DCPS: 7th Grade Social Studies

UNIT 6
ANCIENT HISTORY
LESSON 1

Summary

- In this lesson, students will read "Pericles" (pp. 56-59) and "Parthenon" (pp. 60-63) to learn about Pericles, how he advanced the foundations of democracy, and his contributions to Athens during its Golden Age.

Social Studies Background

Pericles (495-429 B.C.) was a wealthy statesman and gifted orator who was largely responsible for making Athens the political and cultural center of ancient Greece.

Born into a wealthy and politically connected family, Pericles grew up surrounded by leading artists and philosophers of his day. This created in him a great passion for the arts. Upon inheriting a vast fortune as a teenager, Pericles became a dedicated patron of the arts.

But politics soon became his priority. In 461 B.C., he and a fellow politician, Ephialtes, organized a vote in the popular assembly that stripped Areopagus, or the old noble council, of its powers. Democracy was born.

After Ephialtes was assassinated, Pericles became Athens' leading politician. He led the popular assembly for the next 30 years.

Under Pericles' guidance, Athens became a peaceful, democratic society. All citizens were allowed and expected to participate. The city became a mecca of art, architecture, religion, and philosophy. Pericles led many projects, including construction of the Parthenon.

In 431 B.C., Pericles urged Athens to declare war against Sparta. This started the 27-year-long Peloponnesian War, which Athens ultimately lost. That war, along with a plague that killed Pericles and 20,000 other citizens, led to the ruin of this great city.

ENGAGE

Encourage students to flip through the article and turn and talk with a partner to discuss what they see. Invite students to ask questions or share what they already know about ancient Greece.

EXPLORE

Instruct students to read the caption on page 56 of their Readers. **Ask:** *Who was Pericles?* (an ancient Greek statesman) Brainstorm ideas about how he could have advanced the foundations of democracy.

EXPLAIN

Point out to students that Athens is identified as the birthplace of democracy. Pericles, its leading statesman for nearly 30 years, is called "the first citizen." **Ask:** *Why is Pericles called "the first citizen?"* (He and another politician organized the first vote in the popular assembly. Pericles went on to lead a democratic Athens for nearly 30 years.) Have students turn and talk as they discuss how democracy changed life for people in Athens. (Previously, only wealthy people could afford the time to participate in politics. But under Pericles and his democracy, the state paid ordinary citizens to participate in public affairs.) Have students discuss how Pericles's actions led to the rise and fall of Athens over the next 30 years.

ELABORATE

Use National Geographic Education's resource "Ancient Greece" (*www.nationalgeographic.org/ education/ancient-greece/*) to teach students about ancient Greeks and how they informed today's democracies. The resource includes videos, artifacts, photos, maps, articles, and blogs on a number of key topics.

EVALUATE

Have students complete the **Content Assessment** for this lesson. Encourage them to share and compare their results in small groups.

CONTENT ASSESSMENT: Pericles

Pericles was a gifted orator. Read his quotes below. Analyze their meaning.

	What do you think the quote means?	How do you think the quote influenced others to take action?
Pericles stated in his famous Funeral Oration that Athenian citizens regard "a man who takes no interest in public affairs not as a harmless, but a useless character."		
Pericles urged the popular assembly to declare war against Sparta. "It's from the greatest dangers that the greatest glories are to be won," he stated in front of the assembly.		