DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints in Primary Source Documents

How Democratic Were the Ancient Greeks?

The free citizens of Greece: Did the noble ideal match the practical reality?

Debating the DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints in Primary Source Documents

How Democratic Were the Ancient Greeks?

The 2017 World History Course and Exam Description of the College Board Advanced Placement Program* lists five themes that it urges teachers to use in organizing their teaching. Each World History *Debating the Documents* booklet focuses on one or two of these five themes.

The Five Themes

1. **Interaction between humans and the environment.** (demography and disease; migration; patterns of settlement; technology)
2. **Development and interaction of cultures.** (religions; belief systems, philosophies, and ideologies; science and technology; the arts and architecture)
3. **State-building, expansion, and conflict.** (political structures and forms of governance; empires; nations and nationalism; revolts and revolutions; regional, transregional, and global structures and organizations)
4. **Creation, expansion, and interaction of economic systems.** (agricultural and pastoral production; trade and commerce; labor systems; industrialization; capitalism and socialism)
5. **Development and transformation of social structures.** (gender roles and relations; family and kinship; racial and ethnic constructions; social and economic classes)

This Booklet's Main Theme:

3 State-building, expansion, and conflict.

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Contents

Teacher Introduction

Using Primary Sources

Primary sources are called "primary" because they are first-hand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their "secondary" accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it's because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. *Debating the Documents* helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.

"Multiple, conflicting perspectives are among the truths of history. No single objective or universal account could ever put an end to this endless creative dialogue within and between the past and the present."

From the 2011 Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct of the Council of the American Historical Association.

The Debating the Documents *Series*

Each *Debating the Documents* booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

Each *Debating the Documents* Booklet Includes

- **Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay.** The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- **Two Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents.** In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. *Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way*. (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- **Three Worksheets for Each Document Group.** Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- **One DBQ.** On page 20, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.

How to Use This Booklet

1. Have students read "Suggestions for the Student" and the Introductory Essay.

Give them copies of pages 5–7. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

2. Have students do the worksheets.

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources digitally.

NOTE: If you are using these materials with an AP world history class, an honors class, or some other group of advanced and/or more knowledgable students, you may want to make more written sources available to them on this topic. Do a basic Internet search for sources that provide additional perspectives and then add to the sources provided here.

3. "Debate the documents" as a class.

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source's point of view.

4. Have students do the final DBQ.

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 20 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

The DBQ for this Booklet (see page 20):

"Greek democracy was not 'flawed.' It was a tremendous triumph if you view it in the context of its own time in history." Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay's thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

Complete DBQ Scoring Guide

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

Excellent Essay

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

Good Essay

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Fair Essay

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Poor Essay

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in "laundry list" style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.

Suggestions to the Student

Using Primary Sources

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called "primary" because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This *Debating the Documents* lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful, or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.

How to Use This Booklet

1. **Read the one-page introductory essay.**

   This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this *Debating the Documents* lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.

2. **Study the primary source documents for this lesson.**

   For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals, others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image's "content" (its subject matter) but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image's meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source's author, that author's reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These considerations give you clues as to the source's historical value.

3. **Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.**

   For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the "Study the Document" worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the "Comparing the Documents" worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

4. **As a class, debate the documents.**

   Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

5. **Do the final DBQ.**

   "DBQ" means "document-based question." A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge.

Ancient Greek Democracy

The first great civilizations grew up in fertile valleys along major rivers. Egypt had the Nile. The early Mesopotamian cultures arose along the Tigris and Euphrates. The Indus civilization was centered on the river of that name. Ancient China appeared along the Yellow River. These rivers provided water for farming. Their floods spread fertile soil regularly over the land. The need to control these rivers with dams, canals, dikes, and other irrigation works led people to form complex, organized societies. A powerful ruler or government was needed to regulate this kind of river-based agricultural order.

Ancient Greece was different. Mountains divide it into many separate regions. Its rocky hills and narrow valleys forced the Greeks to look outward to the sea, to trade, to the islands of the Aegean Sea, and to the many other cultures along the coasts of the Mediterranean. The Greeks would learn much from these other civilizations. Yet they always seemed to create something new out of what they learned. Great epics, written history, drama, philosophy, science, mathematics, medicine—all these and more were a part of the great burst of creativity that took place in ancient Greece.

Ancient Greece is not famous for its great wealth or power. It is famous, above all, for its ideas, its art, and its emphasis on human striving. The ancient Greeks told dramatic stories about their gods. What these myths illustrate is the human quality of the gods, as well as the god-like abilities and ambitions of various human heroes. The myths express a sense that human beings are not that different from the gods, and that both can strive and achieve at the highest level.

Ancient Greece never united into a single nation. That was partly due to its geography. The Greek cities were cut off from one another by mountains and coastlines. Because of this they remained small, separate states. These city-states went through many political changes, and a form of democracy developed in some. The most important democracy was at Athens. At the height of its power, Athens was ruled by elected officials and an assembly of citizens. The assemblies met in public spaces out in the open. In such settings, citizens learned to speak their minds and take pride in their freedom and independence.

Why did democracy develop in ancient Greece? There are many reasons for this. A major one was Greek warfare. The Greek city-states were often at war with one another. At first, warfare was carried on mainly by wealthy nobles rich enough to own horses. But over time, Greeks learned to fight in organized formations of foot soldiers called hoplites. Less wealthy men could afford the sword, shield, and helmet needed for such fighting. And even poor men could join Greek naval forces as rowers in Greece's famous triremes. The growing importance of such soldiers and sailors helped win them greater power and say as citizens.

In Athens and other Greek city-states, free citizens had important rights. But this did not include everyone. Women, for example, could not vote or hold office. In fact, they took very little part in public life at all. Also, foreigners in Greek city-states usually had no political rights.

Slavery was also a part of life in ancient Greece, as it was in every early civilization. Prisoners of war from all over the Mediterranean were enslaved and put to work in households, mines, and shops in the Greek city-states. In the city-state of Sparta, an entire class of farmers—the "Helots"—were serfs who belonged to the state and had no real freedom. Yet the warlike Spartans themselves were equal citizens within their city-state, and Spartan women were among the most free in Greece.

Some historians say the Greek citizen's love of liberty was strong in part because he could see so many unfree people around him. Does this mean Greek democracy was too flawed to be considered true democracy? This lesson's sources will help you discuss and debate this question.

Ancient Greece Time Line

2200–1200 BCE

From about 2200 to 1500 BCE, Minoan civilization thrives on Crete. From 1600–1200 BCE, Mycenean civilization flourishes mainly on the Greek mainland. Both cultures will influence Classical Greek civilization. From 1300 to 1200 BCE, Mycenean palace culture is at its height.

1200–900 BCE

A time of upheaval, migration, invasion, and disruption sets in throughout the Aegean region (and elsewhere). During this "Dark Age," most Mycenean palaces and other sites are destroyed and the population declines.

900–800 BCE

Agriculture and population start to recover. Iron begins to be used in tools and weapons. Greeks begin to trade with and learn from many other Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures.

800–700 BCE

Sometime around 750–700 BCE, the Homeric epics are written down. The Greeks begin to write again, now using a Phoenician alphabet modified with vowels. City-states begin to form. Some are monarchies. Others are ruled by wealthy social elites. A concept of citizenship grows in which all of a city-state's free-born people, even free-born poor, are seen as equal and entitled to some share of political rights. Major city-states begin to found colonies all around the Mediterranean and Black Seas. In 776 BCE, the Olympic games begin, providing a sense of unity among all Greeks.

700–600 BCE

Possibly in 621 BCE, Draco draws up a law code for Athens, which is written down and posted in public. The laws are very harsh—hence today's word "draconian."

600–500 BCE

In 594 BCE, Solon rewrites Athens' law code to ease harsh treatment of indebted farmers and other poor people. This helps reduce social tensions. During this century, the philosophers Thales and Anaximander of Miletus offer purely rational or naturalistic explanations of the natural world. Miletus is a Greek city-state on the coast of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). In 546 BCE, Persia invades and conquers the Greek city-states along that west coast of Asia Minor. In Athens in 508 BCE, after a time of rule by tyrants, Cleisthenes reforms and deepens Athenian democracy.

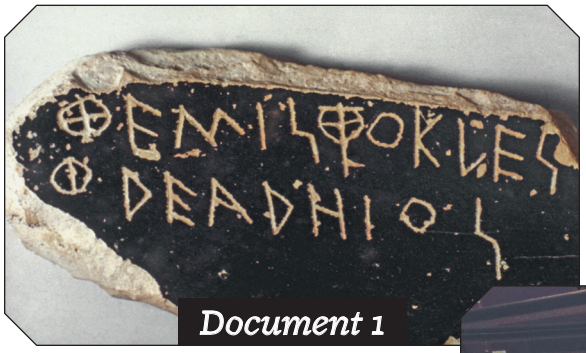
500–400 BCE

The Persian Wars take place from 490 to 479 BCE. The Persians are finally defeated in 479 by the Athenian navy at Salamis and on land at the battle at Plataea. The Delian League of city-states led by Athens organizes to thwart any new Persian attack. From 461 to 429 BCE, Pericles leads Athens during the high point of its power and influence. Democracy reaches its fullest development at this time. From 431 to 404 BCE, Athens and Sparta and their allies war against each other in the Peloponnesian War. In 404 BCE, Athens surrenders to Sparta. The war is the setting for bitter political conflicts in Athens. A reign of terror there under the Thirty Tyrants (404–403 BCE) is followed by a restored but shaken democracy.

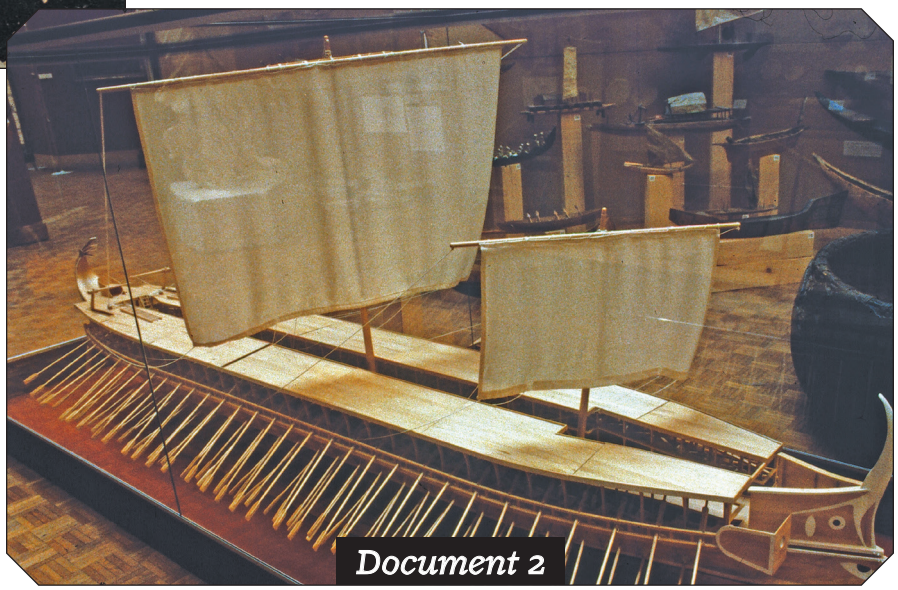
400–300 BCE

In part due to political tensions in Athens, the philosopher Socrates is accused of treason and executed in 399 BCE. His most famous pupil is Plato (428–348 BCE). Plato lives during a time when Greece's city-states continue to war with one another and grow weaker. He writes critically about democracy. In 338 BCE, Philip II of Macedonia defeats a Greek alliance and ends the age of completely independent city-states in ancient Greece.

Visual Primary Source Documents 1 & 2



The Granger Collection, New York



The Granger Collection, New York

Information on Documents 1 & 2

In the fifth century BCE, some 30,000 or 40,000 citizens in Athens enjoyed equality before the law and many political rights as well. Full citizenship was granted to male children of free-born Athenian parents. These males had to complete military training to be able to vote. Council members, jurors, and other officials were chosen by lot and paid with public funds. Athens was the largest city-state. Keep in mind that the other ancient Greek city-states may have had different kinds of citizenship rules.

Document 1. In special elections in Athens, each citizen could scratch one name on a shard of pottery such as this. The name with the most votes would be banished from the city for a period of years. The shard was called an "ostrakon," which gave us the term "ostracism."

Document 2 is a model of an Athenian trireme of the fifth century BCE. Many poor men were used as rowers on these warships. The need for such rowers may have helped persuade Athens to grant citizenship rights to poor free-born men.