



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2021 Volume III: Democracy and Inequality: Challenges and Possible Solutions

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## **Democracy: The Ancient World and Modern Implications**

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by Brandon Barr

In this unit, students will learn more about democracy in ancient Rome and Athens and how influential and comparable these early democracies were to the establishment of democracy in the United States. Democracy seems like the standard and aspirational ideal for government today, but it was not always considered an ideal form of government by many great thinkers. This unit will help students to see that there are clear parallels that are worth considering between the ancient world and modern democracy. Knowing that there was a significant period in which democracy disappeared from the face of the world, this unit also briefly explores challenges that democratic nations face in modern times that might threaten democracy going forward.

This unit is designed for sixth grade students to extend historical knowledge about the ancient world by using a guided inquiry approach. Documents for an archive bin have been curated to support the inquiry. This unit could be used in middle school or high school Social Studies classes. It assumes little knowledge about Roman and Athenian societies, but this information is readily available in the content objectives section of the unit.

(Developed for Social Studies, grade 6; recommended for Social Studies and History, grades 6-8)

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