

## Roots of Democracy

**Time Needed:** One Class Period

**Materials Needed:**

Student worksheets

**Copy Instructions:**

Student packet (*double-sided, class set*)

**Learning Objectives.** Students will be able to:

- summarize definitions of the five features of American democracy, defining them from textual context.
- identify key influences on our founding fathers, underlining them in the text and then correctly sorting them onto a timeline.
- differentiate between the features of American democracy, correctly matching them to examples of the feature in American government.

### STEP BY STEP

- ANTICIPATE** the lesson by asking the following question: "What is democracy? Are we a democracy here in the United States?"
- DISTRIBUTE** the *Principles of Democracy* reading (3 pages).
- READ** through the reading as a class, pausing at the end of each section to complete the step listed there: after the intro, hypothesize as to the definitions of the terms about to be covered, and after each term, define it.
- DISTRIBUTE** the *Principles of Democracy* worksheet (1 page).
- REVIEW** the instructions for the "Mark it up" and timeline activities on the top of the page. **\*\*Optionally, you may divide students into pairs to complete the "Mark it up" activity.**
- INSTRUCT** students to complete the activities on the worksheet.
- GROUP** students into groups of 2 or 3.
- DISTRIBUTE** a set of *Principles of Democracy* "Matching Activity Cards" to each group of students. (You may need to distribute scissors to each group, unless you have pre-cut the cards).
- GIVE** students the following instructions: Students will be playing memory. They should mix up the cards and lay them out on a flat surface **face down**. They are going to create sets of three, by flipping over three cards at a time. They need to create sets that include a term, that term's definition, and a fill-in-the-blank to which that term is the correct answer. They need to remember where each card is so that they can find it when they need it to create a set of three! When they have created a set of three they may remove it from the playing surface.
- REVIEW** each term, the correct definition of each term, and the completed fill-in the blank sentence. This may be done before or after your students play the Matching Activity.

# Roots of Democracy

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Introduction.

*Democracy* means rule by the people. In the United States we have a democracy, but where did it come from? There are lots of civilizations and great thinkers that influenced our Founding Fathers as they developed American democracy. One of these, Ancient Greece, was a very important civilization that existed from around 2200 BCE to 130 BCE. In this lesson, we will study five principles of American democracy and find out where these ideas came from.

**Sum it up.** Democracy is:

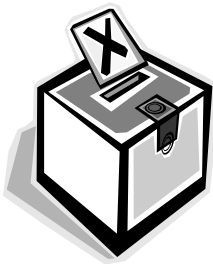
**Take a Guess!** Before we explore where our democracy came from, let's look at the five principles of American democracy. Using what you already know about words, can you guess the meaning of the following terms?

Consent of the Governed:	Representative Government:	Rule of Law:	Individual Rights:	Checks and Balances:

## Consent of the Governed.

*Consent* means to give permission for something. *Consent of the governed* means that the citizens of a country give their permission for the government to operate. This is a key feature of government in a democracy, where citizens have the right to vote.

In the United States, our Declaration of Independence says that governments should get their power from the consent of the governed. This idea can be traced back to 510 BCE, when parts of Greece became democratic.



In a part of Ancient Greece called Athens, democracy required participation of the people. It came with certain responsibilities, much like our democracy today. The Greeks established the *Assembly*, a body of citizens that made decisions and voted on issues that affected everyone. All citizens could participate! Decisions made in the Assembly had to be approved by another group of citizens called the *Council*. By participating in government, all these citizens were giving their permission, or consent, for that government to operate.

**Sum it up.** Consent of the governed is:

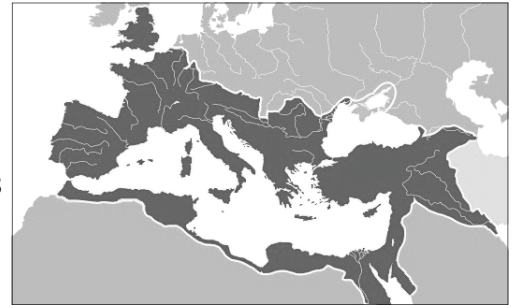
# Roots of Democracy



## Representative Government.

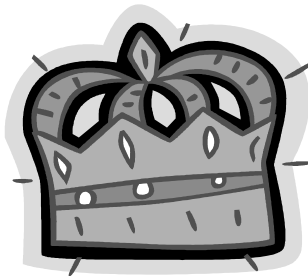
In a *representative government*, the citizens elect representatives that make decisions for the people and are responsible to the people. In the United States, we elect the people who represent us in Congress and we elect our President. Even many judges are elected (but not our U.S. Supreme Court Justices).

The beginnings of representative government could be seen in the ancient Roman empire. This civilization lasted from about 500 BCE to 476 CE. By about 150 CE, the Roman empire was at its height and stretched almost 2.5 million square miles! Rome was originally ruled by kings, but eventually it changed into a form of democracy. It was not a true representative democracy, because not all of its important officials were elected. However, citizens were allowed to vote for some of their representatives, and if these representatives did not please the people, they could be voted out and replaced!



**Sum it up.** Representative government is:

## Rule of Law.



*Rule of law* means that no person is above the law—not even government officials. In the United States, nobody is above the law. This concept can trace its beginnings to a document called the Magna Carta. What's so great about the Magna Carta? For thousands of years, laws had applied to the people but not to kings or governments. Then, in 1215, the English wrote the Magna Carta and included a very important section: The King was no longer allowed to do whatever he wanted. Instead, the King had to follow the "law of the land" when dealing with his subjects.

The Magna Carta had a great deal of influence on the United States Constitution and on other constitutions and charters around the world. It was one of the first formal documents that made a king subject to the law. The Magna Carta set the stage for the idea that even governments should be accountable to the law.



**Sum it up.** Rule of law is:

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## Individual Rights.

A *right* is a claim or privilege to something. *Individual rights* are things every person has a claim or privilege to have for themselves. Even though our United States democracy operates by majority rule, we consider individual rights to be very important. In fact, our Founding Fathers were very concerned that the majority might take advantage of the minority. In order to protect all individuals, they created the Bill of Rights and attached it to the end of the Constitution. The Bill of Rights lays out the rights of all citizens in the United States.

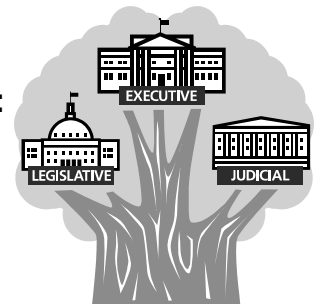


Individual rights is a concept that comes from many different thinkers in many different cultures. John Locke was an English philosopher. In 1689 CE, he published a book about the natural rights held by every human being. Locke's ideas about natural rights helped to form the way we think about individual rights today.

**Sum it up.** Individual rights are:

## Checks and Balances.

*Checks and balances* are limits that keep the government's power under control. The United States has two systems of checks and balances: our three branches of government and our federal system.



The United States government is divided into three branches: the Executive (President), the Legislative (Congress), and the Judicial (courts). The first person to describe this kind of system in detail was a French thinker named Montesquieu. In 1748, Montesquieu wrote that power must be divided in government to prevent one part from becoming too powerful. Our Founding Fathers were influenced by Montesquieu when they designed our government.



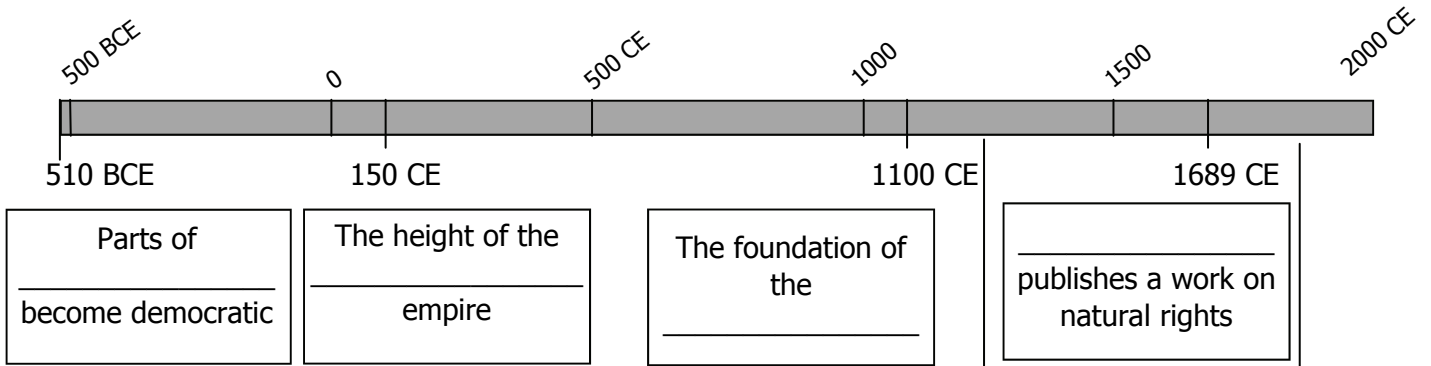
The Founding Fathers also created a *federal system* that divides power between the states and the national government. Each state has its own constitution and makes its own laws. However, each state must follow the United States Constitution and all the national laws. The U.S. was not the first to do this. Around 1100 CE, the Iroquois—a group of Native American tribes—also formed an alliance to work together toward a common goal.

**Sum it up.** Checks and balances are:

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mark it up.** Go back to the reading pages. Underline every person or group who influenced our Founding Fathers. Then, use the information you underlined to complete the timeline below:



**Your Opinion.** Which features do you think are most important? Rank them from 1 (most) to 5 (least).

- \_\_\_\_\_ Consent of the Governed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Checks and Balances
- \_\_\_\_\_ Individual Rights
- \_\_\_\_\_ Representative Government
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rule of Law



**Identify.** Match the examples with the five features of American democracy:

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| _____ 1. When the President of the United States wants to create a law he must go to Congress with the idea.     |                              |
| _____ 2. People elect representatives on both the state and national level to speak for them in government.      | A. Consent of the Governed   |
| _____ 3. By electing officials in or voting them out, people give their approval to the government.              | B. Checks and Balances       |
| _____ 4. The people are the source of all government authority.  | C. Individual Rights         |
| _____ 5. Our Bill of Rights protects the rights of all U.S. citizens.  | D. Rule of Law               |
| _____ 6. The national government and states' governments have divided up certain responsibilities of government. | E. Representative Government |
| _____ 7. The President of the United States must follow the Constitution and the laws of the country.            |                              |
| _____ 8. The law protects all people, even those in the minority.  |                              |
| _____ 9. Citizens vote for President every four years.   |                              |

Democracy

Checks and Balances

Rule of Law

Representative  
Government

Consent of the Governed

Rule by the People

Individual Rights

Everyone is under the Law

<p>Power is divided so that no one becomes too powerful</p>	<p>People elect representatives to express their will in government</p>
<p>People give their approval to the government</p>	<p>All people's interests are protected, even those who aren't the majority</p>
<p>In a _____ the government is run by the people.</p>	<p>The ancient Greeks practiced _____ by allowing people to vote on government issues.</p>
<p>The Roman Empire had a _____ where the leaders were elected to speak for the people.</p>	<p>The Magna Carta was the first written support of _____, or the idea of everyone answering to the law.</p>

John Locke discussed natural rights which are the basis for our government's emphasis on

\_\_\_\_\_.

The Iroquois and Montesquieu are some of the people who influenced our separation of powers, or

\_\_\_\_\_.



## Sample answers:

**Sum it up.** Democracy is: rule by the people.

**Sum it up.** Consent of the governed is: when the citizens of a country give their permission for the government to operate.

**Sum it up.** Representative government is: when the citizens elect representatives to make decisions for the people and that are responsible to the people.

**Sum it up.** Rule of law is: that no person is above the law, not even the government.

**Sum it up.** Individual rights are: things that every person has a claim or privilege to have for themselves.

**Sum it up.** Checks and balances are: the division of government into branches that share power and keep each other under control.


**Mark it up.** Go back to the reading pages. Underline every person or group who influenced our Founding Fathers. Then, use the information you underlined to complete the timeline below:

The timeline shows the following events:

- 510 BCE:** Parts of Ancient Greece become democratic.
- 150 CE:** The height of the Roman empire.
- 1100 CE:** The foundation of the Iroquois Nation.
- 1215 CE:** The Magna Carta is written in England.
- 1689 CE:** John Locke publishes a work on natural rights.
- 1748 CE:** Montesquieu wrote that power must be divided.

**Your Opinion.** Which features do you think are most important? Rank them from 1 (most) to 5 (least).

- \_\_\_\_\_ Consent of the Governed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Checks and Balances
- \_\_\_\_\_ Individual Rights
- \_\_\_\_\_ Representative Government
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rule of Law



**Identify.** Match the examples with the five features of American democracy:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><u>  B  </u> 1. When the President of the United States wants to create a law he must go to Congress with the idea.</p> <p><u>  E  </u> 2. People elect representatives on both the state and national level to speak for them in government.</p> <p><u>  A  </u> 3. By electing officials in or voting them out, people give their approval to the government.</p> <p><u>  E  </u> 4. The people are the source of all government authority.</p> <p><u>  C  </u> 5. Our Bill of Rights protects the rights of all U.S. citizens.</p> <p><u>  B  </u> 6. The national government and states' governments have divided up certain responsibilities of government.</p> <p><u>  D  </u> 7. The President of the United States must follow the Constitution and the laws of the country.</p> <p><u>  C  </u> 8. The law protects all people, even those in the minority.</p> <p><u>  A  </u> 9. Citizens vote for President every four years.</p> <p><u>  D  </u> 10. Thomas Paine said that "in America, law is king."</p> | <p>A. Consent of the Governed</p> <p>B. Checks and Balances</p> <p>C. Individual Rights</p> <p>D. Rule of Law</p> <p>E. Representative Government</p> |
|--|---|