Historical sources

A historical sources book containing seen and unseen primary and secondary sources will be provided in the examination for Paper Two.

You must use a range of seen and unseen sources and reference them in your response.

The seen sources are overleaf. Researching the authors listed below is likely to enhance your ability to provide evidence of evaluation:

- Herodotus
- Thucydides
- Xenophon
- Plutarch
- Isocrates
- Antiphon
- The Old Oligarch (pseudo-Xenophon)
- Diodorus Siculus (or Diodorus the Sicilian)
- Aristotle
- Aristophanes.

Enquiries

Telephone (07) 3864 0211 or email externalexams@qcaa.qld.edu.au.
Seen sources (Sources A–X)

Athenian democracy: Workings

Source A

Democracy, or the ‘rule of the people’, was the form of government at Athens from 508/7 to 322/1 BC. The Athenian government was a form of ‘direct’ democracy, in which all citizens were expected to participate, both by voting and speaking in the assembly and by standing for various offices and magistracies, or serving on Athens’ council, the boule: Perikles praises this form of government in his Funeral Oration. ... Greek cities also possessed governments in the form of kingships (especially the dual kingship in Sparta), tyrannies (one-man rule), aristocracies (‘the rule of the best’) and oligarchies (‘the rule of the few’).

Dillon, M and Garland, L 2010, Ancient Greece, p. 6

Source B — 1.5 [Aristotle] Politics 1317a40-b4: Aristotle on democracy

As this is our foundation and starting point, the principle features of democracy are as follows: the election of all officials from the whole body; that everyone should govern each individual and that every individual should in turn govern everyone; that appointment to every position, or at least those that do not require experience and skill, should be made by lot; that no property qualification should be needed for officials or just a very low one; that the same person should not hold the same office twice, or not often, except in the case of military positions; that all positions, or as many as possible, should be limited in duration; that everyone should be involved in the judicial system and selected out of everyone and judge all issues, or at least the majority of them and those of the greatest importance, such as the audit of accounts, the constitution, and private contracts, with the assembly the supreme authority over all of these, or at least the most important, with the magistrates having no responsibility over any of them or only a very few. Of all the magistracies, the Council is the most democratic when there is no way of paying everyone; but, if there is, the authority of the Council is lost as well, as the people when paid take over all the lawsuits themselves as I said in my discussion earlier. The next feature of democracy is that everyone gets paid including assembly, courts, and magistrates, and, if this is not possible, then magistrates, courts, Council and the sovereign assemblies, or at the very least those magistrates who have to dine together. While oligarchy is defined by birth, wealth and education, the distinguishing factors of democracy seem to be the opposite of these, such as low birth, poverty and the lifestyle of a tradesman.

Dillon, M and Garland, L 2010, Ancient Greece, pp. 6–7
Source C

The two most important democratic institutions of Athens were the assembly (ekklesia) and the law courts (dikasteria); in the fifth century all citizens over eighteen years of age were members of the assembly, but in the fourth century citizens had to be at least twenty years of age. After Kleisthenes’ reforms in 508 BC, the ekklesia made all of the political decisions, and, in the fourth century, indictments against proposed laws were aggressively pursued by political opponents in the dikasteria. The courts also possessed some political jurisdiction in the examination of the incoming and outgoing magistrates (dokimasiai and euthynai), who may have comprised some 700 (doc. 1.23). The Council, or boule, arranged the agenda for the assembly. In the fifth century the Council had 500 members, fifty from each tribe, each tribe presiding in turn: these presiding councillors were called the prytaneis and met in the prytaneion, the ‘town hall’.


Source D — 1.16 [Aristotle] Athenaion Politeia 43.1–6: Business matters for the council and assembly

In the Athenian democracy it was axiomatic that any one citizen was as good as another and as capable of holding office — hence choosing by lot was an appropriate way of selecting officials. Exceptions, however, were made in the cases of financial officials, generals and those in charge of the water supply, showing not only that these were important functions, but that it was admitted that they needed skills not necessarily possessed by the ‘average’ citizen.

All the officials involved with routine administration are chosen by lot. The exceptions are: the treasurer of the military fund, those in charge of the theoric fund, and the superintendent of the water supply. All these are elected by show of hands, and those who are elected stay in office from one Panathenaia to the next. All military officials are also elected by show of hands. The five hundred members of the Council are elected by lot, fifty from each tribe. Each of the tribes in turn presides, in an order decided by lot, with the first four holding office for thirty-six days each and each of the remaining six for thirty-five days, as the year is comprised of lunar months. Members of the presiding tribe (the prytaneis) first dine in the prytaneion, receiving a payment from the city, and then convene meetings both of the Council and the people, with the Council meeting on every day except holidays, and the people four times in each prytany. The prytaneis give written notice of the business to be dealt with by the Council, and the agenda for each day, and the venue. They also give written notice of assembly meetings: one sovereign meeting, at there must be a vote on whether the magistrates appear to be performing their property, and to deal with the food supply and defence of the country. On this same who wish to do so bring impeachments, and the inventories of confiscated property and claims to estates and heirees are read out, so that no one is unaware of any vacant estate. In the sixth prytany, in addition to the other matters mentioned, they take a vote on whether to hold an ostracism or not, and hear complaints about informers. Both Athenians and metics, no more than three each, and whether anyone has failed to redeem a promise made to the people. The second meeting is one for petitions at which anyone who wishes can place an olive-branch (on the altar) and address the people on any matter he chooses, whether private or public. The other two meetings deal with the remaining business and at these the laws lay down that three discussions of sacred matters must take place, three to do with heralds and embassies, and three to do with secular matters.

Source E — 1.18 [Aristophanes] Acharnians 17–27: Assembly procedure

Though the Acharnians was performed in 425 BC during the Archidamian phase of the Peloponnesian War when many country-dwellers were living together cramped up in the city, the vermilion-painted rope was still needed to pull people into the assembly. This perhaps shows the lack of attention of the people to public duty, or more probably the difficulty in getting citizens to the assembly so that it could start on time — the citizens were busy with gossiping and, as at all public functions, there was a problem getting everyone into the venue on time so it could commence.

Dikaiopolis, a die-hard countryman, is speaking here.

Never, from the time when I began to wash
Have I been so tormented by soap under my eyebrows
As now, when a regular assembly is due to be held

At dawn, and the Pnyx here is deserted —
People are chatting in the agora and here and there
Avoiding the vermilion rope.
Even the Prytaneis haven’t come, but they’ll arrive
Late, and then jostle as you’d expect

To try and get on the front bench,
All pouring in together; but that there’ll be peace,
They don’t care at all — O city, city!
I am always the first person to get to the assembly
And take my seat; then in my solitude

I groan, I yawn, I stretch myself, I fart,
Get bored, scribble, pluck my beard, do sums,
While I gaze out to the countryside, longing for peace,
Hating the city and longing for my own deme,
Which never told me to ‘buy coal’

‘buy vinegar,’ ‘buy oil’ — it didn’t know the world!
It produced everything all by itself and that ‘buy’ word didn’t exist.
So now I’m here absolutely ready
To shout, interrupt, and abuse the speakers,
If anyone speaks of anything other than peace!

Dillon, M and Garland, L 2010, Ancient Greece, p. 16
Source F — 1.25 [Aristotle] Athenaión Politeía 50.1–51.4: Officials in the Athenian democracy

Here are listed some of the officials in Athens responsible for the smooth running of the city, handling everything from the hiring of flute girls to the superintendence of the market regulations: The financial officials were established by Kleisthenes. The living conditions as described here show that the city had its less glamorous side.

Ten men are elected by lot as repairers of shrines, who receive thirty minas from the financial officials for the restoration of those temples that most require it, and ten as city controllers. Five of these hold office in the Piraeus and five in the city, and they supervise the female flute, harp and lyre players to ensure that they do not receive more than two drachmas, and, if more than one person wants to hire one, the officials cast lots and hire her to the winner. And they take care that none of the night-soil collectors deposits excrement within ten shares of the city wall and they prevent buildings being constructed in the streets so that balconies overhang the streets or overhead pipes overflow into the streets or windows open onto the streets. They also remove the bodies of those who die on streets, and have public slaves for this purpose.

Ten market-controllers are also elected by lot, five for the Piraeus and five for Athens itself. The laws assign these the responsibility of overseeing all merchandise, to ensure that only pure and unadulterated goods are sold. Ten measure-controllers are also elected by lot, five for the city and five for the Piraeus. They inspect all weights and measures to ensure that sellers use correct ones. There used to be ten grain-guardians as well, five for the Piraeus and five for the city, but now there are twenty for the city and fifteen for the Piraeus. Their duties are, first of all, to ensure that unground grain is for sale in the market at a reasonable price, and then that the millers sell barley-meal at a price related to that of barley and bakers their loaves at a price related to that of wheat, and that these weigh the amounts that the officials prescribe — for law prescribes that they determine the weight. They also elect by lot ten harbour inspectors, whose job it is to supervise the markets at the harbour and ensure that the merchants bring the city two-thirds of the grain brought by sea that arrives at the grain-market.

Dillon, M and Garland, L 2010, Ancient Greece, pp. 19-20

Source G — Ostracism

But afterwards, those who feared the eminence that [Themistocles] enjoyed, and others who were envious of his glory, forgot his services to the State, and began to exert themselves to diminish his power and to lower his presumption. First of all, they removed him from Athens, using against him what is called ‘ostracism’, an institution which was adopted in Athens after the overthrow of the tyranny of Peisistratos and his sons [510 BC]. ... And the law is as follows: Each citizen wrote the name of the man who in his opinion had the greatest power to destroy the democracy; and the man who got the largest number of ostraka was obliged to go into exile from his native land for a period of ten years. ... The Athenians, it appears, passed such a law, not for the purpose of punishing wrongdoing, but in order to lower through exile the presumption of men who had risen too high. Now Themistocles, having been ostracised in the manner we have described, fled as an exile from his native city to Argos ...

Diodorus the Sicilian, History Book XI, ch. 55
Source H — Ostracism

Once more the Lacedaemonians summoned the Athenians to come to their aid against the Messenians and Helots in Ithome, and the Athenians went, but their dashing boldness awakened fear, and they were singled out from all the allies and sent off as dangerous conspirators. They came back home in a rage, and at once took open measures of hostility against the Laconizers, and above all against Kimon. Laying hold of a trifling pretext, they ostracised him for ten years. That was the period decreed in all cases of ostracism [Date: c. 461 BC]. ... The Athenians did not long abide by their displeasure against Kimon, partly because, as was natural, they remembered his benefits, and partly because the turn of events favoured his cause. For they were defeated at Tanagra in a great battle [457 BC], and expected that in the following springtime an armed force of Peloponnesians would come against them, and so they recalled Kimon from his exile. The decree which provided for his return was formally proposed by Pericles ...

Athenian democracy: Benefits and praise

Source I — 1.5 [Aristotle] Politics 1317a40–b4: Aristotle on democracy

A democratic polis presupposes liberty, and it is generally said that only in this type of state can liberty be enjoyed. People say that this is the aim of every democracy. One principle of liberty is that everyone is governed and governs in turn. This is because democratic justice means equality by numbers and not by merit, and this being so the majority must be the sovereign power, and whatever the majority decides must be the final decision and be just. Every one of the citizens, it is said, must be equal. In consequence, in democracies the poor have more power than the wealthy, as there are more of them and the decision of the majority is supreme. So this is one of the marks of liberty, which all democrats see as the distinguishing mark of their constitution: another is that everyone should live as he chooses. This, they affirm, is liberty in practice, since not living in accordance with your wishes constitutes the life of a slave. This is the second distinguishing mark of democracy, and in consequence of this there has evolved the desire not to be governed, by anyone if possible, and if not for government to be taken in turns, thus contributing to the concept of liberty founded on equality.

Dillon, M and Garland, L 2010, Ancient Greece, p. 6


Not only was the constitution at this time oligarchical in every respect, but the poorer classes — men, women, and children — were in absolute slavery to the rich. They were known as helots and also as helotia, because they cultivated the lands of the rich for a sixth part of the produce. The whole country was in the hands of a few persons, and if the tenants failed to pay their rent, they were liable to be haled into debt-slavery and their children with them. Their persons were mortgaged to their creditors, a custom which prevailed until the time of Solon, who was the first to appear as a leader of the people. But the hardest and bitterest part of the condition of the masses was the fact that they had no share in the offices then existing under the constitution. At the same time they were discontented with every other feature of their lot; for, to speak generally, they had no part nor share in anything.

Fordham University and Halsall, P (ed) 1999, Internet Ancient History Sourcebook: Reports of the Origins of Athens
Source K — 1.17 [Thucydides] 2.37.1–43.1: The duties of a citizen: Perikles’ funeral oration

This speech was delivered by Perikles in 431/0 BC over the first Athenians who fell in the Peloponnesian War. Perikles is here stressing the ideals of democracy and praising the Athenian way of life. The essential nature of Athenian democracy is made clear: the majority of the citizens run the state, all are equal before the law and any citizen can stand for political office. There is a deliberate implicit comparison with Sparta: the Athenians ‘love wisdom without cowardice’. The essential participatory nature of the democracy is made clear in the reference to the ‘totally useless’ citizen. Citizens are to ‘love’ their city: for the lover and beloved in Greek culture, see docs 4.72-89.

We possess a constitution which does not imitate the laws of our neighbours: in fact we are an example to others rather than imitating anyone else. And the constitution’s name is democracy, because the majority manage its affairs, not just a few: as regards the laws, everybody is equal when private disputes are being settled, and, as regards the criteria used to pick out anyone for office, what counts is not his belonging to a particular class, but his personal merit, while as regards poverty, as long as he can do something of value for the city, no one is prevented by obscurity from taking part in public life. We conduct our political life with freedom, especially freedom from suspicion in respect of each other in our daily business, not being angry with our neighbour if he does as he pleases, and not even giving him the sort of looks which, although they do no harm, still hurt people’s feelings. But while we avoid giving offence in private life, in our public life it is primarily fear which prevents us from committing unlawful acts and makes us obey the magistrates and the laws, and in particular those laws made to protect those who are being unjustly treated and those which, though unwritten, bring acknowledged disgrace on people who break them.

We love good things without extravagance and we love wisdom without cowardice; we use wealth as an opportunity for action rather than as something to boast about, and there is nothing disgraceful for anyone in admitting poverty — what is disgraceful is not taking steps to escape it. In the same people there is a concern at the same time for their own affairs and for those of the city, and even those primarily concerned with their own business are not deficient in their knowledge of the city’s affairs; indeed, we are unique in considering the man who takes no part in the affairs of the city not as one who minds his own business, but as one who is totally useless.

**Source L — Pericles’ funeral oration: An idealised view of Athenian democracy and its empire**

No finer expression of the ideals of democracy exist than the famous Funeral Oration delivered by Pericles in honour of the Athenians who fell fighting Sparta during the first year (431 BC) of the Peloponnesian War. Like Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, with which it is frequently compared, it is considered one of the greatest speeches in literature. (Unlike Pericles, however, Lincoln does not say that death in battle is the best end a man can come to. Nor would he have taken for granted, as Pericles does at the end of his oration, the inferior nature of women and their seclusion.) Pericles appeals to the patriotism of his listeners, confronted by the crisis of a great war, by describing the superior qualities and advantages of their democracy as a heritage won for them by their ancestors and worthy of any sacrifice to preserve. He emphasises as the outstanding feature of their democracy — and, we can add, of any democracy — the harmonious blending of opposite tendencies in politics, economics, and culture that it contains. This is perhaps the finest expression of the Greek ideal of a mean between extremes. All this is described in sharp contrast to the rigid totalitarianism of Sparta, which regulated every detail of its citizens’ existence. An outstanding example of this happy blending of control and freedom in all phases of life was the Athenian acceptance of the leadership of Pericles as the recognised superior individual voted into power by the people to ‘lead them,’ as Thucydides noted, ‘instead of being led by them.’

Pericles extends the same argument, that order and liberty are compatible, to justify the existence of the Athenian Empire, which had emerged after the Persian Wars to fill the vacuum left by the failure of Spartan leadership in Greek affairs. Before a peace treaty with Persia was signed in 448 BC, Athens and its allies had countered Persian expansionism by aiding anti-Persian uprisings in Cyprus and Egypt. Like the Americans in Vietnam, the Athenian-led Greeks failed in their mission. Bogged down in the Nile Delta after eight years of fighting and the loss of some two hundred ships and many men, Pericles had to withdraw the Greek forces. But he went on to complete the formation of the Athenian Empire, which unified and brought peace and prosperity to half of the Greek world. It was at present under attack by Sparta and its allies as the ‘tyrant city’ that had extinguished the liberties of many Greek states and was now threatening the remainder. Pericles’ reply to this charge is an idealised rationalisation of the need to replace the anarchy of narrow city-state ‘nationalism’ with an ‘international’ organisation of Greek states under Athenian leadership. The goal was peace and prosperity — or what can be called freedom from fear and want, two of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s stirring ‘Four Freedoms,’ the idealistic goals for which World War II was fought. Such also is the meaning of Pericles’ inspired conception of Athenian imperialism: “We secure our friends not by accepting favours but by doing them ... We are alone among mankind in doing men benefits, not on calculations of self-interest, but in the fearless confidence of [bringing] freedom. In a word I claim that our city as a whole is an education to Greece ...”

Bailkey, NM and Lim, R 2002, Readings in Ancient History, p. 167
Athenian democracy: Criticisms

Source M — 1.20 [Xenophon] *Hellenika* 1.7.9–15: The trial of the generals after Ariginousai

In 406 BC the Athenians sent every available man (including slaves) to aid the Athenian fleet blockaded at Mytilene by the Spartans. They were victorious at Ariginousai, but a storm prevented the Athenian generals from rescuing those cast into the sea. Six of the eight generals involved returned to Athens, and were brought before the assembly. Kallixenos secured passage in the Council of a resolution that the assembly should simply vote to acquit or condemn, by ballot, all six defendants together without further discussion. The Athenians soon regretted what they had done. Socrates, who was a member of the Council at the time, was the only one to object. The Eleven were the jailers and executioners at Athens.

Then they held an assembly, to which the Council presented its proposal, Kallixenos bringing the motion as follows: since the Athenians have heard both those who brought charges against the generals and the generals' defence in the previous assembly, they are all to vote by tribes; and two urns will be provided for each tribe; and for each tribe a herald shall proclaim that whoever thinks the generals to be guilty of not picking up those who had won the naval battle shall place his vote in the first urn, and whoever thinks them to be not guilty, in the second. And if it is decided that they are guilty, they shall be punished with death and handed over to the Eleven and their property confiscated, and a tithe to belong to the goddess... Eurytolemos and Peisianaktos and some others brought a charge against Kallixenos of having made an unconstitutional proposal. And some of the people commended this, but the majority shouted that it would be dreadful if the people were not allowed to do what they wanted. In addition, when Lykiskos proposed the motion that these men should be judged by the same vote as the generals unless they withdrew their charge, the mob again created an uproar, and they were forced to withdraw their charges.

Some of the prytaneis declared that they would not put the question to the vote contrary to law, but Kallixenos again mounted the speakers' platform and made the same accusations against them. And the crowd shouted that all who refused should be taken to court. The prytaneis, terrified, all agreed to put the question to the vote except for Socrates, son of Sophroniskos; he declared that he would not do anything against the law.

Source N — Plato’s forms of political governance and the best form

Although, Plato uses the number four for his stages of governance or forms of government in the Republic, he actually talks about five particular forms. He starts with the best and shows us how one stage transforms into another stage of governance because of deterioration. The first stage of political governance is the best form of government according to Plato. It is called aristocracy or government of the best. The ruler has to be the best of philosophers and the best at war as mentioned earlier. Excellence and education is a priority and equality is observed under the rule of an aristocrat. An aristocracy changes mildly into a timocracy or government of honour. This form of government is one in which the ruler is more involved in warfare, hence, a government of honour comes to being. The ruler is honoured by public and this makes it similar to an aristocracy but the state is involved more into warfare. Plato, also, explains how timocracy comes to being in the first place. According to Plato, there are particular periods in which people should have babies and when babies are born otherwise it leads to deterioration and inequality. Metals are mixed when they shouldn’t; hence, bronze and iron combine to fight for money, while silver and gold come together and fight to bring back aristocracy. This brings chaos and inequality which causes a state involved in warfare. Similarly, timocracy degrades into an oligarchy. Oligarchy is a government of few and the rich are the few that rule the majority of the poor. Oligarchy just naturally evolves from timocracy because a nation indulged in war will accumulate a lot of wealth and it will lose its respect for excellence. The few rich people will begin to rule and suppress the poor. The rich will be scared of arming the poor majority, fearing they will turn on them and the state will be a weak one. Extreme poverty will bring crime rate and illiteracy to their peaks. The poor majority will soon come together to form an even worse form of government, democracy. This is the form of government in which everyone wants to be rich, Plato believed. Democracy takes birth when rich have made the poor loathe them and love of revolution begins to spring amongst poor. Therefore some revolutionists rise and either kill or exile the rich rulers, forming a new, just government with freedom as their priority. In a rule like this one there is no compulsion for anything. You can choose to not join the army even if you are competent. The insatiable desire of freedom forms a nation where teachers fear students and children fight parents. Hence, people start disregarding all laws and nobody wants to be ruled. Although, someone obviously does rule and they are slightly richer than all the other population. The common people start taking their rulers as oligarchs. This is when someone stands up as the defender of democracy. This is where another form of government and the worst of all, comes to existence. The defender of democracy makes all sorts of promises and pretends [to be] very kind in the beginning. He overthrows the rulers and when he has defended democracy and is no longer required, he keeps bringing fake problems to make the people feel that they need him. When the people discover he is not needed and they stand for that, the true face unleashes and we find that the defender of the democracy is a tyrant. This is how the fifth, most repulsive stage of governance, tyranny, comes to being. Now one way to put down Plato’s five stages of governance were to simply name and describe them. But, I believe, this is not how Plato wants us to know them. He wants us to know them in the form he writes, as to show which form deteriorates to which and which one is the best. Aristocracy is the best and it keeps deteriorating from timocracy to oligarchy to democracy and then to the worst, tyranny.

Naeem, H., *Plato’s Forms of Political Governance and the Best Form*, 2011
Source O — Thucydides

So, in what was nominally a democracy, power was really in the hands of the first citizen. But his [Pericles] successors, who were more on a level with each other and each of whom aimed at occupying the first place, adopted methods of demagogy which resulted in their losing control over the actual conduct of affairs. Such a policy, in a great city with an empire to govern, naturally led to a number of mistakes, amongst which was the Sicilian expedition... And in the end it was only because they had destroyed themselves by their own internal strife that finally they were forced to surrender.

Teaching Company, Thucydides: Book II, ch. 65

Source P — Pseudo-Xenophon (Old Oligarch), Constitution of the Athenians

And as for the fact that the Athenians have chosen the kind of constitution that they have, I do not think well of their doing this inasmuch as in making their choice they have chosen to let the worst people be better off than the good. Therefore, on this account I do not think well of their constitution.


Source Q — 1.8 [Xenophon] Constitution of the Athenians 2.9-10: The amenities of Athens c. 425 BC

The author is apparently annoyed that the people can enjoy benefits which the rich have to pay for themselves. The author complains that it is the wealthy who pay for liturgies, and sees a popular motive behind it, so that the poorer citizens become wealthy and the rich poorer, which of course did not happen.

The people, realising that it is impossible for each of the poor to offer sacrifices, hold banquets, set up shrines and govern a great and beautiful city, have discovered a way of having sacrifices, shrines, festivals and sanctuaries. So the city sacrifices numerous victims at public expense, but it is the people who banquet and who are allocated the victims. And while some of the wealthy have their own private gymnasia, baths and dressing-rooms, the people have built for their own use many wrestling-schools (palaistra), dressing-rooms and bath-houses; and the ordinary people enjoy far more of these than the aristocrats and the wealthy.

Dillon, M and Garland, L 2010, Ancient Greece, p. 9
Source R — The Old Oligarch: A realistic view of Athenian democracy and its empire

Some years after the death of Pericles (429 B.C.), an unknown Athenian oligarch delivered a political speech (we have what appears to be a stenographic copy) to an audience of like-minded oligarchs in some unknown Greek city. Despite its sarcastic tone, it balances the idealised picture of Athenian democracy and its empire contained in Pericles’ Funeral Oration with a realistic and penetrating description of the shortcomings of that democracy and the self-interested economic basis of its imperialism. The Old Oligarch’s views are in some part valid for the Periclean age, but are especially pertinent to the decade or two following the death of Pericles when, due largely to the crisis of the war, passion triumphed over wisdom in the making of policy and demagogues, who played on the emotions and cupidity of the masses, replaced the courageous and far-sighted statesmen of the stamp of Pericles as leaders of the democracy. Although he spoke with the bitterness and exaggeration of a narrow partisan, much of the Old Oligarch’s criticism of the character of the Athenian masses and the motives of their imperialism seems justified.

More than twenty centuries later, another aristocrat, the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville, visited the United States to observe its new democracy in action. Some of the conclusions in his Democracy in America (1835), though expressed with far more reserve, are similar to those of the Old Oligarch:

Are you concerned with refining mores, elevating manners, and causing the arts to bloom? Do you desire poetry, renown and glory? ... If in your view that should be the main object of men in society, do not support democratic government; it surely will not lead you to that goal. But if ... in your view the main object of government is ... to provide for every individual therein the utmost well-being, protecting him as far as possible from all afflictions, then it is good to make conditions equal and to establish a democratic government.

Bailkey, NM and Lim, R 2002, Readings in Ancient History, p. 171
Source S — The Old Oligarch: A realistic view of Athenian democracy and its empire

“Rascals fare better than good citizens”

As for the constitution of the Athenians, their choice of this type of Constitution I do not approve, for in choosing thus they chose that rascals should fare better than good citizens. This then is why I do not approve. If on the other hand you investigate good order, first of all you will see that the most capable make laws for them; then the good citizens will keep the rascals in check and will deliberate on matters of state, refusing to allow madmen to sit on the Council or make speeches or attend the general assemblies. Such advantages indeed would very soon throw the commons into complete subjection.

Democracies are irresponsible

Again oligarchical states must abide by their alliances and their oaths. If they do not keep to the agreement, penalties can be extracted from the few who made it. But whenever the commons makes an agreement it can lay the blame on the individual speaker or proposer, and say to the other party that it was not present and does not approve what they know was agreed upon in full assembly; and should it be decided that this is not so, the commons has discovered a hundred excuses for not doing what they may not wish to do. If any ill result from a decision of the commons it lays the blame on a minority for opposing and working its ruin, whereas if any good results they take the credit to themselves.

They do not allow caricature and abuse of the commons, lest they should hear themselves evilly spoken of, but they do allow you to caricature any individual you wish to. They know that generally the man who is caricatured is not of the commons or of the crowd, but someone rich or well-board or influential, and that few of the poor and democrats are caricatured, and they only because they are busy-bodies and try to overreach the commons; so they are not angry when such men are caricatured either.

Bailkey, NM and Lim, R 2002, Readings in Ancient History, pp. 171–172
Athenian democracy: Perikles


Socrates’ aim was to elicit definitions from his interlocutors, particularly of terms relating to ethical ideas such as justice, arete (virtue) and courage. Unfortunately many were angered by his conversational and dialectical abilities. Alkibiades was Perikles’ nephew: Perikles’ first wife (with whom he was unhappy) was perhaps Alkibiades’ mother Deinomache, Perikles’ cousin; Alkibiades grew up in Perikles’ household.

While Kritias and Alkibiades were Socrates’ associates they were out of sympathy with him for the whole of that time, and right from the very beginning what they were aiming at was leadership of the city. For even while they were Socrates’ companions they tried to converse not with others, but mainly with leading politicians. It is actually reported that Alkibiades, before he was twenty years of age, held the following conversation about the laws with Perikles, his guardian, and the city’s champion. “Tell me, Perikles,” he asked, “could you teach me what a law is?” “Why, certainly,” replied Perikles. “Then please teach me,” said Alkibiades. “For whenever I hear men being commended for observing the laws, I think that no one can justly obtain this praise without knowing what a law is.” “Well, Alkibiades,” said Perikles, “there is nothing very difficult about what you want, in your wish to understand what a law is; laws are all those things which the assembled people have approved and enacted, through which they declare what ought and ought not to be done.” “Is this the case whether they think it right to do good or evil?” “Good, of course, young man, but not evil.” “But if, as happens under an Oligarchy, not the majority but a minority meet and enact what ought to be done, what’s this?” “All that, after deliberation, the sovereign power in the city ordains ought to be done, is called a law.” “And if a tyrant controls the city and enacts what the citizens ought to do, is this also a law?” “Yes, whatever a tyrant as ruler ordains is also called a law.” “But what is force, or the negation of law, Perikles? Isn’t it when the stronger without persuasion forcibly compels the weaker to do whatever he chooses?” “Yes, that is my view,” replied Perikles. “Then whatever a tyrant enacts and compels the citizens to do without persuasion is the negation of law?” “I believe so,” replied Perikles, “and I withdraw my statement that whatever a tyrant enacts without persuasion is a law.” “And whatever the minority enacts, without persuading the majority but by using its power, should we call that force, or not?” “Everything, I think,” replied Perikles, “that a person compels someone else to do without persuasion, whether by enactment or not, is force rather than law.” “So whatever the whole people enacts without persuasion, by using its power over the possessors of property, would be force rather than law?” “Alkibiades,” said Perikles, “when we were your age we used to be very clever at these sorts of things too; for the sorts of things we studied and exercised our skill on men, are exactly the same as those that you seem to like practising now.” “Perikles,” answered Alkibiades, “I only wish I’d known you when you were really good at such debates!”

Source U

Turning to Pericles’ policy towards the members of the Delian League, we find that he frankly endeavoured to turn the allies into subjects. A special feature of his rule was the sending out of numerous cleruchies, which served the double purpose of securing strategic points to Athens and converting the needy proletariat of the capital into owners of real property. The land was acquired either by confiscation from disaffected states or in exchange for a lowering of tribute. The chief cleruchies of Pericles are Thracian Chersonese (453-452), Lemnos and Imbros, Andros, Naxos and Eretria (before 447); Brea in Thrace (446); Oreus (445); Amisus and Astacus in the Black Sea (after 440); Aegina (431).

Fordham University and Halsall, P (ed) 1999, *Internet Ancient History Sourcebook: 11th Britannica: Pericles*

Source V — Plutarch

In his home policy Pericles carried out more fully Ephialtes’ project of making the Athenian people truly self-governing. His chief innovation was the introduction of payment from the public treasury for state service. Chief of all, he provided a remuneration of 1 to 2 obols a day for the jurymen, probably in 451. Similarly he created a ‘theoricon’ fund which enabled poor citizens to attend the dramatic representations of the Vionysia. To him we may also attribute the 3 obols pay which the soldiers received during the Peloponnesian War ... The archons and members of the boule, who certainly received remuneration in 411, and also some minor magistrates, were perhaps paid for the first time by Pericles. In connection with this system of salaries should be mentioned a somewhat reactionary law carried by Pericles in 451, by which an Athenian parentage on both sides was made an express condition of retaining the franchise and with it the right of sitting on paid juries. The measure by which the archonship was opened to the third and (practically) to the fourth class of citizens (the Zeugitae and Thetes) may also be due to Pericles; the date is now known to be 457.

Dryden, J (trans), *Pericles by Plutarch*

Source W — Plutarch

The course of public affairs after his death produced a quick and speedy sense of the loss of Pericles. Those who, while he lived, resented his great authority, as that which eclipsed themselves, presently after his quitting the stage, making trial of other orators and demagogues, readily acknowledged that there never had been in nature such a disposition as his was, more moderate and reasonable in the height of that state he took upon him, or more grave and impressive in the mildness which he used. And that invidious arbitrary power, to which formerly they gave the name of monarchy and tyranny, did then appear to have been the chief bulwark of public safety; so great a corruption and such a flood of mischief and vice followed which he, by keeping weak and low, had withheld from notice, and had prevented from attaining incurable height through a licentious impunity.

Dryden, J (trans), *Pericles by Plutarch*
Source X

In his youth Plato had seen or heard about demagogues like Cleon and Hyperbolus: ignorant, self-seeking, caring nothing for the real good of the people. He knew that even Pericles' democracy had been but a veiled dictatorship.

Acknowledgments

Seen sources

Sources A–F, I, K, M, Q, T

Source G
California State University, USA, Diodorus the Sicilian: History Book XI, ch. 55, obtained from www.csun.edu/~hcfl004/ostracism.html, accessed 20 February 2014.

Source H

Source J

Sources L, R, S
Bailey, NM and Lim, R 2002, Readings in Ancient History: Thought and Experience from Gilgamesh to St. Augustine, 6th edn, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Source N

Source O

Source P

Source U

Sources V, W
Source X


Every reasonable effort has been made to contact owners of copyright material. We would be pleased to hear from any copyright owner who has been omitted or incorrectly acknowledged.