

# Ancient Greece Study Guide

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## Essential Questions

### **How do people use power responsibly?**

People use power responsibly when they do not become corrupted by greed or wealth but instead use their power only for the good of all their people under their power, especially rulers. An example of an unjust ruler would be one that is so rich and wealthy that he spends it all on himself and impractical items. An example of a just ruler would be one of Plato's "philosopher-kings," who rule reluctantly, without any wealth or property and raised with only morale stories and ideas. If power is used to help others, or for another just cause, then it is used responsibly.

### **To what extent do any of the Greek models achieve responsible use of power?**

I think few Greek models (in power) will achieve responsible use of power. Most of the people with power were leaders or other politicians, who were probably tempted by the amount of wealth they had access to. We have read about a few leaders and lawmakers, such as Lycurgus and Pericles, who were known as just and created laws that helped most of the citizens of their city-states.

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## Polis (city-state)

### **What is a city-state?**

A city-state, or polis, is an independent city of Ancient Greece. Although they are all Greek, and have many things in common such as language, religion, and culture; they are independent, and therefore can self-govern, wage war, and have the same function as regular, larger nations.

### **Why do you think the ancient Greeks organized their society this way?**

I think that they organized their society this way because they had little means of communication and traveling, so new ideas and technologies could not move very quickly. Therefore, the most effective way to live was in a smaller city-state with laws based on their own people, rather than as the whole country of Greece.

### **What impact did geography have on this organization? Did religion have an impact on it at all?**

Geography had a large impact on this organization. Because Greece is mountainous and has many small islands, it would be hard to travel and get ideas across to different areas. This would make governing very difficult, because laws and news would travel very slowly across Greece to be carried out. A smaller form of government was more efficient in ancient times.

### **What characteristics do all polis' share? (ex. sea trade)**

All Greek city-states, like all other governing nations, have to have some sort of power organization in the form of a government. They also have to have trade, mainly from the sea, but also from land. They have to be near water to trade and to have enough water for everyday needs, including washing and drinking. All city-states also have to have some source of food, whether that is from trade or agriculture or hunting. A specialization of workers (jobs) will necessary to function correctly, and usually a form of currency that all people can use. Also, a military, complex institutions (schools and businesses), advanced technology, and record-keeping are all necessary in a polis.

Specifically, the Greek city-states all have citizens that can all speak Greek, and know the Greek religion and culture.

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## Vocabulary

1. **Civilization**
  - a. an advanced society of self-governing people that have similar culture, religion, and ideas.
2. **Military Oligarchy**
  - a. a government system in which the power is placed in a few military generals
3. **Direct Democracy**
  - a. a government system in which the people are directly involved in government
4. **Skepticism**
  - a. doubt about the truth of something; the theory that certain knowledge is impossible
5. **Socratic Method**
  - a. dialectics: a method of philosophy that involves cross-examining (questioning, dialogue)
6. **Timocracy**
  - a. a government system in which the power is based on possession of property; where rulers are inspired by ambition or love of honor
7. **Autocracy (Plato and his idea of the Philosopher-King)**
  - a. a government system in which one person has absolute power
8. **Philosophy**
  - a. the rational investigation of the truths of principles, conduct, and knowledge
9. **Pythagoras**
  - a. an Ancient Greek philosopher that studied mathematics and philosophy and tried to link the two together; he associated “cosmos” with the universe for the first time and thought that it could be explained through math; came up with the Pythagorean theorem
10. **The Academy**
  - a. the school founded by Plato to train men to become “philosopher-kings” and to teach them the ideas that he created
11. **Oracle of Delphi**
  - a. also known as the Pythias; a priestess at the city-state of Delphi, which was considered to be the center of the world and very spiritual/sacred; gave prophecies/pronunciations, or answers to questions or advice that was asked of her (probably under the influence of poisonous gases from a fissure in the Earth) in the form of jumbled phrases and words; sometimes she was misinterpreted
12. **Peloponnesian War**
  - a. the 30-year war between Athens and Sparta that resulted in a Spartan victory; fought in three phases; Athens weakened during war and surrendered; Sparta established an oligarchy on Athens (under the rule of the “Thirty Tyrants,” including Plato), that was overthrown after many years; Spartans used the help of the Persians to defeat Athen’s navy
13. **Golden Age**

- a. the period of time in Athens between the defeat of a Persian invasion and the Peloponnesian League; Pericles ruled during this time; Greek city-states are united happily

**14. Draco**

- a. a person called upon to make reforms to Athens while it was an oligarchy; said that *all* wealthy people can participate in government; only punishment was death; people felt it was unjust, and overthrew him; “draconian” created after him, because he was so harsh

**15. Cleisthenes**

- a. self-declared ruler who overtook Peisistratos; organized “demes,” representative structures based on geography; power was organized more equally than ever before; ostracism was legal; *created* democracy

**16. Aristocracy**

- a. a government system in which a wealthy, privileged class rules

**17. Pericles**

- a. a ruler of Athens at the end of the Golden Age; had the “Funeral Oration”; died during the Peloponnesian War; was a great orator; ruled by himself in a democracy because of his skill, not because he wanted power; *perfected democracy*

**18. Funeral Oration**

- a. a speech given by Pericles after the first year of the Peloponnesian War against Sparta to commemorate (and sugarcoat) the dead, to encourage more people to fight, and to discuss what the people are fighting for (the greatness of Athens, the Athenian democracy. and the Athenian ways)

**19. Egalitarianism**

- a. the idea that all people are equal

**20. Lycurgan system**

- a. the government system of Sparta under the laws of Lycurgus;; Council of Elders watching over two kings (all military generals); military oligarchy; people were equal and were not greedy (they ate the same foods, together; used iron as currency; outlawed unnecessary items); boys were trained to be strong; women educated

**21. City state**

- a. a polis; a self-governing city in Ancient Greece; (see above, at “What is a city-state?”)

**22. Acropolis**

- a. the raised part of an Athenian city, usually raised; usually includes temple and other important buildings; most famous Acropolis at Athens, with the Parthenon

**23. Agora**

- a. the center of an Athenian city; a marketplace; a gathering place, assembly; the center of athletic, spiritual, political artistic life of Athenians

**24. Idiotes**

- a. eligible citizens of Athens or Athenian cities that could vote but did not; modern day word “idiot” comes from this word

## **25. Allegory of the Cave**

- a. an example situation that Plato describes to explain his idea of the philosopher-king: prisoners who are facing a wall in a cave can only see shadows from people walking in front of a fire behind them, not knowing what real sunlight is like anymore, and when one prisoner escapes and sees outside for the first time and returns with news that the shadows that they are seeing are not caused from real sunlight, the other prisoners laugh; used to show that the philosopher-kings are used to bring enlightenment to the ignorant, common people, and that they will probably face much skepticism

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## **Spartan Government**

### **Two Kings (Dual Monarchy)**

Sparta was ruled by two military general-kings. They were under the watch of the Council of Elders.

### **Ephorate (Group of five men)**

Sparta had five ephorates that were elected annually. They swore to the Spartan state (not to themselves like the two kings), and helped rule with the kings.

### **Council of Elders**

The Council of Elders was a group of 60 experienced military generals that helped the two kings make decisions. They voted on decisions.

### **Assembly**

The assembly was a group of eligible Spartan citizens that helped make decisions in the Spartan government.

### **Helots**

The helots of Ancient Sparta were slaves. They worked the land for their owners, the Spartans.

### **Material Wealth in Sparta (\$)**

Since Lycurgus wanted to make sure that people would not become greedy in Ancient Sparta, he changed the currency to iron. Iron was extremely plentiful, heavy, and of low value, unlike gold or silver, so that people would not want it and it would be impractical to steal it.

### **Spartan Boot Camp**

The Spartan training for boys was very tough. They went to start learning at the age of seven, where they started taking roles of leadership, and started to learn preliminary writing and reading. At twelve years old, training increased in difficulty, and their lives were made harder. Leaders started to show, and they were selected to lead.

### **Role of Women**

Women were treated well in Ancient Sparta - more equally than in most of the rest of the world at the time. This was mainly because the Spartans wanted the women to bear strong children. They therefore were trained in academics, as well as athletics.

### **Lycurgus**

Lycurgus was an extremely influential law writer of Ancient Sparta. He wrote the constitution of Sparta. He created many laws (most of them resulting in the above), and he made Spartans strong and equal.

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## Athens & Sparta – Characteristics of Civilization

### Comparison of government, education, citizenship, military, etc.

Athens	Sparta
direct democracy	military oligarchy
interested in arts, politics	interested in military
capital of Greece for long time	capital of Greece after Peloponnesian war
educated well	educated in basics
not taught to fight	taught to fight
women not equal	women educated, trained
had slaves	had slaves
major Greek city-state	major Greek city-state

## Athenian Democracy

### Development of Democracy in Athens

1. Dictatorship
2. Aristocracy
3. Draco (see above)
4. Economic Class Crisis
5. Solon's Constitution
6. Rule of Peisistratos
7. Rule of Cleisthenes (see above)
8. Direct Democracy (see above)

### Pericles (funeral oration, nationalism, courage and skill)

Pericles was well known for being a great speaker. He was also known for ruling by himself in a democracy, but being supported by the Athenians. He ruled because of skill, not wanting of power. He gave the "Funeral Oration" (explained above and below). His rule was the end of the Athenian "Golden Age."

### Athenian Court System

Juries were selected randomly. They voted guilty or innocent, like we do today.

## Funeral Oration of Pericles (what funeral?)

### What was the speech about? (main ideas)

- Greatness of Athens
  - Athenian democracy being the best, most just form of government
  - Athenians being morally just
  - Athenian empire and monuments are grand
- Why the people are fighting and dying

- to keep Athens
- is a noble cause that they are fighting for
- those men have undone any sin they have committed

### **Why is it important?**

The Funeral Oration was important to boost the morales of and recruit the Athenians, as well as to commemorate the dead that fought in the war. It is also very important to us because it provides the Athenian view of their own government and greatness.

### **What distinguished Athenians from Spartans?**

Athenians are just as prepared as Spartans, without having to go through such difficult situations during training, because they are well-educated. They also have a better government than the Spartans, because all the people got a say in government.

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## **Peloponnesian War 431-404 B.C.E.**

### **Who was involved?**

Athens and Sparta were the main opponents in the war. Persia was called on by Sparta for some of the war to help defeat the Athenian navy.

### **What caused the war?**

The Athenians became very powerful, conquering all of Greece but the Peloponnesian League, and worrying Sparta. Also, the Helot revolt of Sparta (during which Sparta rejected 5000 Athenian troops) and the Megara/Corinth conflict (during which Athens helped the Spartan enemies), helped cause the war.

### **What was the outcome? (downfall of Athenian Golden Age, Thirty Tyrants, Socrates)**

Sparta won the war. The downfall of the Athenian Golden Age, in which they had their height of democracy and their empire, resulted. Sparta put the Thirty Tyrants to rule Athens as an oligarchy. Plato served on the Thirty Tyrants for a few years, but left because it was too violent. Socrates also refused to listen to them.

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## **Greek Philosophy**

### **What is philosophy?**

Philosophy is the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline.

### **Socrates and Plato**

Socrates was one of the earliest and most well-known Ancient Greece philosophers. His work was based on the study of morality and ethics, and he was sentenced to death because he held onto his beliefs. Plato was Socrates's student. Because Socrates had no writings (his method of philosophy was through dialogue), historians only know about Socrates through Plato's writings, such as *The Apology*, and *The Republic*. He focused his work more on the best government, which he formulated through the Socratic Method, because he wanted a government better than the democracy that killed Socrates unjustly. He founded an Academy that lasted for hundreds of years and taught many scholars, including Aristotle (the tutor of Alexander the Great).

### **Socratic Method**

The Socratic Method is a method of philosophy that involves cross-examining (questioning) to find truth about human knowledge, conduct, and morals

## **Oracle of Delphi (history & significance of oracles)**

The Oracle of Delphi, or the Pythias, was a priestess at Delphi. Delphi was considered to be the center of the world, and had great spiritual importance. At the center of Delphi, there is the Temple of Apollo. Inside, in the deepest chamber, the Pythias would answer questions and give advice to those who asked her - ranging from personal questions to advice to great cities. Her responses would usually be in jumbled sentences or words, which would require an interpreter to translate into comprehensive text. These answers would be very vague, and could be interpreted in many ways, right or wrong.

There would be a ritual to visit the Oracle, because the Greeks believed a lot in them. First, the asker (who may have traveled from far away, all over the globe) would stop at the foot of the road up to Delphi. He would walk up, and purify himself in the Castalian Spring. He would sacrifice a sheep or a goat, and its entrails would be examined for omens (If there was a negative omen, he may be sent back, despite having gone so far and sacrificed a sheep or a goat). He then would pay a small fee, and then have his question or advice taken by a priest. He would wait for an answer, and get one. Then, he would leave.

There is skepticism in the modern day world that the Oracle really has the power to make true prophecies. In the ancient world, when people were very superstitious, there was no doubt that the Oracle was right, and the god of prophecies, Apollo, was speaking indirectly to them through the Oracle. However, in the modern-day world, as scientists attempt to find a scientific reason for everything, researchers have concluded that since Delphi lies on criss-crossing fault lines and since Greece is a very active seismological site, there is a high possibility that the Oracle was under the influence of nauseous gases when making her prophecies. There has been traces of those gases found in Delphi.

## **Plato's *The Apology* – The Trial of Socrates**

Plato's *The Apology*, was about the trial of Socrates. Socrates is defending himself. He describes how the Oracle has said that he was the wisest man in Greece - he tried to prove her wrong, thinking, *How can I be the smartest man?* He went around Greece, questioning others to see their wisdom. However, he could not find a man wiser than himself, because all of the men he asked thought that they knew more than they really did - however, he was humble, and he knew that he did not know everything. Then, he explains that his questioning and his students' questioning has lead people to become angry at him, because they think that he is corrupting the youth that has questioned them, and is like the stereotype of philosophers of Ancient Greece - he studies *science*, doesn't believe in gods, and tries to make the worst of everything. However, he explains that this is not true - that he does believe in gods, and only tries to find truth in things and people. He then goes on to say that convict him or not, he will not be affected by their verdict: if they say he is guilty, then he will die in peace, because God will not allow a wise person to die in pain; however, if they decide to free him, he will continue teaching (in the form of asking questions) no matter what.

## **Plato and *The Republic* (why was it written)**

Plato's *The Republic* is another of his most well-known works. It is a dialogue between Socrates and other characters to determine what justice is and why people act justly, as well as the ideal government in which the leader and everyone else is equal and just. Socrates is the character for himself: Plato expresses his own ideas through his character. He discusses why all the major existing governments would not work, as well as what his own government does to prevent the faults of the other governments.

## **Plato's Philosopher-King**

Plato's idea of the ideal ruler in the ideal government is the "philosopher-king." This philosopher-king would be a well-educated ruler that was extremely just. He would be raised without family, possessions, or money, so that he would not be corrupted or distracted. He would also be raised only with stories of good triumphing over evil, of justice and equality. He would not be raised with any music, poetry, or drama, as these can be considered

corrupting. He would be chosen as the best from a group of people training to be rulers. He would rule reluctantly, because he does not want power - he uses it because it is his duty. He is well-educated, better than the common people, so he does not make decisions that may seem good or will only be good for the short-term - therefore, he will not listen to the "mob mentality" that killed Socrates. He will have no money, except for the minimum that he needs for a humble life. He will have only a role in politics, but not economics.

### **Plato's Ideal Government**

Plato's idea of the ideal government in which everyone is just is one with three classes: the rulers, the auxiliaries, and the common people. The rulers include the philosopher-king and the other people who help him rule - however the philosopher-king has absolute power; therefore, Plato's idea of an ideal government is an autocracy. They have no power in economics, but have every power in politics. Then, there are the auxiliaries, the police and the military who enforce the law. Again, they only have power in politics. Together, these two classes make up the Guardians of the state, the political power. Lastly, there are the common people, who make up the vast majority of the society. They are mostly farmers and merchants, and they provide the state with food and other supplies. They control the goods, and therefore the economy. However, because they do deal with money, and are not well-educated, they have no role in government.

There are many positive elements to this idea. One of the most important is that the people in power are trained to not handle money or be unjust in any way. Another is that it will be more effective than a democracy, because there will be no objection to the leader, but will be better than a dictatorship, because the leader is not self-proclaimed through violence and well educated. Also, there will not be the mob mentality of the common people like there is in a democracy, which can lead to unjust and negative decisions.

There are also a major negative element: the people may not want to be ruled by a single ruler. They may feel unhappy that they have no say in government, and revolt. Also, the ruler may make rash decisions, and not listen to the common people even when they're right.