

Sample Lesson: Democracy vs. Republic!

Overview

During our study of Ancient Greece and Rome students learn about the origins of governments for and by the people. True democracy (where all citizens participate directly in the decision making process) was first developed during Athens' Golden Age in the fifth century B.C.E. Several centuries later, the Roman Republic established the first representative democracy (where citizens elect leaders to participate in the government on their behalf). The study of these ancient cultures provides a wonderful opportunity to examine the roots of our own modern government in the United States, and creates authentic opportunities for student learning and understanding.

Objectives

The learner will recognize and understand the characteristics of Athenian Democracy.
The learner will recognize and understand the characteristics of the government of the Roman Republic.
Students will make connections between these historical governments and the government of the United States today.

Materials

World Studies: The Ancient World. Prentice Hall, 2008.

Greek and Roman Civilization. Mark Twain Media Inc., 1996.

The Romans. Milliken Company, 1999.

Implementation

This lesson occurs after the culmination of the Greece unit. Students are asked to recall what they learned about the direct democracy established in ancient Athens. They are asked, "How does that version of democracy differ from the democracy of the United States today?" Through this method of questioning students begin to discover the primary difference between representative and direct democracy. Then, after reading about the Roman Republic, students are asked to recall classical democracy in Athens. Using a Venn Diagram students work in small groups to chart similarities and differences between the two governmental systems. The teacher guides the students through a discussion about their charts, but allows the students to develop the conclusions themselves. Students then continue their work in small groups and identify traits of these governments that are still present in the United States today.

Assessment

Students will be assigned to defend either Democracy or Republic in a short in class debate

Students will support their claims in writing and identify which government more closely mirrors the United States.

Students will describe in writing the qualities that make their student government a representative democracy and will then hypothesize about how the school might change if they began to run it as a direct democracy instead.