

# Ancient Democracy

## Topic

Ancient Greece

## Objective

Students will describe which segments of society were included in the original Athenian democracy. They will compare and contrast early Greek democracy to democracy as it is exercised in the United States today.

## Materials

- the accompanying role cards (page 57)

## Preparation

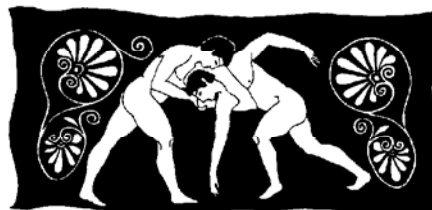
1. Make enough copies of the role cards so there is the following ratio: Ecclesia cards should number one-half the male membership of the class. Metic and servant cards combined should equal one-half the male membership of the class.
2. Cut out the required number of role cards. (Cards may be laminated for future use.)

## Procedure

1. Initiate a discussion with the class regarding an upcoming project. Tell them that you are undecided about what kind of project you want them to do (about any topic you may be currently studying). Explain that you have thought about a report, a diorama, a play, a mural, etc. However, you have decided to let democracy rule on this project.
2. Pass out the needed number of role cards at random to male students only.
3. Explain that only those students who possess an Ecclesia card may enter into discussion about the proposed project.

As deftly as possible, garner responses only from those boys holding an Ecclesia card. Those boys holding other cards or the girls of the class must be politely, but firmly, told that their opinion in this matter doesn't count.

4. Hold a vote on the project choices, allowing only ecclesia members to vote.



# Ancient Democracy *(cont.)*

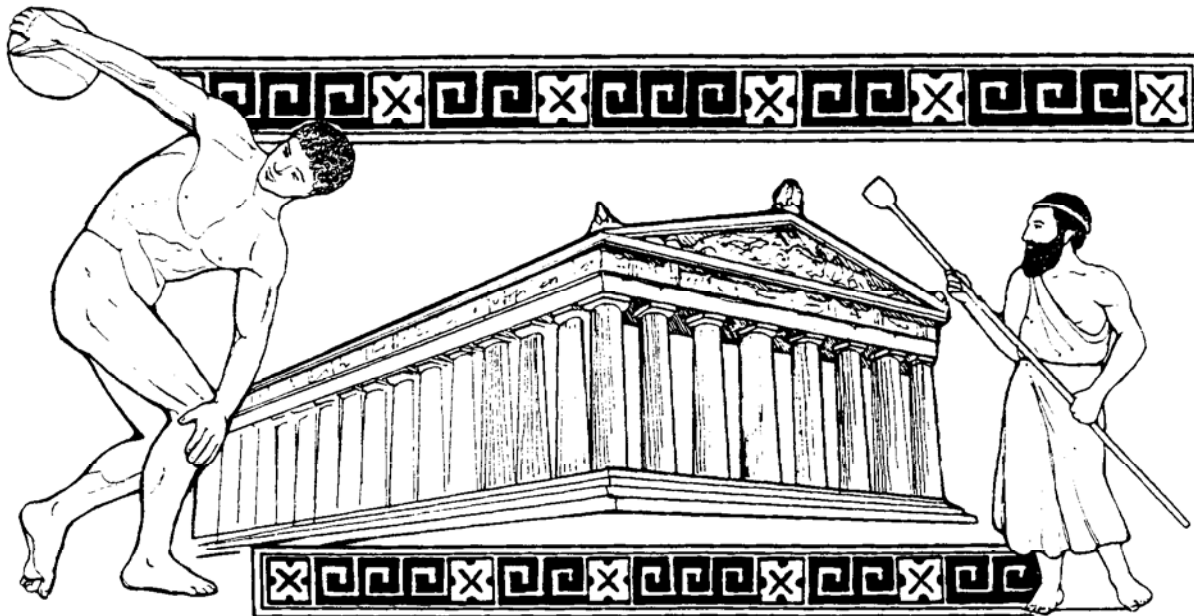
## *For Discussion*

After eligible voters have made their decision, the instructor may have to deal with some upset students. The following questions may help defuse and clarify the lesson succinctly:

- How was or wasn't this a democratic way of dealing with the project dilemma? (Some students got to vote, but only a minority were able to do so.)
- What part of the classroom membership was totally left out of the decision-making process? (the girls)
- Who among the boys were not able to participate in the "democratic" process? (those with cards marked "Servant" and "Metic")

Inform students that this activity simulates the earliest forms of democracy as it was born in Ancient Greece. Metics, or foreign males, and servants or slaves, as well as women, were denied a part in the governing process. Only those males age 18 and over whose ancestors had been citizens of Athens were given the right to vote. Have students compare those qualifications to modern voter qualifications in our country.

(All citizens—those born in the United States and those legally naturalized—age 18 and older may vote, regardless of race, religion, gender, or political beliefs.)



# Ancient Democracy *(cont.)*

## ***Background***

The idea of democracy was a radical concept for Ancient Greece of 500 B.C. For over 500 years the Greek city-states had been ruled by oligarchies—small groups of aristocratic men who made all major decisions for the city-state. The Athenian democratic ideal developed methodically, commencing with the great law-giver, Solon, in 594 B.C. and continuing with a civil official named Cleisthenes. By the time Pericles became a significant government official in Athens (461 B.C.), all common male citizens whose ancestors had been Athenian citizens were able to direct the course of government.



Pericles

At the height of its power, Athens had a population of approximately 200,000 people of whom about 50,000 constituted the male citizenry. This citizenry met by tribe on a monthly basis to decide issues handed to them by a more exclusive governing assembly. Large numbers of foreigners and slaves, as well as the women, had no voice whatsoever. In effect, Western man's initial experiment with democracy was extremely limited, since a minority led the majority.

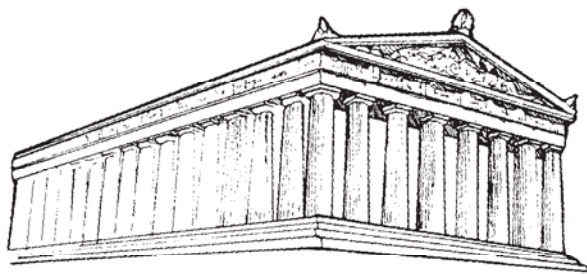
## ***Follow-Up***

Check with your local board of elections to see what percent of eligible adults are registered to vote in that area. Also, ask what percent of eligible voters actually cast ballots in the last election. In all likelihood, a self-chosen minority of citizens are making decisions for the majority even to this day.

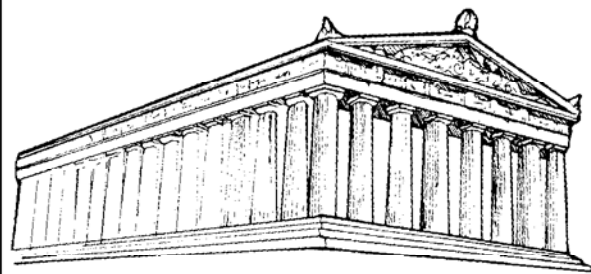
This could lead to further discussion or an essay for the students, "The Value of a Vote."

The aforementioned Cleisthenes also introduced the concept of ostracism to the ecclesia. The citizenry of Athens could deem a particular person as dangerous to the state and, by a majority vote, have that person exiled for 10 years. If an instructor is open to some controversy and has some advanced students, he or she may pose the question as to what public figure in the United States should be ostracized if it were legal. The debate could be interesting even if the idea is unconstitutional.

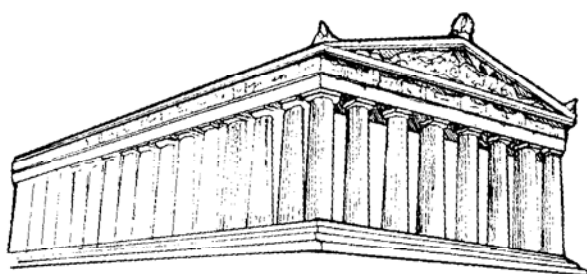
# Ancient Democracy Role Cards



**ECCLESIA**



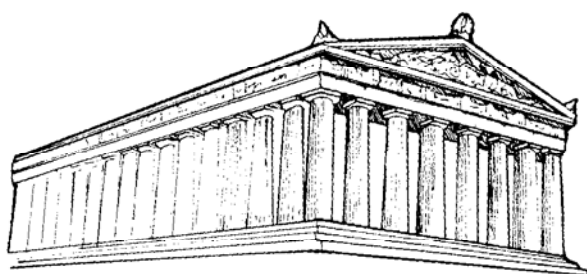
**ECCLESIA**



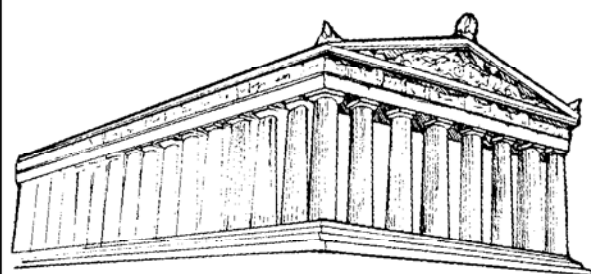
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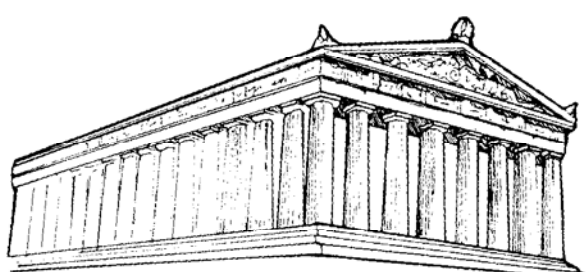
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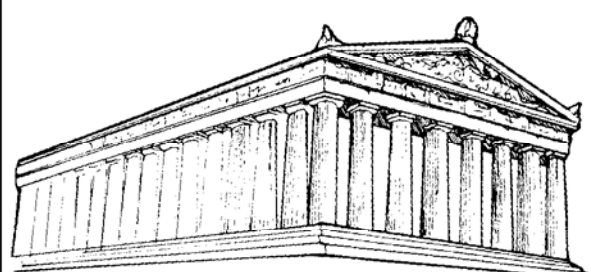
**METIC**



**METIC**



**SERVANT**



**SERVANT**