

CHAPTER
1
SECTION 1

Section Summary
THE GREEK ROOTS OF DEMOCRACY

The ancient Greeks built small, independent **city-states**. Each was a political unit made up of a city and the surrounding lands. The two most influential city-states were **Sparta** and **Athens**. While Sparta stressed stern discipline, Athens glorified the individual and extended political rights to more citizens.

In many Greek city-states, the government started as a **monarchy** and evolved into an aristocracy. The Spartan government included two kings and a council of elders who advised the monarchs. It was in Athens that the idea of **democracy** first took root. Under an aristocracy, Athenian wealth and power had grown. Discontent, however, spread among ordinary people; merchants and soldiers resented the power of the nobles. This discontent led to the rise of **tyrants**, who often won the support of the merchant class and the poor by making reforms that helped these groups. The Athenian tyrant Cleisthenes broadened the role of ordinary citizens in government and set up a genuine **legislature**. In this way, tyrants moved Athens toward democracy.

After winning the Persian Wars, Athens emerged as the most powerful city-state in Greece. Under the able statesman **Pericles**, the government became more democratic. Pericles believed that all male citizens, regardless of wealth or social class, should take part in government. In addition to serving in the Athenian assembly, male citizens over 30 years of age served on a **jury** for a year. In a civic speech, Pericles praised the Athenian form of government, stating that power was in the hands "not of a minority but of the whole people."

Greek philosophers also contributed greatly to the development of Western political thought. The philosopher **Socrates** was a long-time defender of democracy. He maintained that the duties of the individual included submitting to the laws of the state. His student **Plato** rejected democracy and, instead, argued that the state should regulate every aspect of its citizens' lives to provide for their best interests. Plato's most famous student, **Aristotle**, favored a constitutional government and the rule of law. Aristotle argued that even rulers must be subject to the law. This principle lies at the heart of all modern constitutional governments.

Review Questions

1. How did tyrants win the support of the people?

2. How did Pericles directly involve male citizens in Athens' government?

READING CHECK

In which Greek city-state did the idea of democracy first take root?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *civic* mean in the underlined sentence?

Note that the word *civic* comes from the Latin word for "citizen." Use your prior knowledge of the word *citizen* and context clues to help you figure out what *civic* means.

READING SKILL

Identify Main Ideas What were Plato's main ideas about government?
