

Name/Period: _____

Pericles on Democracy

Between 460 and 429 B.C., Pericles was the central force behind the enthusiasm for democracy in Athens. Given below are 2 passages from a speech in which Pericles expressed his thoughts on courage and democracy.

“Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands 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 one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what must count is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability that the man possesses.

“Here each individual is interested not only in his own affairs but in the affairs of the state as well...We do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all.... And this is another point where we differ from other people. We are capable at the same time of taking risks and of estimating them beforehand. Others are brave out of ignorance; and, when they stop to think, they begin to fear. But the man who can most truly be accounted brave is he who best knows that meaning of what is sweet in life and of what is terrible, and then goes out undeterred to meet what is to come.”

In the blanks write **YES** if Pericles would agree and **NO** if he would disagree.

1. Rule by a powerful king is the best government? _____
2. A hard-working person would be a better leader than a lazy person? _____
3. People have a responsibility to vote in elections? _____
4. The best legal system is one in which all people have equal rights under the law?

5. Karl Marx would have gotten along with Pericles? _____
6. Candidates must have support from the people? _____
7. The judicial process controlled by the people? _____

Use the other side of this Worksheet

- A. Why do you believe Pericles was before his time?
- B. Point out the time period he was in and the ideas that he forged into the history of government?
- C. Explain his importance in the evolution of Democracy?