### Athens and Rome: Who Could Be a Citizen?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Athens</th>
<th>Roman Republic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free, native-born adult males</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free, native-born adult females</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free, native-born male children</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female children</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaves</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freed slaves</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sons of freed slaves</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Requirements**

- **Athens:** If parents were free-born Athenians
- **Rome:** If parents were married in certain areas of Roman Empire
- **Rome:** But had limited rights. Could own property, but could not vote or hold public office.
- **Athens:** First, had to complete education and two years of military training before being granted citizenship
- **Rome:** At birth, if parents were citizens
- **Rome:** At birth if parents were citizens

### Document Analysis

1. What was required for an adult male to become a citizen of Athens? A Roman male?
2. Could women become citizens in Athens and Rome? Could slaves?
3. In which society were children granted citizenship?
4. In your opinion, which system, Athens or Rome, was more generous in granting citizenship to its people? Explain.
Document B

Source: From a speech titled "The Polity of Athenians" by The Old Oligarch, circa 424 BCE.

Note: The identity of The Old Oligarch (an oligarch is a person of power) is unknown.

"I shall say that at Athens [...] it is the poor which mans the fleet and has brought the state her power, and the steersmen and the boattswains and the shipmasters and the lookout-men and the shipwrights - these have brought the state her power much rather than the... best-born and the elite. This being so, it seems right that all should have a share in offices filled by lot [lottery] or by election, and that any citizen who wishes should be allowed to speak.... For if the poor and the common people and the worse elements are treated well, the growth of these classes will exalt [glorify] the democracy...."

Document Analysis

1. What is The Old Oligarch’s main idea when he says it is the steersmen and the shipwrights (shipbuilders) who have brought the city-state power?

2. What is the significance of the fact that Athenians allowed a poor and common man to win a position in the government by lot?

3. Do you think that election by lottery was a wise practice by the Athenians? Explain.
Document C

Source: From a speech by Claudius, Emperor of Rome, 48 CE and other varied sources.

In Athens, once citizenship was granted, citizens enjoyed equal rights and full political participation. In the Roman Republic, not all citizens received the same rights or the same political participation. But there is a reason for this. Hear first the words of Emperor Claudius responding to criticism for giving citizenship to the people of Gaul (modern-day France) soon after conquering them:

“What was the ruin of Sparta and Athens, but this, that mighty as they were in war, they spurned from them as aliens [foreigners] those whom they had conquered? Our founder Romulus, on the other hand, was so wise that he fought as enemies and then hailed as fellow-citizens several nations on the very same day.”

In other words, the Athenians were more stingy with their citizenship. The Romans more freely gave it away. But they gave it away in measured amounts.

For example:

1. *Latini* – people from regions outside Rome but on the Italian peninsula – were granted a class of citizenship with the right to do business and to travel and live within the Empire but not to an official Roman marriage.

2. *Foederati* – citizens of states with treaty obligations with Rome – were given limited rights in return for performing military service.

3. *Peregrini* – foreigners in conquered lands – could be given full or partial citizenship. Claudius did give citizenship to the people of Gaul after he conquered them.

Document Analysis

1. According to Claudius, what was the ruin of Athens?

2. How might Claudius argue that giving citizenship and high office to conquered Gauls would be good for Rome?

3. The document says that the Romans sometimes gave away citizenship rights in measured amounts. Use an example to explain what this means.

4. How could you use this document to argue that Rome had a better system of citizenship than Athens?

5. How could you use this document to argue that Athens had a better system of citizenship than Rome?
And the law is as follows: Each citizen wrote the name of the man who in his opinion had the greatest power to destroy the democracy; and the man who got the largest number of ostraka was obliged to go into exile from his native land for a period of ten years.

The Athenians, it appears, passed such a law, not for the purpose of punishing wrongdoing, but in order to lower through exile the [position] of men who had risen too high. Now Themistocles, having been ostracized in the manner we have described, fled as an exile from his native city to Argos....

Note: Only one ostraka, or ostracism, was permitted in Athens per year.


In conducting the census of the Roman population, the censors (they were elected in pairs) not only counted Rome’s citizens but... ranked them into distinct classes.... The censors’ ranking, based on wealth, heritage [family standing], administrative competence, marital status, and physical and moral fitness, determined the citizen’s political privileges, his level of taxation, and his military service. Anyone who didn’t meet the standards of the censors could be demoted in rank. If the offender was a senator, this meant expulsion from the Senate.

Note: The Roman census was conducted every five years.

Document Analysis

1. What did it mean when Athenians ostracized a fellow citizen? What was the purpose?

2. Do you think ostracism was a good idea? Explain.

3. How did Rome control the privileges and benefits of citizenship?

4. Do you think giving the censors the power to rank and re-rank citizens into different classes was a good idea? Explain.

5. Judging from the two passages in this document, who had the better system of citizenship, the Athenians or the Romans? Explain.
The Athenian Assembly met 40 times a year on a hillside called Pnyx, near the Acropolis. The site had excellent acoustics. All of Athens’s 40,000 citizens were eligible to attend, though travel made that difficult. Six thousand were necessary for a quorum on important issues such as ostracism. Athenians chose their officials, including the Council of 500 (an executive committee that oversaw the Assembly), by lot from the general citizenry. The Assembly passed laws, set budgets, and had power to declare war.

Document Analysis

1. What percent of adult male citizens in Athens could vote in the Assembly? What percent were eligible to become members of the smaller Council of 500?

2. Judging by the illustration and the quorum requirement, what generalization can you make about the attendance of Athenian citizens at Assembly meetings?

3. What does it mean that the Council of 500 was chosen “by lot”? Was that a good idea?

4. Assume that the scene in the drawing is reasonably accurate. Does it strengthen or weaken an argument that Athens had a better system of citizenship than Rome? Explain.
Document F

**The Roman Senate**

During many years of the Roman Republic (509-44 BCE), members of the Roman Senate (about 300 men) served for life. They usually came from the oldest Roman families and inherited their seats.

The Senate had primary responsibilities for foreign relations, including selecting ambassadors, making treaties, and creating alliances. They were responsible for war policy, and for the control of public lands. The Senate also tried cases of treason and conspiracy.

Though it started as an advisory body to Roman kings, by the third century BCE, the Senate had full governing power in Rome.

**Document Analysis**

1. How many served in the Roman Senate? How many could serve in the Athenian Assembly? (see Doc E)

2. How long was the usual term of service in the Roman Senate?

3. Compare the social class make-up of the Roman Senate and the Athenian Assembly (Doc E). What does this comparison tell you about the political power of the average citizen in each society?

4. Compare the two images in Documents E and F. In your opinion, what were the strengths and weaknesses of the Athenian Assembly and the Roman Senate? Explain.