Read the text and match the words in the box below with their meanings.

The organization and institutions of Athens

Around the year 450 BC, Athens was one of the most powerful cities in Greece with a population of more than 300,000 people. For centuries, the city had been ruled by the Athenian aristocracy. But Pericles, one of the aristocrats who led the city from the year 462 BC, wanted every free citizen to be able to participate. A new form of government was created: democracy.

The most important institution of Athenian democracy was the *Ekklesia*, an assembly of Athenian citizens, which met three or four times a month. Every male citizen over 18 was allowed to participate, and it was not unusual for five to six thousand men to attend. Political and legal issues were discussed and decided, and everyone could get up to speak and vote. The *Ekklesia* also elected magistrates, who were responsible for applying the laws, and *Strategoi*, or military generals, who led the army.

The *Boule* was a council of citizens which prepared the political and legal issues for the *Ekklesia* and was responsible for day to day affairs. Five hundred citizens were selected by lot to serve on the *Boule* for one year.

In addition, there was the *Heliaea*, a court of law with judges, elected by the *Ekklesia*. In important law cases, up to 1501 citizen judges would participate in decisions. All posts were limited to one year in order to make sure that no citizen gained too much power over the city. However, if one citizen seemed to become too powerful, he was sent into exile and banned from Athens for ten years.

Pericles died from the plague in 429 BC. At this time, Athens was already fighting a war with Sparta, which was to last for 25 more years. Athens lost the war and its wealth, and Athenian democracy was abolished.

abolish	aristocracy	aristocrat	citizen
democracy	magistrate	~~plague~~	select by lot

1 a disease that spreads quickly, causing a high fever, and in the past usually death

plague

2 a system of government in which everyone can vote and share in making decisions

_____

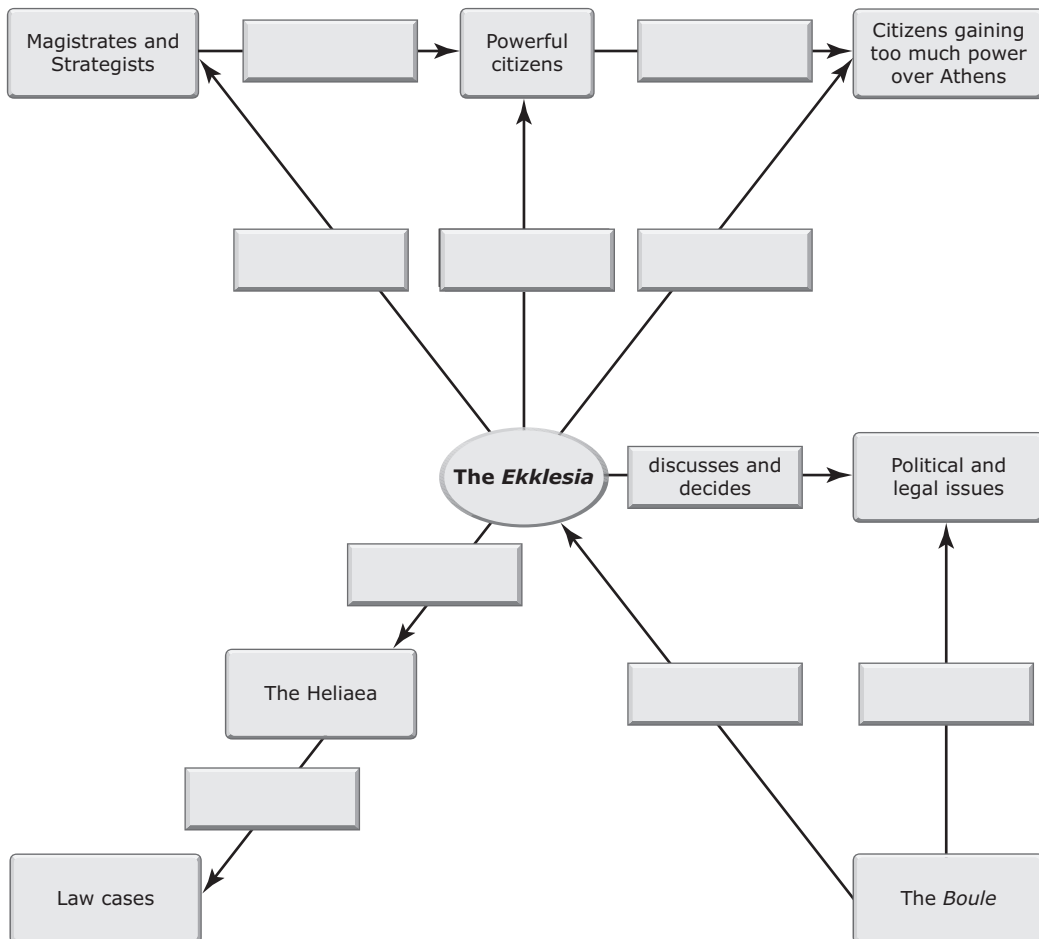**3** a member of the aristocracy

_____

4 a judge in a court for minor crimes _____

5 someone who lives in a particular town or city _____

6 the people in the highest class of society, who usually have money, land and power, and who often have special titles, such as 'duke' or 'countess' _____

7 to choose from a group without any particular method _____

8 to officially get rid of a law, system, practice, etc _____

2 Democracy in Athens

Vocabulary, Speaking

1 Complete the mind map with the correct words and phrases from the list.

bans	can become	~~discusses and decides~~
elects	elects	is selected by lots from
judges	may be seen as	prepares
controls		

Magistrates and Strategists → [ ] → Powerful citizens → [ ] → Citizens gaining too much power over Athens

[ ] [ ] [ ]

The *Ekklesia* — discusses and decides → Political and legal issues

[ ]

The Heliaea

[ ]

Law cases

[ ]   [ ]

The *Boule*

2 Work in pairs and write correct statements about the institutions of Athenian Democracy using the information in the mind map.

Example: *The Ekklesia discusses and decides political and legal issues.*

3 Work with a partner and discuss the information in the mind map.

Student A: cover your mind map and listen to Student B's statements. Decide if they are true or false. Correct the false statements.

Student B: read out true or false statements from the mind map. Ask Student A to correct the false statements.

4 Complete the sentences with the appropriate term to describe the organisation of your country.

1 In my country, _____ discusses and decides political and legal issues.

2 Citizens elect _____.

3 Minor legal cases are judged by _____.

4 Major legal cases are judged by _____.

Ancient Greece
Christoph Suter

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HISTORY

Overview

To introduce Pericles and presents some key aspects and terminology of ancient Athenian democracy.

Aims

- To understand the institutional system of ancient Athenian democracy.
- To learn some technical terms of ancient Athenian institutions.
- To compare ancient Athenian institutions with institutions in one's own country.

Language focus

- Description of historical place and events.
- Simple past tense, simple past passive.

Skills focus

Reading, writing, speaking

Preparation

Photocopy one worksheet for each student.

Time

30 minutes

Procedure

- For advanced level students, complete Worksheets 1 and 2.
- For basic level students, you may wish to omit the Mind Map stage in Worksheet 2.

1 The rise and fall of Athens

Ask students to work individually or in pairs. Tell them to read the text and do the vocabulary activity, matching the technical terms with their meanings.
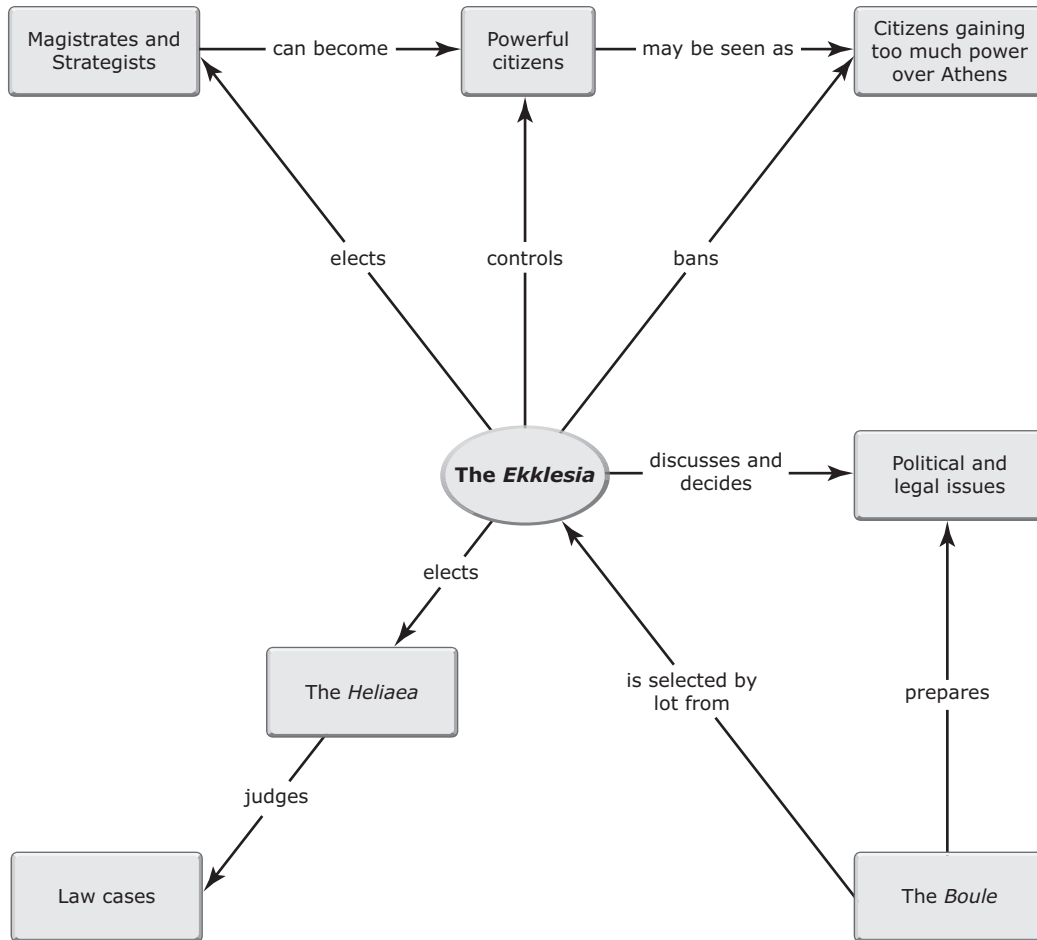
Key

1 plague   2 democracy

3 aristocrat   4 magistrate

5 citizen   6 aristocracy

7 choose by lot   8 abolish

2 Democracy in Athens

1   After reading the text, explain to students that they are going to complete the mind map in Worksheet 2. Check they understand that this represents

note-taking in a visual form. The mind map contains the key facts from the text. Tell them to work in pairs and complete the mind map with the correct words and phrases from the list. Set a time limit if you wish and allow students to refer to the text if they need to. The aim is not a memory test!

Key

Go through the mind map with whole class, eliciting the correct answers for the missing boxes.

2   Ask students to work in pairs and write sentences about the institutions of Athenian Democracy using the information in the mind map. Point out that they should write full sentences.

Example: *The Ekklesia discusses and decides political and legal issues.*

Go around the class helping students where necessary. Point out that this stage is an opportunity for students to consolidate their understanding of the institutions they have read about.

3   Draw a simple mind map showing institutions in your country on the board. Then, ask students to complete the sentences according to the information on the board.

Example: In my country (eg: the UK) *the House of Commons/Parliament* discusses and decides political and legal issues.

Citizens elect *Members of Parliament/MPs.*

Minor legal cases are judged by *magistrates*.

Major legal cases are judged by *judges and juries*.

There is plenty of opportunity for discussion on systems of government and democracy in students' own countries. Encourage them to share and discuss what they know about modern systems and compare it with ancient Greece.