

Socrates and pericles



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Athens is known to have lived its most glorious times under the reign of Pericles. He was the first politician to create a democratic Athens. He molded Athens into an empire that became famous for its diversity in culture.

Socrates, was viewed by many Greeks to be a great philosopher, served as a questioner of Athens. He questioned everything involving politics, knowledge, military, and social status. Living under the rule of Pericles, Socrates questioned his governing among the Athenian people. Unlike Pericles, Socrates believed that a democracy corrupted Athens and as he stated, we have elected many sweet shop owners, and very few doctors thus believing that democracy was in fact a downfall for Athens. Pericles was born in Athens to an aristocratic family whose father was a military leader and whose mother was a member of an elite family. Given that he was born into this type of family, he received a very well-rounded education in philosophy and music. As a teenager, he was left a great fortune by his family in which he used to succeed into politics. In young adulthood, he had already created a reputation for himself in the political field. As a politician, he organized a democratic institution, and became ruler of Athens. He held his pace as ruler until his death in 429 BC. Socrates was a son to a stone mason and a midwife. He did not come from an elite family as Pericles did however he still received a decent education and took on his father's craft as a stoner mason. Later in his life, he began to devote himself to philosophy. Socrates believed that philosophy gave the ability to create a well-established society. He wanted to establish a system unlike democracy that was based on human reason. In many of his writings he explained that the true happiness of a person comes from their ability to make reason. During a transition in

Socrates' life, he asked an oracle who the wisest man was. The oracle replied saying that there is no wiser man than Socrates. This led Socrates onto a journey to find someone wiser than him because he did not believe the oracle's words to be true. Through questioning and reason, he created havoc among politician in Athens. They began to believe that he was corrupting the minds of the youth. However, his only mission was to bring reason to them instead of following the democracy that Pericles had built. In Plato, Apology of Socrates, Socrates is put on trial which he is accused by Meletus and Anytus with impiety and corruption of the youth. In this apology, Socrates explained that he is not apologetic towards anyone or sorry for his actions. Socrates goes on to explain how he is not responsible for the corruption of youth but in fact it is the backwards politicians who believe in the democracy who are. He explained to the court, When I say that I am given to you by God, the proof of my mission is this: Reflecting that I was really too honest a man to be a politician and live, I did not go where I could do no good to you or to myself; but where I could do the greatest good privately to every one of you, thither I went, and sought to persuade every man among you that he must look to himself, and seek virtue and wisdom before he looks to his private interests of the state; and that this should be the order which he observes in all his actions Socrates' had no interest in keeping his message private. He made it clear in public and private that the democracy in Athens was not virtuous. He told the people of Athens that it is better to give individuals who are educated and knowledgeable the right to vote rather than individuals who are not.

He supported his message with an imaginary election debate between a sweet shop owner and a doctor. In his analogy, he stated that a sweet shop owner will tell you, Look, this person here has worked many evils on you, he hurts you, gives you bitter potions and tells you not to eat and drink whatever you like. He'll never serve you feasts of many and varied pleasant things like I will. Then he asked to consider the audiences response, Do you think the doctor would be able to reply effectively? The true answer- ? I cause you trouble, and go against your desires in order to help you' would cause an uproar among the voters, don't you think? His message to the people of Athens on democracy is that they have elected many sweet shop owners, and very few doctors. For this he was put on trial for corrupting the youth and deterring their view on democracy. He insisted that individuals who think of issues rationally should be able to vote. Socrates wanted to remind Athenians about their history with demagogues. Giving common people who are uneducated in certain issues and who are influenced by politicians like Pericles, Athens would again fall into demagoguery. His last words, I would rather die haven spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. Thus, his view on democracy is unlike Pericles who believed that every citizen by birthright should be given the chance to vote in elections. Pericles was elected as ruler of Athens because of his ability, integrity, and rank. Whenever Athens fell into despair he found a way to heighten spirits amongst Athenians. He reduced anger between the rich and the poor by giving the right to vote to every citizen of Athens because he believed everyone deserved to have a say in politics.

In Pericles' Funeral Oration, Pericles spoke valiantly in regard to the war heroes who died for Athens. He stated that because of their bravery and love for Athens, that they have risen to become a great empire. He continued to speak about how proud he is of the democratic state, in which the actions of the citizens have helped Athens flourish; he continues, We do not copy our neighbors, but are an example to them but while the law secures equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognized; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as a reward of merit. In this statement, he wishes to remind Athenians that they deserve the right to vote and to voice their opinions through action. To Pericles, democracy allows men to act as they wish without fear or judgement of others as long as they act within the confines of the law. He valued the equality that democracy offered to Athenians despite class considerations. Socrates believed that intellectuals who are fit to be politicians should vote in a democracy because they have more experience and knowledge in the field. Pericles however, believed that with the voices and opinions of citizens, Athens was able to flourish. Though Socrates and Pericles have different views on what a democracy should be, they both cared deeply about Athens and its citizens.