



Founders' Influence:
SS.7.CG.1.1
Ancient and Religious Influences
READING #3

Name: _____

Date: _____



SS.7.CG.1.1 Benchmark Clarification 3: Students will compare and contrast the democratic principles of ancient Greece and ancient Rome with those of the United States.

Civilizations like ancient Greece and ancient Rome have experienced different governments throughout their existence. There have been kings who ruled as **tyrants**, aristocracies and oligarchies promoted as democracies, and eventually, the creation of direct democracy and representative democracy, also known as a **republic**. Ancient Greece was the birthplace of democracy and was born out of the formation of city-states like Athens. Athens was the first to create a new form of government called direct democracy, allowing citizens to directly vote on bills and legislation passed by the Assembly and help make judicial decisions. In addition, Athens created a constitution, or a written set of laws, that outlined their new structure of government.

After enduring a tyrannical king, ancient Rome was transformed into the Roman Republic by the senate, which favored the concept of republicanism. As a republic, Rome embedded **checks and balances** and **separation of powers** into their government structure, creating three separate branches, the senate, the legislative assemblies, and the executive magistrates. The Roman Republic, just like Athens, created a constitution that outlined their new structure of government and would serve as the written law code ensuring **rule of law**.

The United States infused these democratic contributions from ancient Greece and ancient Rome into many of its founding principles and documents. The United States, like Rome, has a republican form of government, with aspects of direct democracy that were practiced in Athens. The U.S. Constitution outlines how the government will be structured by using separation of powers to create three branches of government: the **legislative branch** to create laws, the **executive branch** to enforce laws, and the **judicial branch** to interpret laws. Within each branch of government, a system of checks and balances to limit their power and prevent them from becoming too powerful. The legislative branch resembles the assemblies that existed in Athens, Sparta, and Rome, and it can create bills that may become laws. The executive and judicial branches also resemble some powers that existed in ancient Greece and ancient Rome, including the power to appoint military generals and a supreme court to make judicial decisions.

Finally, civic participation was also evident in ancient Greece and ancient Rome. Athens allowed citizens to serve on juries, Sparta required all males to serve in the Spartan army, and Rome made it a duty of citizens to serve as judges over legal cases. The United States infused aspects of civic participation into its government. Citizens have **civic duties** they are obligated to fulfill, such as serving on juries, and voluntary **civic responsibilities** that contribute to the common good, such as registering to vote.

civic duty - something a person has to do; an act required or forbidden by government

civic responsibility - something a person should do; optional activities to engage with and for government

checks and balances - a principle of the federal government, according to the U.S. Constitution, that allows each branch of government to limit the power of the other branches

legislative branch - the branch of government that creates laws

executive branch - the branch of government that enforces the laws made by the legislative branch

judicial branch - the branch of government that interprets the laws made by the legislative branch

republic - a form of government in which the people elect representatives to make laws for them

rule of law - the idea that those who govern must follow the laws; no one is above the law

separation of powers - the structure of the federal government, according to the U.S. Constitution, that sets up three branches with their own distinct powers and responsibilities

tyrant - a single ruler that possess and abuses absolute government power