

Pericles' Funeral Oration, c. 420 BCE

This famous speech was given by the Athenian leader Pericles after the first battles of the Peloponnesian war. Funerals after such battles were public rituals and Pericles used the occasion to make a classic statement of the value of democracy. The text comes to us from Thucydides' History.

How reliable is Pericles' description of Athenian government in this speech? Use at least three key details from the text of the speech and/or his biography to support your assessment.

In the first empty column, write ONE word that best describes the idea, tone, or purpose of each section of the speech. Then explain why you chose that word, using specific evidence from the text.

Excerpt	Idea/Tone	Reasoning
Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighboring city-states. We are a pattern to others rather than imitators. Its administration favors the many instead of the few: this is why it is called a democracy.		
The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, instead of keeping a jealous watch over each other, we do not police our neighbor for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in injurious looks, which are offensive but inflict no positive penalty.		
But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens. Fear teaches us to obey the magistrates and the laws, particularly such as regard the protection of the injured, whether they are actually on the statute book, or unwritten, but cannot be broken without acknowledged disgrace.		

Excerpt	Idea/Tone	Reasoning
These are not the only points in which our city is worthy of admiration. We cultivate refinement without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy; wealth we employ more for use than for show; we place the real disgrace of poverty not in owning to the fact but in declining the struggle against it.		
Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters...		
...for, unlike any other nation, we regard a man who does not take part in these duties not as unambitious but as useless. We Athenians are able to judge at all events ... and, instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all.		