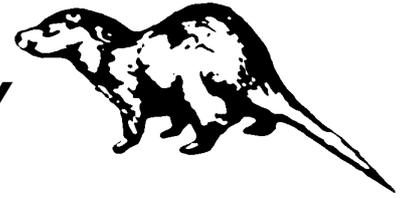


# NUFFIELD PRIMARY HISTORY



## ANCIENT GREEK GOVERNMENT, CITIZENSHIP AND THE STATE

### TEACHERS' NOTES

The two linked lessons described were taught half way through a 10-week scheme of work teaching the Ancient Greeks. The overarching key questions underpinning the ten weeks of teaching were: What was distinctive about the Ancient Greeks? Why do we learn about them, rather than about other societies?

There was also a strong citizenship strand running through the programme, with these two lessons focusing on the related issues of power, forms of government, rights and responsibilities.

The literacy elements addressed particularly discussion and debate; formulating, writing and presenting a persuasive argument; exploring word roots. These tie into the Year 6 NLS objectives. The predominant role of discussion and debate in these two lessons ensured that the children clarified and refined their understanding of important citizenship concepts.

#### **Year group/class**

Year 6, mixed ability and gender,  
34 in the class, including a newly-arrived Bosnian girl.

#### **Teaching time**

Two lessons, of two hours and one hour respectively.

## Learning objectives

- For the pupils to gain insight into concepts of power, influence, rights and responsibilities, with reference to both Ancient Greece and the present, as part of citizenship education.
- Through modelling it, to understand the importance of debate and argument in Greek, particularly Athenian, civic life.
- Literacy: for the pupils to learn to formulate and present persuasive arguments with the help of a writing frame.
- Literacy: to continue to explore English words with roots in Ancient Greek.

## Key questions

- What is the best form of government?
- What was the Athenians' attitude towards their city state (*polis*)?
- What are a citizen's rights and responsibilities?

## Resources

Forms of government ('Government and people' page from Jon Nichol's *The Greek and Roman World*, 1983, Basil Blackwell's Evidence series)

Rules of oratory sheet: *Making a persuasive speech*

*Persuasion* writing frame for drafting a persuasive argument

Athenian citizens' oath

## The teaching (Lesson one, 2 hours)

### Episode 1

*Focus: Power and influence in children's families*

To introduce the children to thinking about power structures, we started by announcing that today we were going to talk about power.

We posed the questions: Who has the most *power* in your family? How are disputes settled? Do the children have any power? What are the different roles and responsibilities, and what power goes with these?

Next question: who wields *influence* in your family? We explained the concept of influence by referring to their own influence over their parents/carers when, say, making choices in the supermarket. We discussed the difference between power and influence.

The children were intrigued, and when I asked them to represent the power and influence structures in their own families diagrammatically, they set to with a will. We used different-coloured arrows for power and influence. The arrows showed the direction in which the power/influence was exercised.

After 10 minutes, every child had produced a clear diagram. Pets featured strongly in the influence stakes. Several children showed sophisticated understanding of the nature of influence.

Three volunteers reproduced their diagrams on the board and explained their structures to the class. This was a useful introduction to thinking about power and governance.

## **Episode 2**

*Focus: Power and government structures in school and beyond*

In this country, who is in power and who is responsible for keeping things working? In families parents use the money they earn to ensure that the family is fed, housed, clothed. Schools are responsible for educating children in a safe environment. Governments have to look after their citizens.

Darren: ‘Is that why we pay taxes?’ Brilliant. His question led us into a discussion of the services provided by government, local and national – services we wouldn’t have unless there was tax revenue to spend. The thought of being without maintained roads or rubbish collection made a big impression on the children.

They were visibly excited by their initial glimpse into the vast functions and structures of government. Hannah immediately drew a simple power and influence diagram incorporating government, council, school, governors, headteacher, teachers and children.

## **Episode 3**

*Focus: Group discussion and formulation of persuasive arguments*

After break we investigated the forms of government the Ancient Greeks had. We explained that several forms of government co-existed in Greece, with Athens and other city-states moving gradually towards democracy, Sparta excepted.

The Greeks used to debate which was the best form of government – we’ll have a debate, too.

We divided the class into five groups, told them that each group had to advocate one particular form of government, and try to persuade the rest of the class that theirs was the best.

We gave each group the *Forms of government* sheet. It gives accessible definitions of five forms of government: monarchy, tyranny, aristocracy,

oligarchy, democracy. We talked through each form with the class first, to make sure they understood what they were arguing about.

We also handed out the rules of oratory sheet: *Making a persuasive speech*. We advised them to follow these rules when formulating their arguments.

Finally, we gave each group a *Persuasion* writing frame to help them to draft their arguments – the writing frame provides useful logical connectives for argument construction.

We gave the groups 15 minutes to debate, decide on and hone their arguments. We circulated, giving help where needed, as some found the concepts difficult.

#### **Episode 4**

*Focus: Which is the best form of government? The persuasive arguments presented*

The five groups now went up to the front in turn, and tried to persuade the rest of the class that their form of government was the most superior. All the arguments were delivered with great aplomb. Afterwards, the class decided that the democrats had the best arguments, with the oligarchs coming a close second.

### **The teaching (Lesson two, 1 hour)**

#### **Episode 1**

*Focus: Our rights and responsibilities at home. Our parents' rights and responsibilities*

We began by asking the children to say what, in their own families, were their rights and responsibilities, and what were those of their parents.

They discussed in pairs, then reported back to the class – five minutes.

We pooled and wrote up on the board the children's ideas about family rights and responsibilities, accompanied by much thoughtful discussion. I was impressed by their awareness and maturity.

Their list is given at the top of the next page.

#### **Episode 2**

*Focus: Forms of government: what is a democracy?*

On to the wider world: the state. We referred back to the previous lesson (before half-term) and their arguments for different forms of government. We discussed and clarified the definition of a democracy, representing the concept with a diagram on the board.

Family rights and responsibilities (see Lesson two, episode 1)

FAMILY RIGHTS		FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES	
PARENTS	CHILDREN	PARENTS	CHILDREN
Some free time.	Some freedom.	Make children behave.	Look after your pets.
Vote.	Have food, drink, clothing.	Give food, drink and clothing.	Make it easy for your parents to look after you.
Believe what they want.	Believe what you want.	Love and care for their children.	Look after your own room and things.
			Obey your parents (mostly).
<----- Respect each other. ----->			

### Episode 3

*Focus: Our rights and responsibilities as citizens of the United Kingdom*

We asked the class about their expectations as British and world citizens. What are our rights? What do we owe in return? – as within families, we also have responsibilities as citizens of a democratic state.

In pairs, the children listed what they thought our responsibilities as citizens are. We pooled their ideas on the board.

The children's list revealed caring and responsible young citizens:

#### Things we owe our country

Care for nature and wildlife (make more green spaces)  
 Caring about the state of the country, such as litter; no vandalism  
 Pay our taxes  
 Serve the country in war  
 Honour and peace and gratitude  
 Look after people who are in trouble (such as homeless people)  
 Respect all people and be kind

We finished off the episode with a thoughtful discussion of the question:  
 Is freedom the same as licence?

## Episode 4

*Focus: What did Athenian citizens owe their city-state?*

In the 5th century BC Athens was a democracy, though not in our sense: it was direct, not representative, and women and slaves were excluded from voting. The girls bridled, and we promised to pursue the issue in a future lesson.

On reaching 18, Athenian men became full citizens, and took a citizen's oath. How does their oath – their statement of their responsibilities towards the state – compare with our list?

We put up the Athenian citizens' oath on the overhead projector and read it with the class. What does it tell us about Greek society and beliefs?

We agreed that there were many similarities, despite the different wording. The children decided the main difference was that we were more aware of our environmental responsibilities than the Athenians were.

They were struck by how important defending the state was. This highlighted the fact that war was a constant feature in Ancient Greece, whereas Britain has not had to defend itself directly for 60 years. However, we still remember and honour those who have fought for Britain, through war memorials and Remembrance Day.

The children also noted the importance of religion, and some of them felt we should have a commitment to honour religion in our own list.

Overall, they were impressed by the sense of civic duty and the importance of the rule of law demonstrated in the Athenian oath.

## Episode 5

*Focus: Investigating the word root 'polis'*

In previous lessons we had investigated Greek word roots such as *tele-* and *-photo*. The word root that arose naturally during this session was the Greek word for the city-state: *polis*.

We told the class that words such as 'politician' arose from the Greek word *polis*. Can anyone think of one or two more? The children volunteered 'politics' and 'polite' – excellent.

Then Ian asked: 'Is that where the word 'policeman' comes from?' We replied, 'Let's check', so we consulted the class Oxford etymological dictionary, and there it was:

Police [French, from medieval Latin *politia* 'policy', from Greek *politeia* 'citizenship', via *polites* 'citizen' from *polis* 'city'].

The children were delighted, and went off to dinner glowing with linguistic expertise.

## Learning outcomes

- The pupils gained an understanding of the nature of power and its uses, through starting with a domestic example, then moving on to forms of government.
- Through modelling it in a small way, the class gained an insight into the Ancient Greeks' passion for debate about issues such as good governance.
- Oracy: the children were introduced to debate and argument as a way of exploring and clarifying ideas, and of persuading others. Important concepts they explored and clarified included: power, influence, citizen, rights/duties, responsibilities, government, freedom, licence, democracy, tyranny, monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy.
- Literacy: the pupils learnt to formulate and present persuasive arguments with the help of a writing frame. See NLS, Year 6, Term 2, Text level work 18 (to construct effective arguments).
- Literacy: they were introduced, *in context*, to further English words with roots in Ancient Greek. See NLS, Year 6, Term 1, Word level work 3 (building words from other known words, and from awareness of the meaning or derivations of words) and 10 (to understand the function of the etymological dictionary, and use it to study words of interest and significance).

### **Nuffield Primary History project**

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