

Political Issue A: Government

You must join either the Delian League that is led by Athens or the Peloponnesian League that is led by Sparta. The leaders of each league demand that you have the same form of government that they have. Representatives from Athens and Sparta will now try to convince you that their form of government is best.

Athens

We Athenians invented democracy, the government that all of Greece envies. We believe that all people should have a right to participate in their own government. In Athens, we have an organization called the Assembly. This body passes all of our laws, and all free men over the age of 18 can belong to it. We don't believe in putting absolute power in the hands of one person, so we elect 10 generals to lead our army and navy and act as our judges. In addition, we have a group called the Council of 500. This group proposes the laws upon which the Assembly votes, and it operates our government on a daily basis. Any citizen, rich or poor, may be a member of the Council. Members are chosen by lottery, and they are paid for their services. We Athenians do not believe that only a chosen group of wealthy old men should rule an entire city-state. If you want a government that gives all citizens a right to participate, join our league.

Sparta

We Spartans believe that our oligarchy system of government is much more stable and efficient than the democracy of Athens. We believe our older and more experienced rulers have the wisdom to make good decisions for our people. For example, we have two strong kings to lead us into battle. The kings also serve on our main body of rulers, the Council of Elders. This Council is made up of 30 experienced men who must be at least 60 years old to hold office. The Council writes our laws and then presents them to our Assembly, which votes "yes" or "no" on them. All citizens over the age of 30 may belong to the Assembly. Our Assembly also annually elects five men, called *ephors*, in whom we place great trust. These chief officials oversee the actions of our kings, and are responsible for controlling the education of our children and the supervision of our slaves. These officials may even ignore the vote of our Assembly, if they believe it is in the best interest of all Spartans to do so. Sparta has been very successful because our government is stable. We're not subject to the "mob rule" of the Athenian system, where inexperienced young citizens run the government. Under their democracy, leaders who are popular today may be forced into exile tomorrow. If you feel that government is best left in the hands of experienced and knowledgeable men, join our league.

Critical-Thinking Question A: Now that you have heard the two viewpoints on government, which league do you think your city-state would most benefit by joining? What other city-states would also benefit by joining the league you chose?