

Module 1: Government Foundations

Topic 3 Content: Origins

Introduction



Glover Mint: Get ready to take a journey back in time to ancient Greece and Rome. Today, in a special segment titled *Origins*, you will learn how many aspects of American government are based in the democracies of these early civilizations. Julio Czar is here with the story.

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Origins



Julio Czar: Thank you, Glover Mint! Welcome to *Origins*. I am your host, Julio Czar. Let's take a look back at the beginnings of democracy.

For thousands of years, humans survived by hunting and gathering food. Traveling was a necessity. However, with the development of agriculture, people no longer needed to travel to find food. They could plant and harvest crops, while remaining in one location. This led to groups of people settling into communities, and rules became necessary to maintain order. Government was created to meet this need for structure.

Government can be described as an institution that has the power to create and enforce rules for people to follow. The nations of ancient Greece and Rome developed methods of government that have stood the test time. Many aspects of American government are derived from the governments of these societies.

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Ancient Athens: Monarchy



Monarchy

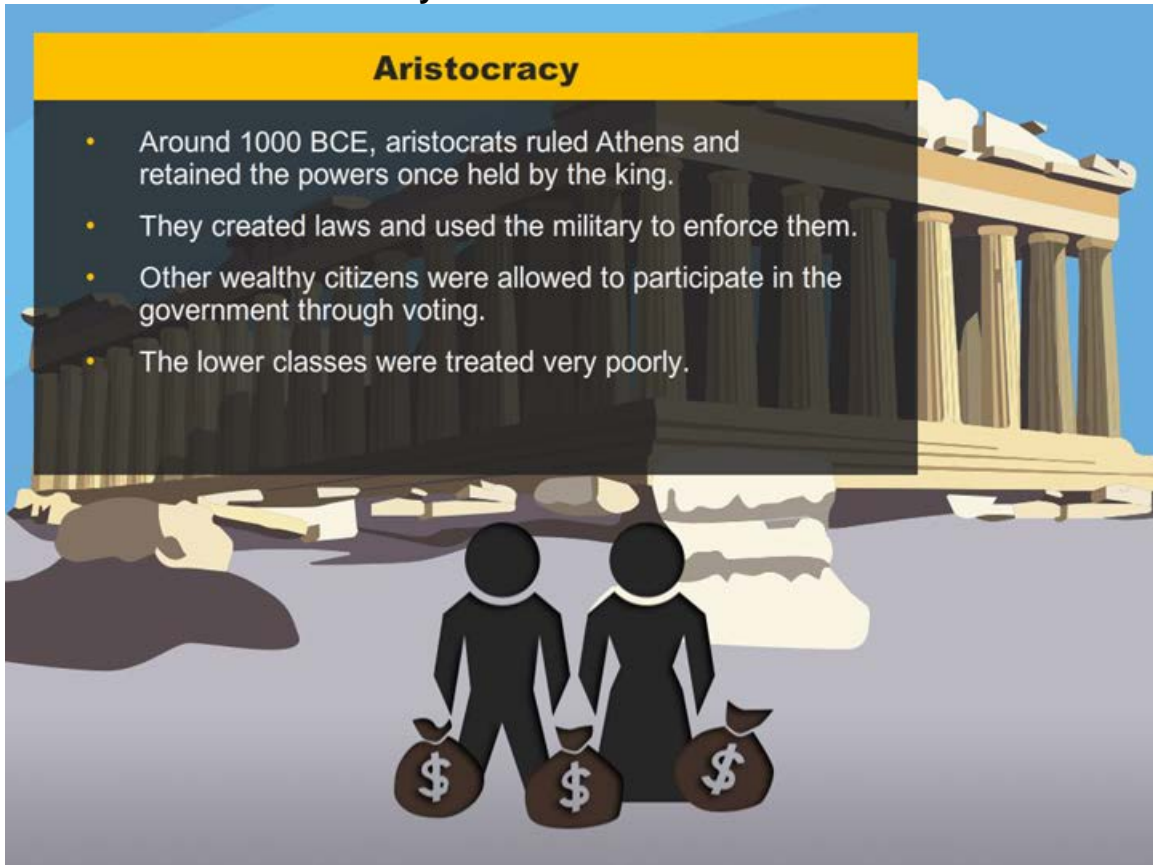
- In around 2000 BCE, the government of Athens was a monarchy.
- The Athenians were ruled by a king, who created laws, settled legal disputes, and led the army into battle during wartime.
- The king was advised by and relied on aristocrats for their wealth.

Julio Czar: Athens transitioned between several models of government. In around 2000 BCE, the government of Athens was a monarchy. The Athenians were ruled by a king, who created laws, settled legal disputes, and led the army into battle during wartime. The king was advised by a group of wealthy landowners known as aristocrats. He often relied on them for their wealth to fund wars, by purchasing weapons and other battle supplies. The aristocrats began to believe that as a group, they were more powerful than the lone king. Eventually they overthrew the king and began to rule Athens.

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Ancient Athens: Aristocracy



Aristocracy

- Around 1000 BCE, aristocrats ruled Athens and retained the powers once held by the king.
- They created laws and used the military to enforce them.
- Other wealthy citizens were allowed to participate in the government through voting.
- The lower classes were treated very poorly.

The graphic features a yellow header with the word 'Aristocracy' in bold black text. Below the header is a semi-transparent dark grey box containing a bulleted list of four points. The background of the graphic is a stylized illustration of a classical Greek temple with columns. In the foreground, a man and a woman are depicted in black silhouettes, each holding a brown money bag with a white dollar sign on it.

Julio Czar: Around 1000 BCE, aristocrats ruled Athens and retained the powers once held by the king. They created laws and used the military to enforce them. The aristocrats allowed other wealthy citizens to participate in government through voting. However, the poor in Athens were treated cruelly. For example, farmers who were unable to pay their debts were required by law to sell themselves into slavery. Also, death was the punishment for every crime, regardless of the severity of the offense. The poor and middle class grew tired of the cruel laws of the aristocracy. This led to another transition of the Athenian government.

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Ancient Athens: Tyranny

Tyranny

- Former military leaders agreed that all citizens should be treated fairly.
- Fighting for the rights of the poor and middle class, they overthrew the aristocracy.

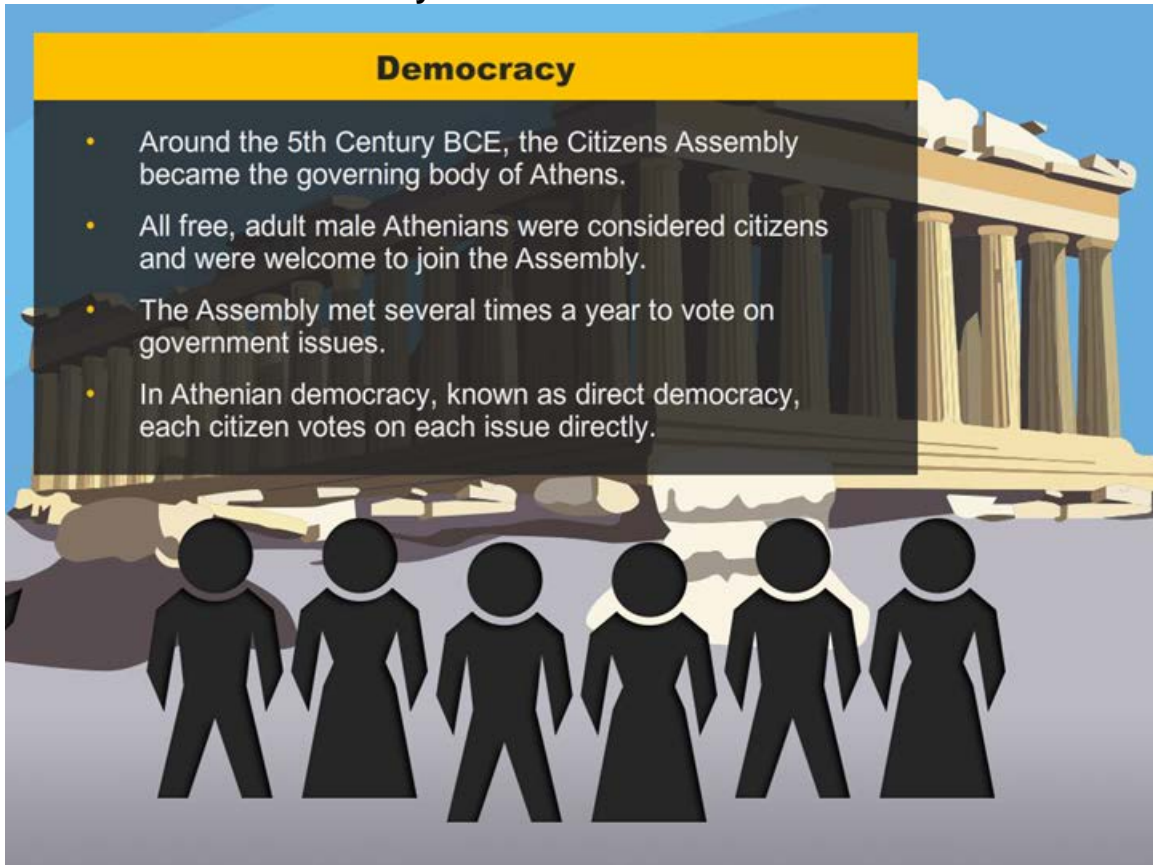
These military leaders changed laws, canceled debts, and gave all citizens the right to vote.

Julio Czar: Former military leaders championed the cause of the poor and the middle class. They agreed that all citizens should be treated fairly, not just those who were born with privilege and wealth. They fought for the rights of the poor and the middle class, eventually overthrowing the aristocracy. These military rulers changed laws, canceled debts, and gave all citizens the right to vote, allowing them to participate in the government. For about 100 years, Athens remained a tyranny, where citizens enjoyed many freedoms. However, when the military rulers began to govern harshly, the Athenian government transitioned yet again.

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Ancient Athens: Democracy



Democracy

- Around the 5th Century BCE, the Citizens Assembly became the governing body of Athens.
- All free, adult male Athenians were considered citizens and were welcome to join the Assembly.
- The Assembly met several times a year to vote on government issues.
- In Athenian democracy, known as direct democracy, each citizen votes on each issue directly.

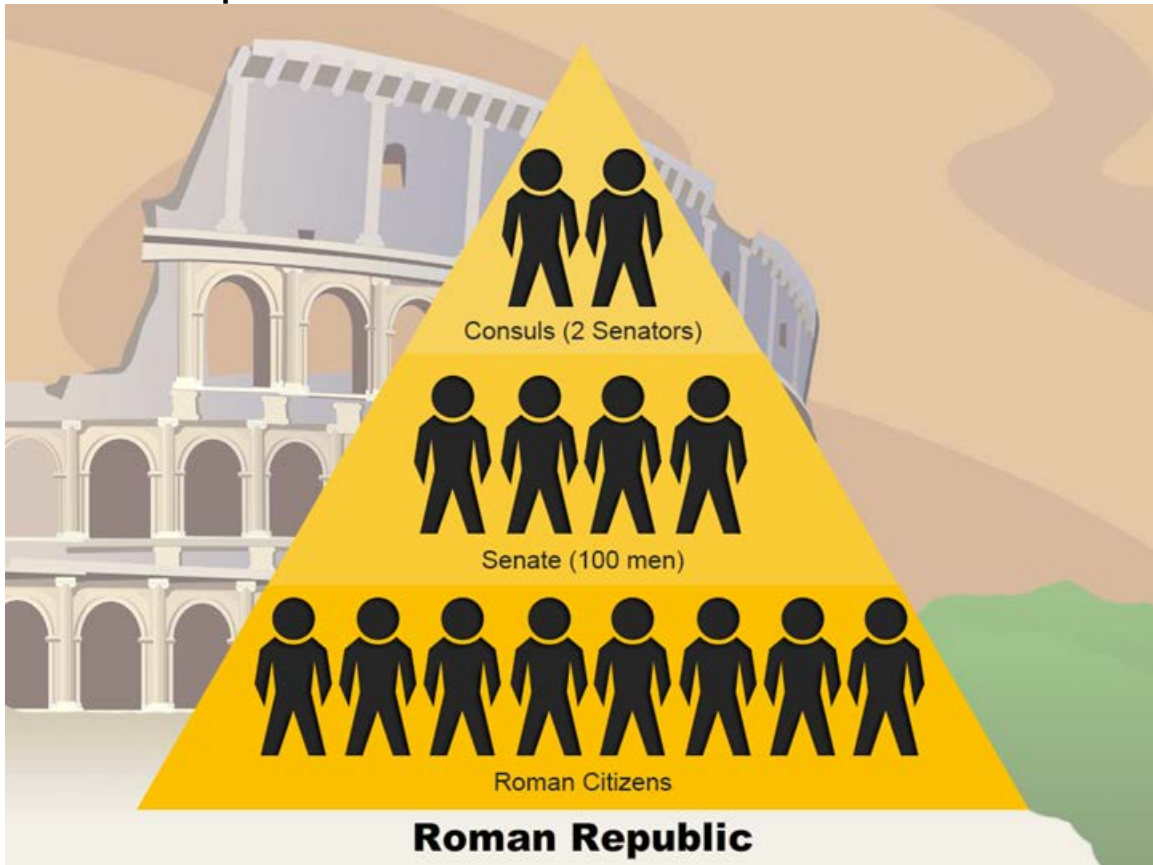
The infographic features a background image of the Parthenon in Athens. In the foreground, there is a row of six stylized human figures, three men and three women, representing the citizenry.

Julio Czar: Around the fifth-century BCE, the Citizens Assembly became the governing body of Athens. All free, adult male Athenians were considered citizens and were welcome to join the Assembly. The group met several times each year to vote on laws, taxes, and any other issues of government. With the creation of the Citizens Assembly, a new form of government, democracy, was born. The Athenian form of democracy, in which each citizen votes on each issue directly, without the use of a representative, is commonly known as a direct democracy.

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Rome: The Republic



Julio Czar: Like ancient Athens, Rome also began as a monarchy. Around 509 BCE, the Romans overthrew the monarchy and established a representative democracy, also known as a republic. In a republic, citizens do not make decisions in the government directly. They elect representatives to govern on their behalf. Here's how the Roman republic worked:

- **Roman Citizens**
All free, adult males of Rome were considered citizens, and enjoyed the right to vote. Citizens, however, did not vote for laws directly, as in the Athenian direct democracy. In the Roman representative democracy citizens elected the members of Senate, which would then make decisions on their behalf.
- **Senate**
The Senate was the legislative body of Rome. Elected by Roman citizens, senators were responsible for making decisions on behalf of the people. During their lifetime terms of service, they passed laws, appointed governors, and nominated consuls, who served as the executive body of the Rome.
- **Consuls**
This executive body of Rome was nominated by the Senate, but elected by the Roman citizens' votes. The consuls were two individuals who were granted the power to veto laws, lead the Senate, and command the Roman army. Together, the consuls served a one-year term, at the end of which they would join the Senate.

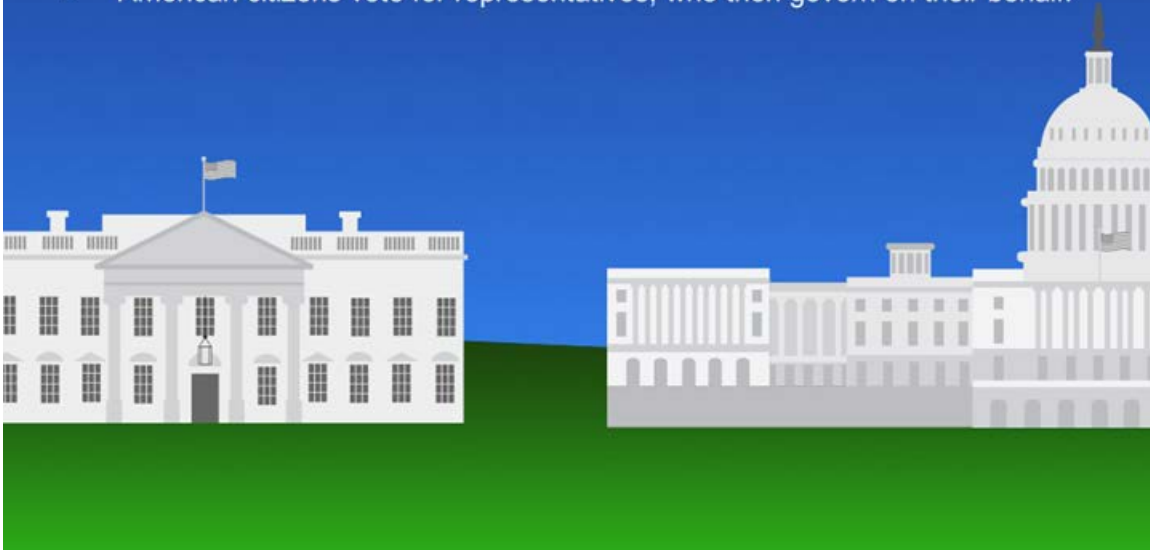
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American Democracy

American Democracy

- American government incorporates aspects of the democracies from both Athens and Rome.
- Citizens are provided with the right to vote and encouraged to participate in the government.
- American citizens vote for representatives, who then govern on their behalf.

An illustration of the White House and the U.S. Capitol building. The White House is on the left, a large white neoclassical building with a portico and a flag on top. The U.S. Capitol is on the right, a large white building with a prominent dome. Both are set against a blue sky and a green lawn.

Julio Czar: American government incorporates aspects of the democracies of both Athens and Rome. Like the governments of Athens and Rome, the government of the U.S. is also a democracy. Similar to ancient Athens, citizens are provided with the right to vote and encouraged to participate in the government. Like the Romans, American citizens vote for representatives, who then govern on their behalf. American government shares more similarities with the republic of Rome, than the direct democracy of Athens.

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Legislative Body of American Government

Legislative Body of American Government

- The legislative body of the United States is Congress, which is comprised of the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- Congress is elected by citizens and makes decisions on their behalf.
- Congress has many powers, including the power to create laws, coin money, and declare war.



Julio Czar: The legislative body of the United States is Congress, which is comprised of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Members of Congress are elected by citizens and makes decisions on their behalf. Congress has many powers, including the power to create laws, coin money, and declare war. However, unlike the Roman republic, Congress does not have the power to nominate the members of the executive body.

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Executive Body of American Government

Executive Body of American Government

- The executive body of government in the U.S. is led by the president, but also includes the vice president, the presidential advisors of the cabinet, and the heads of numerous federal agencies.
- The president and vice president are both nominated and elected by the votes of American citizens.
- The president has many powers, which include the power to veto and enforce laws, command the army, and negotiate treaties with foreign countries.



Julio Czar: The executive body of government in the U.S. is led by the president, but also includes the vice president, the presidential advisors of the cabinet, and the heads of numerous federal agencies. The president and vice president are both nominated and elected by the votes of American citizens. The president then appoints advisors and the heads of national agencies.

As the leader of the executive body of government, the president has many powers, which include the power to veto and enforce laws, command the army, and negotiate treaties with foreign countries. However, unlike the consuls of Rome, it is uncommon for the president to become a member of the legislative body after completing a term of service.

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Origins Conclusion



Julio Czar: Thank you for joining us on our look back to ancient Athens and Rome. I hope that you have seen how aspects of American government have their origins in the democracies of these early civilizations. I am Julio Czar, and this has been *Origins*.

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Ending of Episode



Demi Tracy: Until next time, this is Demi Tracy with Glover Mint, wishing you a wonderful day.