

**Citizens in Athens in the 5th  
century BC**

# INTRODUCTION

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Let's study the elements of this  
subject

The subject here is:

Citizens in Athens in the 5th century BC

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Definition

**What is a citizen?**

# What is a citizen?

Someone with a social and political power

Someone who has rights

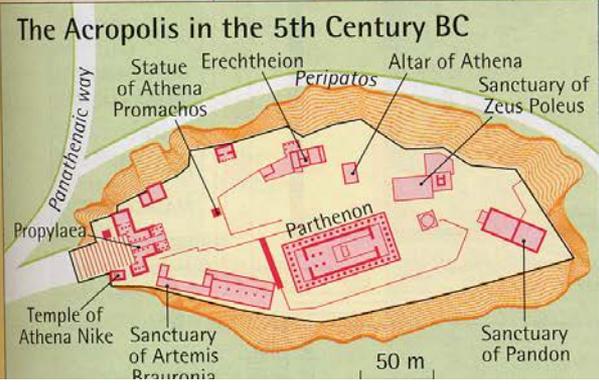
Someone who has duties

Citizens in Athens in the 5th century BC

Present Athens

A thin black arrow points from the text 'Present Athens' below to the word 'Athens' in the title above. The word 'Athens' is highlighted with a green oval.

**WORD BOX**  
**Athens** [ˈæθɪnz]  
**The Acropolis**  
 [əˈkrɒpəlɪs]  
**The Parthenon**  
 [ˈpɑːˈθændɒn]  
**The Panathenaia**  
 [ˌpænəθeɪˈnæjə]  
**The Peloponnese**  
 [ˈpeləpəniːs]



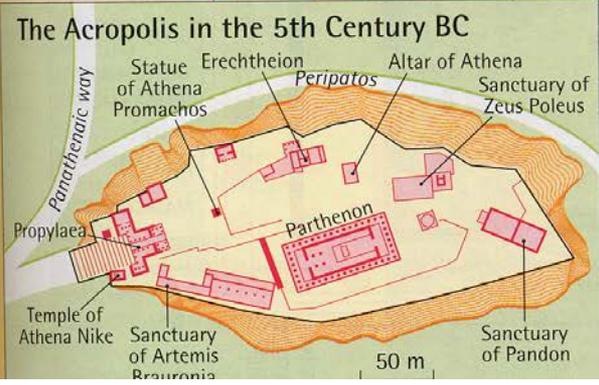
- City of Athens
- Athens' allies
- Persian Empire

Athe was an Antique Greek City .

It was the biggest city of Greece.

The Attica was the name of the territory controlled by Athens: it was 25 000 square kilometers wide.

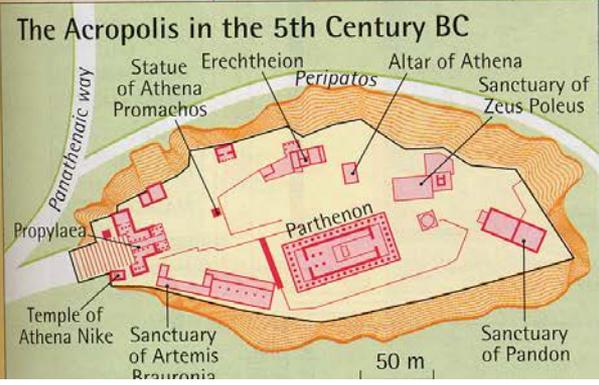
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Athens was at the head of the DELIAN League

The cities of the League paid Athens for its protection

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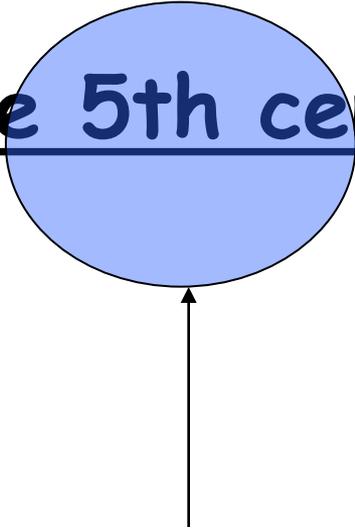
Indeed Athens was very powerful thanks to its fleet.

The Athenians defeated the great Persian Empire in the Medic wars in 480 BC .

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# Citizens in Athens in the 5th century BC

What was so special  
about Athens at this  
precise time?



Athens was also the very first DEMOCRACY in history

What is a democracy?

**A DEMOCRACY IS A POLITICAL SYSTEM  
WHERE THE PEOPLE HAS THE POWER**

**It comes from 2 Greek words: DEMOS and  
KRATOS**

Now we know enough to write the introduction of this new lecture.

First : let's introduce the subject: why is it worth studying Athens at this time ?

Next : Let's write the key question:

Was was it like to be a citizen in Athens?

To finish, let's present our layout:

First let's present the Athenian political system to understand how it worked.

Then in a second part, let's define citizens' rights and duties.

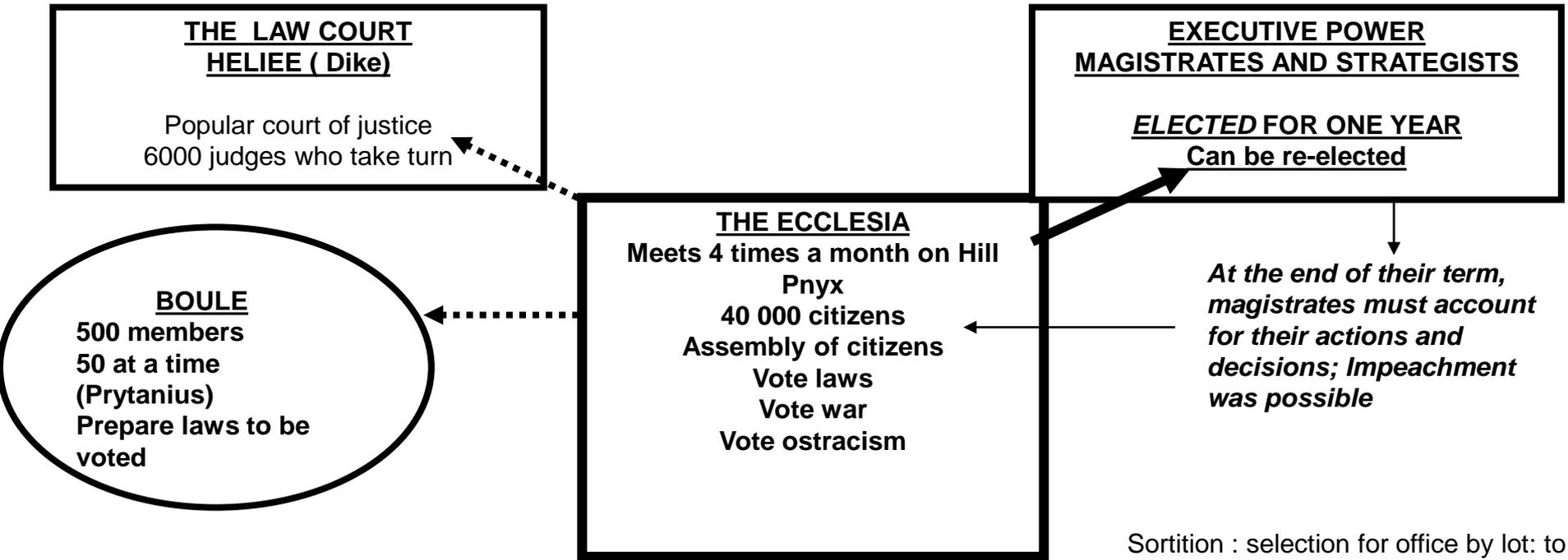
To finish, we'll explain that only some people were considered as citizens.

VOILA !

WE ARE DONE!



# I/ Athens political organisation



**The legislative power belonged to :**

the Boule and Ecclesia

Because: they prepared laws and voted laws

**The executive power belonged to :**

Magistrates and strategists

Because: they enforced laws

**The judiciary power belonged to : The Law court / Heliee**

Because: they judged people

## II/ Who were citizens ?

### A- Citizens:

There were only 40.000 male citizens

To be a citizen your father and mother's father had to be Athenian: you inherited from citizenship: this is called the Right of blood.

Each citizen when he reached 18 had to go on a two-year military service called **the Epheby**

Each citizen had to be registered on a demo ( the region he was from, like a census).

He had 3 names: his own name, his father's name and his demo's name

## **B- Non citizens:**

they totaled 340.000 and were not taken into account for political decisions.

There were three categories:

- the foreigners : either from Greece ( the metics) or out from Greece ( the Xenoi) They paid a tax to be accepted.

- Slaves

- Women depended on men: they could not make any political decisions although they were in charge of religious ceremonies

## **C/ How did citizen get organized ?**

Let's study a text by a very famous Athenian magistrate called Pericles.

*The Greek historian Thucydides recounted the story of the Peloponnesian War during which Pericles pronounced the funeral oration for the Athenian soldiers who fell during the war*

**Our system of government does not copy the institutions of our neighbours. It's more the case of our being a model to other than of our imitating anyone else.**

**Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hand not of a minority but of the whole people.**

**When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting someone before someone else in position of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability that the man possesses. No one as long as he has it in him to be in the service of the state, is kept in political obscurity because of poverty. (...)**

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**1-Presentation of the document: what elements of the text can be helpful?**

## TO PRESENT A DOCUMENT YOU NEED TO TELL MORE ABOUT:

- The author
- The nature
- The topic/the/subject: What does it deal with? What is it about?
- The date: When was it made? When did the events mentioned occur.
- The context: what happened at the time?

Let's see what we have here....

# THE AUTHOR:

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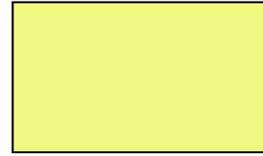
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THE CONTEXT:



**YOU CAN NOW WRITE A PARAGRAPH TO PRESENT  
THIS DOCUMENT...ENJOY YOURSELF!**



**Let's now work on the content of this text...**

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**2-Was democracy a common political system at this time?**

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**3-How does Pericles define a democracy?**

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**4-Who was given some power in such a political system?**

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5-Don't you think it can be put into perspective?  
Isn't Pericles 'view biased? Comment on the colored passage.

NOW WRITE A PARAGRAPH TO COMMENT ON THIS TEXT. THE FOLLOWING WORDS WILL BE NEEDED:

Layout ( plan)- A two-part layout (un plan en deux parties)-Democracy- to occur- to deal with- to put into perspective- a funeral oration- a magistrate- The author-equal- equality- to have some power- political system- common/uncommon-to be defeated- a defeat-to face with something-to be drawn-to be elected

**WORK HARD!**



### III/ Citizens' rights and duties

#### A-Rights:

- go into politics
- freedom of speech
- Question magistrates
- isonomy: equality of citizens before laws
- Misthos: they could get a financial support to get full time into politics when they were sorted by lot.
- Do the Epheby

## B-Duties

-defend the city in case of a war

-get involved into religious ceremonies: the Panathenaic festival (Panathénées) was the most famous of them.

It was to worship Athena, Athens' patron Goddess.

Getting involved into religion was a condition to be a good citizen.

It's said that in Athens religion was a CIVIC RELIGION

-respect laws or they could be **ostracized**: that's to say the Ecclesia could vote to send someone into exile.( OSTRACISM)

## **CONCLUSION:**

***So we've seen that in Athens citizens were the ones who participated to the Athenian democracy.***

***It was the first time in history the people was given power.***

***But it was far from being a fair political system and democracy was neither open nor put citizen on an equal footing.***

***This is the reason why Athens's democracy did not survive the defeat against Sparta at the end of the 5th Century BC***