Document A: Pericles (Modified)

The following excerpt is from a speech known as "The Funeral Oration," delivered by the Athenian general and politician Pericles in 431 BCE. Pericles was widely seen as the leader of Athens. He gave this speech during a funeral for Athenian soldiers that died in the first year of the brutal Peloponnesian War against Sparta, Athens's chief rival. The Athenian historian Thucydides included the speech in his book the History of the Peloponnesian War*. Historians are not sure when Thucydides wrote down the speech or how close his version was to the original.*

Our constitution favors the many instead of the few. This is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they give equal justice to all. Advancement in public life falls to one's reputation for good work. **Social class** is not allowed to interfere with someone's **merit**, and poverty does not block the way. If a man is able to serve the state, he is not stopped by the **obscurity** of his condition.

The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from being jealous of each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbor for doing what he likes. But all this ease in our private lives does not make us lawless as citizens. Fear is our chief protection against this, teaching us to obey the **magistrates** and the laws.

Source: *Thucydides (c. 460-395 BCE), "Pericles's Funeral Oration," in* The History of the Peloponnesian War.

Vocabulary

social class: someone's position in society
merit: talent, skills, or qualifications
obscurity: unknown or unimportant
magistrates: government officials

Document B: The Athenian Constitution (Modified)

The following excerpt comes from "The Athenian Constitution," written by the Greek philosopher Aristotle between 330 and 322 BCE. Aristotle was the leading Greek philosopher of the time, and is credited with writing accounts of the constitutions of 170 different Greek states.

At the time that we are speaking, the people have secured their control of the state and established the constitution which exists at the present day. The democracy has made itself master of everything and administers everything by its votes in the Assembly and by the law-courts.

The present state of the constitution is as follows. The **franchise** is open to all men who are of citizen birth by both parents. They are enrolled as citizens at the age of eighteen. On the occasion of their enrollment, the current citizens give their votes first on whether the new candidates appear to be of the age set by the law. If the candidates are not of the right age, they are dismissed back into the ranks of the boys. Secondly, the current citizens give their votes on whether the candidate is **free born**, and has two citizen parents as the laws require. If they decide that he is not a free man, he can appeal to the law-courts. If the court decides that he has no right to be enrolled as a citizen, he is sold by Athens as a slave. If he wins his case, he has the right to be enrolled as a citizen without further question.

All the **magistrates** that are responsible for the ordinary routine of administration are elected by **lot** in the Assembly. However, the Military Treasurer, the Commissioners of the Festival Fund, and the Superintendent of the Water Supply are elected by vote. All military officers are also elected by vote.

Source: *Aristotle, "The Athenian Constitution," 330-322 BCE.*

Vocabulary
franchise: right to vote and participate in government
free born: not born to a parent who is a slave
magistrates: government officials
lot: random lottery

Document C: The Athenian Population

The data below comes from the book Wealthy Hellas*, written by Professor Josiah Ober in 2010. Ober is a professor of Classical Civilization and Political Science at Stanford University.*

Population Group	*Total Number of people*	*Percentage of the population*	*Ability to vote*
Citizen men	29,900	12%	Yes
Citizen women	29,900	12%	No
Children of citizens	74,750	31%	No
Metics	25,775	11%	No
Slaves	80,000	34%	No
Total Population: **240,235**		Percentage of Total Population Able to Vote: **12%**	

******Metics** *were foreigners or Greeks from other city-states that settled in Athens, normally for purposes of trade. They became a key part of the city-state's economy, industry, and education system.*

***Source:** Josiah Ober,* Wealthy Hellas*, 2010.*

Document D: Professor Hansen

Mogens Herman Hansen was a professor of philology and classics at the University of Copenhagen before retiring in 2010. He is considered a leading expert in the world on the subject of Athenian democracy. The following is an excerpt from an article he wrote in 1989.

The objections regularly raised against Athenian democracy are twofold: first, democracy is the rule of the whole of the people, excluding minors and maniacs only. ***Demokratia*** was rule by male citizens only, excluding women, free foreigners (metics) and slaves. Thus, by our standards it was **oligarchy**, not democracy. Second, rule was exercised directly by the people, whereas democracy today means government by representatives of the people. Popular assemblies belong to the past, and direct democracy has been made impossible by the size of modern nations. Athenian *demokratia* is criticized for being both more democratic and less democratic than democracy. It is more democratic by being government by the people instead of government by those elected by the people. It is less democratic by narrowing down the concept of *demos* to mean the adult male citizens in assembly.

Source: *Mogens Herman Hansen, "Was Athens a Democracy?", 1989.*

Vocabulary

demokratia: the Greek word for democracy
oligarchy: a form of government in which a small group of people have power and control

Document E: Professor Camp

Professor John Camp directs excavations of the Athenian Agora, which was a gathering place in ancient Athens. He is also a professor of Classics at Randolph-Macon College. This is an excerpt from an opinion article he wrote in the New York Times *in 2003.*

Once a year the Athenians would meet and vote on a simple question: Is anyone . . . becoming a threat to the democracy? If a simple majority voted yes, then they dispersed and reassembled two months later. They brought with them their ostracon (a fragment of pottery), on which they had scratched the name of the person they thought represented a threat. The man with the most votes lost. He was exiled for 10 years, and this was thought to calm any anti-democratic leanings he might have.

In other words, the Athenians not only voted people into office, but they had a regular procedure for voting one person per year out of office. It was an option which could be exercised but did not have to be. The exile did not involve **confiscation** or any other **punitive** measures; it was designed only to remove an individual from the political arena. . . .

The Athenians were better than we are at enforcing accountability in their public officials. . . . Almost every prominent statesman of Athens in the early 5th century BC took one of these 10-year vacations, courtesy of the Athenian people. . . .

There may be pitfalls. . . . One batch of 190 ostraca found in Athens, all with the name of Themistocles . . . turned out to be all written by only 13 individuals. . . . The other danger is that if a leading statesman is powerful enough and has the votes, ostracism is a great way to eliminate a weaker but annoying rival. . . .

In 417 BC, when the outcome was uncertain, the two top dogs . . . ganged up on Hyperbolos, a **hapless** number three. This was such an obvious misuse of the system that the Athenians never used it again.

Source: *John Camp, "Ostracized in Athens: Ancient Greeks Knew How to Dump Bad Pols."* The New York Times*, July 24, 2003.*

Vocabulary

confiscation: taking property with authority
punitive: disciplinary
hapless: unlucky

Guiding Questions

Document A: Pericles

1. Who was Pericles? Why did he give this speech?

2. Based on what you know about Pericles and how this speech was recorded, what are the strengths and weaknesses of this document as a source about Athens's political system?

3. According to Pericles, what were the characteristics of Athenian democracy?

Document B: Athenian Constitution

1. What kind of document is this? What was its purpose?

2. According to the Athenian Constitution, who had the right to vote in Athens?

3. How did someone become "enrolled" as a citizen in Athens? Explain.

Document C: Athenian Population

1. What percentage of Athens's total population was able to vote?

2. Which groups of Athenians were able to vote? Which groups were not able to vote?

Document D: Professor Hansen

1. Who wrote this document? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this document as a source about Athens's political system?

2. According to Hansen, how was Athens's political system **more** democratic than democracies we think of today? How was it **less** democratic?

Document E: Professor Camp

1. Who wrote this document? What are his strengths and weaknesses of this document as a source about Athens's political system?

2. What was ostracism in ancient Athens? What was its purpose?

3. Did ostracism make Athens more or less democratic? Use evidence from the document to support your answer.

Structured Academic Controversy: Athenian Democracy

During today's class, you will work in teams to discuss whether or not ancient Athens was truly democratic. Your goals for today should include looking at all the issues, seeing both sides, and finding common ground.

SAC QUESTION: Was ancient Athens truly democratic?

Team A will argue: YES, ancient Athens was truly democratic.
Team B will argue: NO, ancient Athens was NOT truly democratic.

PROCEDURE

30 minutes With your teammate, read the documents in the Athenian Democracy document set. Find four pieces of evidence that support your side

10 minutes Team A presents. BOTH PARTNERS MUST PRESENT!
Team B writes down Team A's arguments and then repeats them back to Team A.

10 minutes Team B presents. BOTH PARTNERS MUST PRESENT!
Team A down arguments of Team B and then repeats them back to Team B.

10 minutes Everyone **CAN ABANDON** their positions. Groups of 4 attempt to develop a consensus.

ORGANIZING THE EVIDENCE

Use this space to write your main points and the main points made by the other side.

Ancient Athens was truly democratic: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document _____:

2) From Document _____:

3) From Document _____:

4) From Document _____:

Ancient Athens was NOT truly democratic: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document _____:

2) From Document _____:

3) From Document _____:

4) From Document _____:

Coming to Consensus

STARTING NOW, YOU MAY ABANDON YOUR ASSIGNED POSITION AND ARGUE FOR EITHER SIDE.

Use the space below to outline your group's agreement. Your agreement should address evidence and arguments from both sides.