

Role-Play: Decision Making in the Polis

In your group, you will be performing role-plays of citizens of ancient Greece who are deciding a matter that will affect the polis. Your task is to come to a decision using each of the three different forms of government. To do this, you will discuss the question three separate times, playing different roles each time. Decide on your roles and prepare them briefly before each discussion. You will have a set amount of time for each decision-making process. After the decision has been made using each of the three methods, compare the results using the guiding questions suggested at the end.

Method 1: Monarchy (rule by one)

In this method, draw cards to determine who is the monarch. All other members are members of the aristocracy or Greek elite. The monarch may choose to consult some or all members of the group, but makes the final decision without being bound to the advice of any of the members. (Note that a monarch may—or may not—choose to consider the needs of the poorer classes for the good of the polis, even though they are not represented.)



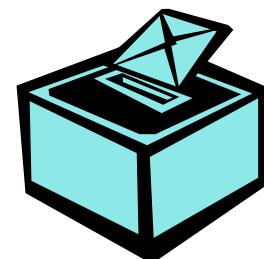
Method 2: Oligarchy/Aristocracy (rule by the few)

Depending on the size of the group, cards are drawn to determine the three or four members who are members of the oligarchy (they must be a minority). Other group members—the majority—are mostly poor citizens, but may include some merchants and rich citizens as well. They may try to influence the oligarchs but they do not have an official say in the decision.



Method 3: Democracy (rule by the many)

All members of the group have an equal say and an equal vote in the decision. The group may choose a leader to chair the discussion. The citizens should represent a variety of classes, education levels, and occupations. When discussion and all points of view have been heard, the decision is made by a majority vote.



Questions for discussion:

1. Which method yielded the fairest decision?
2. Which method created the greatest tension between groups?
3. Which method took the longest to reach a decision?
4. Which method ended up with a decision that pleased the most people?