

Greece The Rise of Athens Activity

Charting a Course to Democracy

The Evolution of Democracy in Athens

By the end of the dark Ages in ancient Greece, city-states were experimenting with different forms of government. In Athens a democracy evolved over time. Using the reading from your unit lesson, complete the chart below by describing the changes in Athenian government. In the boxes, write a description of the system named and state why it didn't last in Athens.

monarchy	Description: A monarchy is "rule by one." In a monarchy, the "one" is usually a king. The king has power and control over the people, the land, and the natural resources of the region, and he is responsible for all decisions.
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Monarchies didn't last because the monarchs often depended on the nobles for help. Eventually, the nobles decided that since they were providing the King so much support they should have a greater role in making decisions. While the nobles often made decisions that favored only themselves, because more people were involved in decision making this was a step closer to democracy.

oligarchy	Description: An oligarchy is "rule by a few." Those "few" are responsible for decisions that affect the community. Often, the oligarchs come from the aristocratic class, the wealthiest or "best" citizens
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Oligarchies didn't last because the oligarchs often made decisions that only benefited themselves. Because of that, tyrants rose to power promising the people that if they supported his bid for power, he would treat them better and give them more authority.

tyranny	Description: A tyrant is someone who assumes power by force. Today, we call tyrants dictators. Tyrants in ancient Greece, however, took control with the support of the people. Due that, tyrants were different from monarchs and tyranny was a step closer to democracy.
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Tyrannies didn't last because after taking power, some tyrants didn't live up to their promises and enacted harsh laws. When that happened, one tyrant might overthrow another. This was a giant step toward democracy because the ancient Greeks learned that not only could they put a ruler in power, by throwing their support to someone else they could remove a ruler from power.

democracy	Description: Democracy comes from the Greek words demos and kratia. Together those words mean People Power. In the words of Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address, democracy is "of the people, for the people, and by the people."
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In ancient Greece, however, democracy was neither "of," "by," nor "for" all of the people. Only citizens - those males over the age of 18 who were born in the area - were allowed to participate in government. Still, democracy - even in ancient Greece - included the input of more people and gave power to more people than any of the other forms of government on this chart.