

Forms of Democracy

v.

Athenian Democracy 500–322 B.C.

Forms of democracy in Athens first appeared not only in Athens but also in the area of Attica, which surrounded the massive city-state. Athens is considered the birthplace of democracy, and it had a direct influence on future events. While other Greek city-states had attempted to implement forms of democracy, the majority followed the Athenian model. The Athenians participated in a form of direct democracy. People did not vote for representatives to be the voice of the people and to vote for legislation in their place. The people would vote on executive decisions and legislation on their own. The majority of people were allowed to vote, which was a revolutionary concept. Three of the most influential figures in the Athenian democracy were Solon, Cleisthenes, and Ephialtes. Many considered Pericles to be one of the most influential democratic leaders. Athenian democracy, however, was disrupted during the Peloponnesian War until Eueleides briefly revived it. The Macedonians ended Athenian democracy in 322 B.C.

United States Democracy 1790–Present

Democracy is a form of government as well as a political philosophy. One of the elements of democracy is competitive elections. A competitive election features many elements of democracy. Some democratic elements are freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Another aspect of democracy in the United States is majority rule. In the United States, the form of democracy that is practiced is representative democracy. The sovereignty of this form of democracy is the citizens who participate in the government. Democracy is a system of government in which the citizens of the United States vote for representatives who form the country's legislature. Citizens petition their representatives to pass laws supported the voters support. Representatives are ultimately answerable to the voters and can be voted out of office if their legislative record does not represent the will of the voters.

Direct democracy, as it had been practiced in ancient Athens, was not practical in the modern United States, since much greater numbers of people and much more legislation was involved than there was in the ancient city.

Similarities

Democracy in Athens and the United States are similar in many ways. Both were forms of government that gave the power of voting to the people. People in Athens were allowed to vote directly on many different measures, as opposed to the electing a representative. In America, voters elect representatives who propose legislation, debate, and vote on their behalf. Both forms of democracy give power to citizens, allowing them to control their government. Athenian democracy did not include women or slaves, who were the majority of the population. The democratic system in the United States no longer excludes voting based on sex or race.

Name: _____

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Discussion Questions:

1. Who were four influential figures of democracy in Athenian democracy?
2. How do United States citizens control their government?
3. What forms of democracy were prevalent in Athens and the United States? How did they differ?