



Athens: The Birthplace of Democracy

7A

Introducing the Read-Aloud

10 minutes



What Have We Already Learned?

- ← Show image 5A-3: Spartan army



- ← Show image 6A-5: People choosing Athena as their patron

Ask students what they see in the images and what they remember about these city-states of ancient Greece. Tell them that they are going to hear more about the city-state of Athens and how it was very different from the city-state of Sparta. Remind students that in the last story, the goddess Athena said to the people of Athens, “And I tell you this as the goddess of war: The olive branch will become the symbol of peace. Pray to me when you are in danger, and I will protect you.”

Purpose for Listening

Tell students to listen to learn more about the city-state of Athens and about a very important contribution that it gave to the world.



1 or talking

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Show image 7A-1: Hiero and Dion talking in front of the agora

Hiero (*HERO*) and Dion were on their way to Dion's home, passing through the central marketplace of Athens, where people spent as much time conversing¹ as they did shopping. The two young men stopped to buy some olives at a farmer's booth that stood beneath the branches of two old olive trees. As they stepped out into the sunlight again, Dion turned to look up at the top of the high hill.



Show image 7A-2: Dion with Hiero admiring Parthenon

"Really, Hiero," Dion asked, "is there a more beautiful spectacle anywhere than the Parthenon?"² My father and I traveled to many wonderful places on our trading voyage around the Mediterranean—but I never saw anything equal to it."³ Hiero agreed as he looked up at the magnificent temple.

Just as the city-state of Sparta focused on self-discipline and training for battle, the Athenians focused on their love of art, beautiful **architecture**, and sculpture.⁴ The Athenians filled their remarkable city-state with graceful buildings that were pleasing to the eye. Inside these buildings, and in the public spaces around them, famous artists created statues for all to enjoy—statues that even today are considered some of the finest ever made.⁵

The Athenians were wealthy enough to cover a forty-foot-high statue of Athena in gold before setting it in the Parthenon. The ancient Greeks showed their devotion to Athena by visiting her statue and offering her prayers and gifts.⁶

2 The Parthenon was a temple dedicated to the goddess Athena.

3 What is the Mediterranean?

4 Architecture is the art of designing buildings, or the style in which buildings are designed. Is the Parthenon an example of architecture or sculpture?

5 Do you remember what famous sculpture was created by Myron from Athens? [Point to Image Card 11 (*The Discus Thrower*) on the Civilization Chart.]

6 What is devotion? How did the ancient Greeks show their devotion to Athena?



← **Show image 7A-3: Busy Athenian city**

7 or something that brought them praise and that set them apart as unique

8 or names and categories given to things studied

9 Remember, the ancient Greeks traveled great distances by land and by sea in order to trade and explore.

10 or successfully complete

11 If *grace* means a polite or nice way of behaving, what do you think “failing with grand grace” means?

12 Democracy is a way of governing, or ruling, which gives the people the power to choose their leaders and to help create their own laws.



← **Show image 7A-4: Pericles passing Hiero and Dion**

13 or chosen

14 or chosen again

At the same time that the arts were the glory of Athens,⁷ Athenian scientists were making discoveries that would become the basis for modern science. For example, one scientist you will learn about was a great observer whose ideas and classifications⁸ are still used today. Other ancient Greeks contributed inventions that the next civilizations developed more fully, including the gear, screw, watermill, and catapult; plumbing; using furnaces to melt and shape iron; and using air, water, or steam for central heating.

Athenian merchants such as Dion and his father were trading as far west as Britain and as far east as India.⁹ These merchants brought back goods and even more knowledge from distant lands. This is another way that Athens differed from Sparta; as you heard earlier, Sparta was a “closed” society, meaning that most of the people were not allowed to travel outside of the city for trade or exploration.

At the heart of all these remarkable achievements was the Athenian belief that human beings could **achieve**¹⁰ almost anything they set their minds to, and in whatever they could not achieve, they could at least fail with grand grace.¹¹ It was this belief in the benefit, or good, of independent thinking, or thinking for oneself, that led to the greatest of all the Athenian gifts to the world—greater than the art, the architecture, or the Olympic Games—the gift of **democracy**.¹²

As Hiero and Dion continued walking on that sunny afternoon so long ago, they glanced ahead and saw a face that they knew well. “It’s Pericles (PAIR-uh-klees)!” Hiero exclaimed.

All Athenians knew the man whom they had elected¹³ to run their government year after year. Pericles held great power both as an army general and as the leader of their government. However, like all Athenian leaders, he had to be reelected¹⁴ to his office every year, and if the Athenians did not like the job he was doing, they could vote him out of office, or right out of Athens for up to ten years!



← **Show image 7A-5: Athenian government**

15 Under the rule of a king, are the people allowed to help create the laws or choose who rules them? Which city-state that you learned about had not only one king, but two? (Sparta)

16 Nobles were wealthy men who were related to the king.

17 or discussed or argued their different points of view

It had not always been this way. In the past, Athens had been ruled by a king.¹⁵ Then, several nobles started to rule in place of the king.¹⁶ Finally, a new leader came along who thought every citizen should be able to take part in his government.

Originally, only men who were born in Athens—and who were considered wealthy enough—were allowed to be citizens. These citizens had the right to vote, to be a part of a jury that made decisions in a court of law, and to serve in the **assembly**, a large group of men who **debated**¹⁷ and created the laws. Over time, even poor men—and some merchants who were not born in Athens but who lived and traded there—were allowed to take part in the assembly.

However, because there were too many citizens (over 5,000!) participating in this assembly, it became too difficult to manage the meetings and allow everyone to have their say. Eventually the Athenians decided to have some citizens from each area come to the assembly to represent the people from their area, so that the group could be smaller and easier to manage. Every citizen still had the right to choose who would represent them in the smaller assembly.



← **Show image 7A-6: Athenian women working and managing the house**

18 Do you think this was fair?

19 or a plan for how money will be spent at home

Women, however, did not have the rights to do any of these things, although they could own land and have their own money. Athenian girls also did not have the right to attend school as the boys did.¹⁸ For Athenian women, it was more important that they learn to cook, sew, and clean. However, all well-educated young ladies learned at least enough mathematics at home to be in charge of a household budget,¹⁹ and some who had learned reading and writing at home were widely admired for their intelligence and learning.

Most Athenians knew that the best woman friend of Pericles, leader of the Athenians, wrote many of his famous speeches for

20 In the United States democracy today, are women allowed to vote and take part in creating the laws? Have they always been?



him. Yet she was not permitted to listen to him speak those words in the assembly, nor to vote for the laws he suggested.²⁰

← **Show image 7A-7: Dion and Hiero watching Pericles**

Seeing Pericles up ahead now, Dion asked Hiero, “Who are those two men with him?” Hiero peered above the heads of others in the crowd. “Only one of the greatest writers in the world, and the artist who designed the statue of Athena!” Hiero answered. He smiled. “Only in Athens could you witness a conversation among the greatest living political leader, a world-famous writer, and such a celebrated artist. Don’t you wonder what those great men are talking about?”

21 If something is fascinating, it attracts and holds your attention.

“Whatever it is,” Dion responded, “I’m sure it is a most fascinating conversation.”²¹

Discussing the Read-Aloud

15 minutes

Comprehension Questions

10 minutes

1. *Literal* What structure did Dion describe as “the most beautiful spectacle” in Athens? (the Parthenon) What was the Parthenon? (a temple dedicated to the goddess Athena)
2. *Literal* What is a democracy? (a way of governing which gives the people the power to choose their leaders and to help create their own laws)
3. *Inferential* How did Athens come up with the idea of democracy? (They believed in the benefit, or good, of independent thinking, or of people thinking for themselves.)
4. *Inferential* What are some of the contributions or achievements that Athens made to modern civilizations? (art, architecture, sculpture, science, inventions, democracy)
5. *Evaluative* What was the group of citizens called who met together to debate and create the laws? (the assembly) Were women allowed to be a part of the assembly? (no) How do you think they felt about this? (Answers may vary.)

6. *Evaluative* What two main city-states have you learned about? (Sparta and Athens) How were they similar? (Both were city-states; believed in gods/goddesses; had battles; only allowed boys and men to go to school and take part in government; etc.) How were they different? (Sparta focused on battle training, whereas Athens focused on art, architecture, and independent thinking; Athens was a democracy, whereas Sparta had two kings; Athenians traveled, whereas Spartans stayed in their closed society; etc.)
7. *Evaluative* Which city-state would you have preferred to live in—Athens or Sparta? Why? (Answers may vary.)

[Please continue to model the *Think Pair Share* process for students, as necessary, and scaffold students in their use of the process.]

I am going to ask a couple of questions. I will give you a minute to think about the questions, and then I will ask you to turn to your neighbor and discuss the questions. Finally, I will call on several of you to share what you discussed with your partner.

8. *Evaluative Think Pair Share:* Have you, like the ancient Greeks, ever had an idea that was completely different from what everyone else was doing or thinking? How did other people react to it? (Answers may vary.)
9. After hearing today's read-aloud and questions and answers, do you have any remaining questions? [If time permits, you may wish to allow for individual, group, or class research of the text and/or other resources to answer these remaining questions.]

Word Work: Democracy

5 minutes

1. In the read-aloud you heard, “It was this belief in the benefit of independent thinking that led to the greatest of all the Athenian gifts to the world—greater than the art, the architecture, or the Olympic Games—the gift of *democracy*.”
2. Say the word *democracy* with me.
3. Democracy is a way of governing, or ruling, which gives the people the power to choose their leaders and to help create their own laws.
4. The United States is a democracy because its citizens have a say in the way things are done in their government.
5. Do you think our classroom is an example of a democracy? Why or why not? Try to use the word *democracy* when you tell about it. [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase the students’ responses: “I think our classroom is/is not a democracy because . . . ”]
6. What’s the word we’ve been talking about? What part of speech is the word *democracy*?

Use a *Making Choices* activity for follow-up. Directions: I am going to read several scenarios. If what I describe is an example of a democracy, say, “That is a democracy.” If what I describe is not an example of a democracy, say, “That is not a democracy.”

1. a classroom where the teacher makes all of the decisions
(That is not a democracy.)
2. a student-government meeting where every student votes
(That is a democracy.)
3. the citizens of the United States voting on Election Day (That is a democracy.)
4. representatives from every state helping to create the laws
(That is a democracy.)
5. a kingdom ruled by a king who makes all of the laws himself
(That is not a democracy.)



Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day



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7_B

Extensions

20 minutes

Civilization Chart (Instructional Master 1B-1, optional)

Show students Image Card 18 (Athenian Assembly), and ask them what they see and what was special about the city-state of Athens. Prompt students to recall that Athens was the birthplace of democracy, a type of government we have today. Ask students which square this image should go in. Have a volunteer place the Image Card in the “Contributions” square.

Show students Image Card 19 (Pericles), and ask them what they see and what they remember about this leader. Ask students which square this Image Card should go in. Have a volunteer place the Image Card in the “Leaders” square.

Review with students what is already on the Civilization Chart, and have them discuss what they remember about each image. Remind students that a civilization is a group of people living together in a well-organized way. Remind students that they are studying different aspects of the ancient Greek civilization, including jobs, city-states, leaders, religion, and contributions.

✈ Above and Beyond: You may wish to have some students complete Instructional Master 1B-1 on their own by drawing pictures and/or writing words in each square.

Choosing a Government

Have students form groups of two or three. Tell them that they have been given the task of setting up a new city-state and that they need to decide how they want the city-state to be governed, or ruled.

Write these three choices on chart paper, a chalkboard, or a whiteboard:

- Their city-state may be governed by a monarch, or king or queen, who rules because s/he is royalty and makes all of the decisions on his or her own.
- Their city-state may be governed by a direct democracy, in which all citizens debate about and decide on every law and elect every official themselves.
- Their city-state may be governed by a representative democracy, in which citizens vote on some issues and elect some officials themselves, but choose a group of people to represent them in creating the laws and making decisions.

Allow students to discuss the three options. Tell them that they are to write two to three sentences explaining why they chose their form of government for their city-state. (Have one student act as the scribe.) Tell students to also create a name for their group's city-state. Allow the groups to share their sentences with the class and explain why they chose that type of government. Ask students which form of government the United States has today. (representative democracy) Ask them why they think a direct democracy would not work for the United States.

✍️ Above and Beyond: You may wish to take this writing piece through the formal writing process for some or all students.