws....

Then, again, our military training is in many respects superior to that of our adversaries. Our city is thrown open to the world, though and we never expel a foreigner and prevent him from seeing or learning anything of which the secret if revealed to an enemy might profit him. We rely not upon management or trickery, but upon our own hearts and hands. And in the matter of education, whereas they from early youth are always undergoing laborious exercises which are to make them brave, we live at ease, and yet are equally ready to face the perils which they face.

Written Primary Source Document 2

Information on Document 2

Plato was an Athenian citizen born in 428 BCE, a year after Pericles died. He grew up during the Peloponnesian War and the troubled times that followed. He admired and was probably a student of the philosopher Socrates. After the brief rule in Athens of a small group called the Thirty Tyrants (404–403), democracy was restored. Socrates was seen as too severe a critic of Athenian society. In 399, he was tried and executed for having “corrupted the youth of Athens.” This unjust execution may have helped shape Plato’s own attitudes toward democracy. This passage from Plato’s *The Republic* uses the metaphor of a ship to express those attitudes.

• Document 2 •

Imagine something like this occurring on a ship or a fleet of ships. The owner of the vessel is bigger and stronger than anyone else on board, but he is hard of hearing, can't see well, and he doesn't know how to navigate a ship. The sailors all fight over who should be at the helm, and every one of them thinks he ought to be the skipper—even though they have never learned the navigator's craft, cannot name any instructor who has taught them, nor indicate any time when they underwent training. They insist, in fact, that there is no craft of navigation that could be taught, and they are ready to rip to shreds anyone who maintains that there is.

They're always all over the owner of the vessel, begging, and doing everything to get him to turn the helm over to them. Sometimes, when others are at the helm, they kill them or throw them

overboard. Then they run the ship, having dulled the owner with wine or drugs or in some other way. They use up the vessel's supplies and sail along in a way that can be expected from such people. Anyone capable of talking the owner into letting him steer the boat is called by him a 'navigator' or 'expert of ships.' Anybody else is dismissed as of no use. They haven't got a clue that a real captain must know about the seasons, the sky, the stars, the winds, and everything else about ships if he is to be in genuine command of the vessel. And they don't think that there is an art that empowers the captain to decide where to direct the ship, regardless of whether the others feel like going there or not. And they do not believe that one can master that art.

Study the Document: Written Source 1

Instructions: Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

1 Main Idea or Topic

What one sentence best sums up what Pericles sees as best about Athenian democracy? Explain the sentence in your own words.

2 Author, Audience, Purpose

The Greek historian Thucydides recorded this oration based on reports he had of it. Given this fact, do you think this makes the oration more or less valuable as a primary source on ancient Greek democracy? Why?

3 Background Knowledge

What do you know about Athens and Sparta? Based on what you know, explain what Pericles means when he says "whereas they from early youth are always undergoing laborious exercises which are to make them brave, we live at ease, and yet are equally ready to face the perils which they face."

4 Interpreting Meanings

At several points, Pericles comments on other Greek city-states and on their attitudes toward Athens. Why do you think he makes these references and comparisons? What does this tell you about ancient Greece?

Study the Document: Written Source 2

Instructions: Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

1 Main Idea or Topic

Briefly explain Plato's ship metaphor. What exactly is the ship supposed to stand for? Who are the sailors supposed to be? What point does Plato make by the way he describes these sailors?

2 Interpreting Meanings

Plato criticizes the sailors for saying "there is no craft of navigation" and for doubting that "there is an art that empowers the captain to decide where to direct the ship." What point is he making here about democracy and about leadership in society?

Also, do you think there is a difference between a "craft of navigation" and an art of deciding "where to direct the ship"?

3 Compare and Contrast

Choose to be either Plato or Pericles. As this figure, write a brief response to the other's views about democracy. Then, explain briefly why you chose to be one figure and not the other.

Comparing the Documents

The Written Sources

Answer the question by checking one box below.

Use all your notes to help you take part in an all-class debate about these documents—and to answer the final DBQ for the lesson.

Which of these primary source documents would be most useful to a historian trying to understand how democratic ancient Greece really was?

A part of the famous Funeral Oration by Pericles as recorded by the Greek historian Thucydides.

Document 1

A passage from Plato's "The Republic," using the metaphor of a ship to express his views on democracy.

Document 2