

## Grade Eleven Sample Test Item—Reading

### Achievement Level: Standard Nearly Met

Read the text and answer the questions.

#### A New Form of Government: Democracy in Ancient Greece

by Phillip Zapkin

##### First Form of Democracy

Before the fifth century BCE, most civilizations were ruled by monarchs, whether they were called pharaohs, emperors, or kings. Around 500 BCE a polis, or city-state, named Athens developed a system of government called a *demokratia*, a democracy. Unlike in a monarchy, power was in the hands of Athenian citizens. Citizens ruled through direct democracy, rather than the representative democracy we have in the United States. The council of citizens that ruled the polis was called the *ekklesia*. At its height, Athens probably only had 40,000 citizens, which meant they could all gather in one place—called the agora, a kind of public square—and openly debate issues before casting their votes. Greeks voted by placing pebbles into pots.

Not everyone in Athens liked democracy, but even critics acknowledged that the citizens should rule because they gave the city its power. A writer known as the Old Oligarch wrote, “It is right that in Athens the poor and the common people should have more power than the nobles and the rich, because they provide the rowers for the fleet and thus give the polis its strength.”

Of course it was not practical to have all 40,000 citizens gather every day to debate and vote on all the decisions involved in running a government. Minor business was handled by the *boulé*, or ruling council. The *boulé* had 500 representatives, with fifty citizens from each of Athens’ ten tribes. These representatives were chosen by drawing lots rather than by being elected like modern politicians. The *ekklesia* only gathered three or four times a month to make big decisions about issues like the city’s finances, whether to declare war, whether to trade with another city, and so on.

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Legal proceedings in Athens were also decided by direct democracy. Unlike modern courts where a judge and jury make decisions, in Athens everyone in the *ekklesia* voted on whether or not a defendant was guilty. The accused and the accuser each had a limited amount of time to make a speech and then the citizens would vote to decide guilt or innocence.

**Speaking of Democracy**

Any citizen who could get the assembly's attention and convince them to listen to him was allowed to speak, and so rhetoric became very important in Greek democracies. Rhetoric is the art of persuasive speaking. Greek teachers and philosophers spent a lot of time thinking about rhetoric. A group of teachers called the Sophists became extremely wealthy teaching young men to think logically and speak convincingly in public. Some Sophists claimed they could teach their students a quality called *areté*, or virtue. These Sophists thought they could teach students the virtues that made a citizen a good leader.

Young men trained by Sophists often became successful political leaders. However, only the rich could afford to study with Sophists. Poorer people couldn't afford the high fees. This meant that the rich had access to the best education and could use their knowledge to gain an unfair advantage. Although Greek democracy seemed inclusive, the system failed to provide equality for citizens.

One of the most famous theorists of rhetoric was the philosopher Aristotle, whose book *Rhetoric* is still studied today. Aristotle explained that "Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion." He outlined three ways of convincing an audience: *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*. *Ethos* is persuasion based on a speaker's expertise and good reputation; *logos* is persuasion based on logical evidence; and *pathos* is persuasion based on manipulation of the audience's emotions. These three appeals remain central to how we think about rhetoric today.

**Who Were the Greek Citizens?**

Unlike in modern democracies, not every person living in Athens was allowed to vote or speak in the *ekklesia*. As many as three-quarters of the people of Athens were not allowed to participate in government. These three-quarters included women, slaves, and *metoikoi*—

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foreigners living in Athens. The only people allowed to speak or vote in Athenian politics were free men. Although today this seems very undemocratic, Athenians accepted it as normal that only a minority of the population were citizens. Ancient Greek society was patriarchal; men held political power and women did not. The Greeks also practiced slavery.

**Long-Term Results of Greek Democracy**

Greek democracy was eventually weakened by a series of wars. When the Romans conquered Greece around 100 BCE, it marked the end of democracy in the ancient world. However, the idea of democracy survived in writings by Aristotle and others, and this idea became influential in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, inspiring ordinary people to demand the right to participate in government. Greek democracy inspired those who fought in the American and French Revolutions, and became the basis for modern democracies in the US, in Europe, and around the world.

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First, read the dictionary definition. Then, complete the task.

(*n.*) 1. people who act on the behalf of another person or people

Click on the word in the paragraph that **most closely** matches the definition provided.

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Area

Reading

Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts.

Standard(s)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10). Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

Answer

representatives