

# Analysis of pericles speeches

People



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Although Thucydides provides a history of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides spends a lot of time emphasizing the government and the citizens of Athens. Thucydides also focuses on the greatness of Pericles and his honest and patriotic leadership. Does this concentration on a democracy and moderate leader reveal what Thucydides sees as a just government? Throughout the text, one can see clues that a democracy is the preferred government of Athens, and the focus on Athens as the greater, swifter and more innovative power; he contradicts them with the passive, slow and cautious Sparta.

This text not only acts as a historical resource but also a source that provides an example for future governments on how to run a government successfully. By looking at the speeches of Pericles, the view of Thucydides comes through. It seems that Thucydides believes in a democracy and giving the common man a voice in what happens in the city. Pericles emphasizes the greatness of a democracy in his funeral oration. Through his speech Pericles emphasizes that equality to create a free and law-abiding society.

I think Pericles speaks of how there is no class consideration when considering man to be able to serve the state because he wants to stress that the most honorable man is the one that serves the state, especially in a time of war. Citizens that do not participate in the duties of public matters are deemed 'useless.' The funeral oration is not just an honoring of the patriotic men that died fighting for Athens but also a call to all the other sons, brothers and fellow citizens of the honorable fallen to live a life as honorable as them.

A democracy is a form of government that gives all the ability to participate, and according to Pericles everyone has a responsibility to take part. Men must put aside their petty wants and look at what is best for the state as a whole. The state as a whole can bring a lot to the people but a single person acting on their own individual interests can do little for the state. Why are there so many of Pericles' speeches in this text? Was Thucydides giving the prime example of what a leader should be?

Was the emphasis on Pericles putting a characteristic of him above those of the other men and leaders throughout the war? It is clear that Thucydides found all leaders succeeding Pericles as poor leaders. In Book 2. 65, Thucydides talks of how the leaders following Pericles were striving for supremacy, and acting according to their own private ambitions and interests. By going contrary to the moderate policy Pericles emphasized, a plan including exposing themselves to no hazards and waiting quietly while keeping attentive to their marine, the war was ultimately lost by the Athenians.

Were the speeches recorded to also show how powerful a leader can be? When Athens held an assembly to determine whether they would concede to the concessions of Sparta, it was the speech of Pericles that invigorated the Athenians with confidence to declare war against Sparta. When the plague hit the Athenians and they had lost momentum in the war effort and were considering sending peace envoys to Sparta, it was a speech by Pericles that was able to increase the Athenian energy to the war.

A great leader has the ability to drive the weak masses to great heights when they know they are under a first-rate leader and is told of the

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superiority of their state; this is seen in the example of Pericles. As a reader, I feel that Athens can win the war with their advantageous sea power, lands across the sea that Sparta cannot harm. By including the speeches of Pericles in his text, Thucydides sets an example of what is a just form of government and what makes a good leader in a democracy.