ANCIENT ROMAN GOVERNMENT: WHOSE VOICE COUNTS?

SOCIAL STUDIES ACTIVITIES

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Reader’s Theater
Comprehension Questions
Think About This Scenario

Session 2
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Opening Statement

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FOCUS WORDS
Examining the Focus Words Closely
Mike: Okay, Ms. O’Brien can’t stay after school today, so she told me to run the meeting because I am the eighth grade class representative. I looked at our notes from last week, and today we’re supposed to start planning the spring dance.

Tien: That can wait. I have something much more important to talk with you all about. Did you know that the principal is now giving automatic suspensions to students found in the hall after the bell rings for class?

José: Yeah, I know about that. I was 10 seconds late for math and I got a suspension from Mr. Davis. I was late because I was cleaning up trash my “friends” left all over our table in the lunchroom.

Kayla: Well, you were supposed to be in class when the bell rang. I hate it when we’re waiting and waiting for class to start because people keep coming in late. I mean, I have goals I’m working towards. I want to go to that new math and science pilot school. Other kids might not care when class starts, but I do!

Mike: Still, we should do something about this stupid rule. I mean, we are the student government, right?

Tien: Yeah, but the administrators and teachers have all the authority. I’m not sure they would listen to us.

José: We’re studying democracy and republics in civics class now, but our school definitely isn’t one. It’s more of a... a...

Tien: Dictatorship!

José: Yeah! A dictatorship.

Kayla: Come on, it’s not that bad. Besides, kids are supposed to be in class. We’re here to learn, not chill in the halls. I think the administrators should make the rules. That’s their job. Something better to work on would be improving the quality of our building. This place is like 100 years old, and there’s even a leak in the ceiling of my ELA class!

Mike: I agree that the building is in bad shape. But I still think we should be working on having more say in the school rules. It feels like just because we’re kids, we’re second-class citizens, you know?

Kayla: Yes, but if kids had all the power at school, it would be total chaos! No one would ever go to class. We wouldn’t learn anything. Plus, more kids would get picked on. You’ve seen how bad it gets in a class when a teacher is out for the day.

Tien: That’s true. I don’t want to fail my classes either. My mother would be so disappointed in me if I came home with an F. But I also agree with what Mike and José are saying. This new rule is unfair. Well, Ms. O’Brien listens to us. Do you remember when the bathrooms were locked between classes? She was able to get that rule changed. She might be willing to talk with the principal about this rule too. Let’s meet with her this week.

This week in social studies class, you’ll learn about the different types of government in the Roman Empire. Like the school administrators, some people in Rome had more authority, or power, and made almost all of the laws for the Empire. The lower class, or poor people, of Rome had much less power. However, the lower-class people did work to get more rights and were sometimes successful. While you study, think about this question: Whose voice counts? In other words: Who gets to decide? Who has the power or authority in a government to make decisions and rules? And when and where should someone get to make the decisions?
Match each character from the Reader’s Theater with their belief about whose voice counts at their school and whether or not it’s fair.

**Students, especially student representatives in student government, should have more say. It is unfair that teachers and administrators treat kids like they are second-class citizens.**

- Kayla
- Tien
- Mike
- José

**School rules can be unfair. Kids can have a say in decisions, if they work through adults who will listen to them.**

- Kayla
- Tien
- Mike
- José

**Students have no power. It’s unfair and students feel like they are under a dictatorship.**

- Kayla
- Tien
- Mike
- José

**The teachers’ and administrators’ voices count the most. This is fair because making decisions is their job. Teachers and administrators keep things under control, which is good for everyone.**

- Kayla
- Tien
- Mike
- José
The Smith family is on a cross-country road trip from their home in New York to their grandma’s house in California. The Smith family has four members: Mom, Dad, a son Bobby (age 12), and a son Michael (age 10). In their hurry to get ready for the trip, they only packed one iPad. Now, four hours into a week-long drive the brothers are in the backseat fighting for it. Bobby thinks he should get the iPad because he’s older, and since he’s stronger he is keeping it from Michael. Michael thinks he should get to play with it because he’s the one who remembered to bring it. He pleads for his parents to help. Mom wants them to share. Dad is threatening to take it away if they can’t stop arguing.

How should this family decide who gets to use the iPad? Pick the one option below that you think is the fairest way for the family to decide.

- The father should decide because he has the most authority in the family.
- The mother should decide because she has the most authority in the family.
- The brothers will have to “fight it out” to determine who gets to use the iPad.
- The father and mother should insist that the brothers take turns using the iPad for 20 minutes at a time.
- The father and mother should give it to Bobby because he’s older.
- The father and mother should give it to Michael because he remembered to bring it.
- The brothers should talk until they come to a decision that they both think is fair.
- Other suggestion: ________________________________

Why did you choose this option? In other words, why do you think this is the fairest way to decide who gets the iPad?

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_____________________________________________________________________________________________
Take a Position

Brief History of Government in Ancient Rome

Who should make the laws in a society? Who should fight the wars? Who should get to vote? In the Roman Republic, the upper-class patricians and the working-class plebeians disagreed about these questions. The patricians, or aristocrats, claimed they had the authority to make the laws and to send the plebeians to war. The plebeians disagreed. They were Roman citizens and demanded full citizenship rights.

In 494 BCE, the plebeians decided to protest for their rights. They went away from Rome, leaving their jobs and their businesses. So the patricians discovered what life was like without shops or servants. This protest was called the first plebeian secession, and it worked! The plebeians won some authority to participate in government.

So the plebeians seceded four more times over the next 200 years, whenever they decided their quality of life was too low. The fifth time, in 287 BCE, the patricians agreed to written laws giving the plebeians their own representatives in government. Collectively, the plebeians’ protests are called the Conflict of the Orders.

The plebeians won legal and governmental rights with their struggle against patrician power and authority. Some plebeians rose to positions of political power. Most, though, remained poor laborers who still had to work hard for a living and could be conscripted (forced) to go fight wars.

On the following page, you will read an argument that might have taken place among some citizens of the Roman Republic. They are discussing the real conflicts between the plebeians and the patricians.

A patrician is ________________________________

A plebeian is ________________________________

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Does the Conflict of the Orders between the Roman plebeians and patricians remind you of any current conflicts that you have heard about on the news?
Setting: A Roman Forum

Victor, a farmer (a plebeian): (Talking to the plebeian shopkeeper) Good morning, Leo. I've brought you some fresh olive oil from my farm to sell.

Leo, a shopkeeper (a plebeian): Excellent, Victor. I hope you brought a lot, because it's been selling very well. Say, you look sad.

Victor: Well, I have a little oil, but not much. Sadly, this will be the last for a while, because I'm being sent off to war in Gaul.

Leo: This is horrible. You're the third farmer today to tell me you're about to go to war. It's all because of those patricians! They send us poor folks off to fight while they stay here making money and having their fancy parties. It's so unfair. I wish there was something I could do. We need to be heard.

Titus (a plebeian): Excuse me. I couldn't help but overhear you talking. You're about to go to war? I agree with you that it is unfair. I plan to talk to a local representative. I want this law to change. Our empire can't survive if no one grows food on farms.

Victor: Finally, someone is talking sense!

Brutus (a patrician): Not so fast. (points to Titus) This man is out of his mind! The patricians decide these things, and that's as it should be. We make the rules because we are more educated and will make better choices. If the plebeians were in charge, it would be total chaos!
### Take a Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roman Character</th>
<th>Who does this character think should get to make decisions in ancient Rome?</th>
<th>The student character each is most like and why (Mike, Tien, José, or Kayla)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victor</td>
<td><em>Thinks that the plebeians should make decisions because they are the ones most affected by rules and laws. He is sad because he’s the one the rule affects.</em></td>
<td>Victor is most like José because José was most affected by the new “late” rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td><em>Thinks that</em> ____________________________________________________________</td>
<td>Leo is most like ___________ because ___________</td>
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<td><em>because</em> ______________________________________________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Titus</td>
<td><em>Thinks that</em> ____________________________________________________________</td>
<td>Titus is most like ___________ because ___________</td>
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<td><em>because</em> ______________________________________________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brutus</td>
<td><em>Thinks that</em> ____________________________________________________________</td>
<td>Brutus is most like ___________ because ___________</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><em>because</em> ______________________________________________________________</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Session 3

Probe

Should the gladiator fights continue?

Gladiators fight in the Colosseum for the entertainment of many.

Thousands of years before TV and movies, and before people filled stadiums to watch football games, there were gladiator games. Gladiator fights, or games, were extremely popular throughout the Roman Empire. A man, and occasionally a woman, was matched up against another gladiator or a beast, such as a lion or tiger. The two would fight (often to the death) in a large arena, such as the Colosseum in Rome. Romans loved to see people killing each other! This was entertainment to them. The gladiator fights were paid for by emperors, and were used by the emperors to increase their own popularity. Romans had diverse opinions about these events.

Read these arguments related to gladiator fights. Then check whether you think each is a pro or con argument for whether the fights should continue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRO</th>
<th>CON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One person usually died in a fight.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gladiators got to keep the money they received from winning a fight.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The fights provided entertainment for many.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Few gladiators survived more than 10 matches or lived to be older than 30 years old.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The audience often decided if the losing gladiator should live or die.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some people who were poor or not Roman citizens decided to become gladiators because they would receive training, food, shelter, and the possibility of fame if they won.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Families whose loved one was killed in the fight were left without support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some slaves, criminals, and prisoners of war were forced to fight as Gladiators.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People admired the best gladiators.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some prisoners were sent into a fight just to be killed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It was cheap to attend a game, so many people could watch fights.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some slaves who won a match were granted their freedom.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pollice Verso ("Thumbs Down") by Jean-Léon Gérôme, 1872. Gérôme’s researched conception of a gladiatorial combat.

Roman Colosseum, photo by Jerzy Strzelecki
Of the following fictional speeches, whose argument do you find most compelling? Which argument does your group most support?

**Male Gladiator:**

“My name is Maximus, and I come from a northern tribe. We fought and lost to the Roman army. I was a simple farmer and did not choose to fight the Romans. The man who owned the land I worked on forced me to enlist when the Romans came to conquer our land. When the battle ended, all of the soldiers on the losing side were taken prisoner by the Romans. We were marched to Rome and were told many of us would die in the gladiator games. I was lucky to win several games. But I know my luck will not last forever. All I want is to return to my homeland and see my wife and children again. If I had the authority to decide, I would end the gladiator fights and free all of us who are forced to fight. Even prisoners deserve to be treated humanely.”

**Advisor to the Emperor:**

“I am Marcus Leovitus, and I work day and night to assist and advise our honored emperor, Augustus. The gladiator games are important for our citizens and government. Our great emperor holds games to celebrate our military wins or to mourn the death of a senator. The games unify us and strengthen the determination of the citizens of Rome to defend their republic from enemies. The games also give the Roman people pride in their empire. The only person who should ever decide on the fate of the gladiator games is the emperor.”

**Christian:**

“My name is Amantius and I represent one of a small but growing number of Christians living in Rome. We Christians are hated. Many of us have died in the amphitheater because we do not worship Roman gods or the emperor. We believe in love, peace, and compassion. The gladiator fights are violent and cruel. We believe killing for pleasure to be wrong and sinful. The fights do not end in the Colosseum. The violence is carried into streets and homes in the hearts of the men and women who cheer for blood. If our voices counted, we would ban the games.”

**Merchant:**

“While some may wonder whether gladiator fights are morally acceptable or not, a lower-class plebeian like myself, Arcus, does not have that luxury! Many of us must work for a living, and we toil hard day and night! On days when there is a gladiator fight, people pack the streets, buying food, wine, and other goods. These are very important events for the local economy. One person may die, but many, many others benefit from the increase in business. If my fellow merchants and I could decide, we would vote to keep the games running.”

**Mini-Glossary**
- enlist - to join (the military)
- conquer - to take over by force
- humanely - sympathetically; compassionately; fairly
- advise - to give guidance
- unify - to bring together; to unite
- determination - will; strength
- compassion - deep sympathy and care for others
- luxury - something that is helpful and welcome and not usually or always available
### Evaluating Arguments

#### Determining Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASIC POSITION FOR OR AGAINST GLADIATOR FIGHTS</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>How good is that support?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Gladiator</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Male Gladiator" /></td>
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<td>[ ] AGAINST</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advisor to the Emperor</td>
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<td>Christian</td>
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<td>Merchant</td>
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<td>[ ] Weak</td>
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<td>[ ] Weak</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
We believe _____________________ had the most compelling argument about whether _____________________. Specifically, he thinks the games should/shouldn’t _____________________.

continue because ________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

This claim may be supported by the following:

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Some may argue in favor of _____________________’s view about the fate of gladiator games. However, this argument is not as compelling because _____________________.

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Therefore, _____________________.

(your final analysis to connect your support to your claim)

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________.

(ancient Roman’s name)

(circle one)

(a different ancient Roman)

(ancient Roman’s name)
Entertainment with a Chance of Death

Take 5 minutes to regroup with your team members and decide on team roles (opening statement and defender). One team member will leave the group and join a committee who will take notes and judge today’s debate.

Gladiators fight to the death in the Colosseum for the entertainment of many. Should this continue?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Claim</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Focus Words</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximus, the gladiator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marcus, the advisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amantius, the Christian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arcus, the merchant</td>
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Example:
Maximus, the gladiator
Gladiator fights should end. Gladiators’ voices should be represented in decisions about the games.

Example:
It’s unfair for him to fight because he didn’t even choose to fight against the Romans, but was taken as a prisoner and forced to be a gladiator. He’s the one fighting, so of course his voice should count.
The Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) began in the early 1990s. Their original tagline was, “There are no rules.” The show featured men fighting each other using different forms of martial arts. In the course of a match, the fighters could become seriously injured. The show was deemed too violent in 2002, and was forced to put stricter limits on what the fighters could and couldn’t do in the ring. However, many people think the show is still too violent.

Who should decide if the UFC should be banned?

In your response, be sure to include:

- Who do you think should have the authority to decide whether or not to ban the UFC? For example, should parents, concerned citizens, students, government authorities, television executives, or some other group take the lead in deciding whether to ban the show?
- Give three pieces of support to back up your argument on who should have the authority to decide whether or not to ban the UFC.
- Give a possible counterargument as well as a response to that counterargument. (Remember a counterargument is one reason that another position is wrong.)

You do not need to explain how you would decide whether to end the UFC or not, just who you think should make this decision.
Session 5

Make a Case

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Many high schools, middle schools, and even elementary schools have a student government. For example, in Boston, MA, each high school is required to have a student government. Also, middle and elementary schools can choose to have a student government if they want one.

In most schools, all of the students in the school vote for several representatives who speak for them in student government. Schools do this because if every student had to vote on every decision a school makes, it would be a lot of work and it would take a lot of time. Instead, school governments act as a representative democracy, or a republic, in which a few elected students represent the ideas and wishes of all of the students in the school.

The main purpose of student government is to give students more authority in the decisions that are made about their school. But what decisions should students be involved in? In one high school in Fairfax, VA, the most important job of the student government is to plan school dances and half-time shows at sporting events. On the other hand, in Philadelphia, PA, students from multiple schools joined together as a Student Union to improve the quality of their schools by making sure kids had enough books and raising money for repairs.

**DISCUSSION:** If you were a member of your school’s student government, what is one change you would like to see in your school? How would this change improve the quality of your school? Would your idea be important to all students (e.g., cleaner bathrooms) or only a few students (e.g., new uniforms for the basketball team)? How would you convince your classmates that your idea was relevant to all of them so they all felt represented?
More Information Related to Fighters

**UFC and Gladiators**

In ancient Rome, gladiator fighting was a form of entertainment. Everyone would come out to watch the gladiators compete. In the United States today, watching people fight is still considered entertainment. The Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) is a company that holds competitions in which men fight each other using different forms of martial arts, such as karate. Men train very hard to be ultimate fighters, and the quality of the competitions is very high. Authorities have set very strict rules about the fights that include no biting, no spitting, and no kicking an opponent on the ground. To be sure that the two people fighting are the same size, the men compete in different weight classes.

**Option 1**

In Rome, gladiators fought in an arena, or an amphitheater. Ultimate fighters compete in an eight-sided space called “The Octagon.” Graph the coordinates below to show what a UFC fighting ring looks like.

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(5, 3)</em></td>
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<td><em>(2, 6)</em></td>
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<td><em>(2, 6)</em></td>
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<td><em>(5, 3)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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**Option 2**

The UFC has several different weight classes for fighters. Each fighter must be weighed before they compete. One particular fighter normally competes in the “lightweight” class, which means he cannot weigh more than 155 lbs. Ten days before his fight, he weighs 160 lbs. How much weight should he try to lose each day so that by the day of the fight he weighs 155 lbs?

- A) 2.0 lbs/day
- B) 1.0 lb/day
- C) 0.5 lbs/day
- D) 5.0 lbs/day

**DISCUSSION:** When the Ultimate Fighting Championship first started holding events, some people were very concerned. They thought it was very violent, and some people even said it was just like having gladiators fighting. Some citizens contacted their state representatives and asked that the UFC be stopped. The fighters were very upset. They trained hard and got paid to compete. The UFC still exists today, but authorities have set many rules that are supposed to protect the fighters. Do you think that this kind of fighting should be allowed as entertainment? Why or why not?
John was a member of the freshman **class** at Mountville High School. The school was in a town where many **citizens** attended sports games to cheer for their teams. John really wanted to be on one of those teams. He was considering the wrestling team and the football team. But his homeroom teacher told John he should play a safer sport, like soccer or baseball. John did not think his teacher should have the **authority** to decide what team he should join. The **quality** of the team mattered more to him than safety. John talked to **representatives** of the wrestling and football teams to learn more about both teams. Neither of them gave him compelling evidence that their team was the best choice. John's homeroom teacher tried hard to influence John's decision because he didn't want John to get hurt. John's teacher taped some information on John's locker about the injury levels of the different high school sports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average number of injuries per season over 5 years</th>
<th>Team winning percentage</th>
<th>Predicted playing time for John</th>
<th>Total number of players on the team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>Less than 10 minutes per game</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrestling</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>5 meets each season</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>30 minutes per game</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>The whole game</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>3 innings per game</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering the information in the data table, John’s desire to play for a **quality** team, and the teacher’s desire for John to be safe, which sport would you recommend that John play?

____________________________________________________________________________________________

Are there other factors that John should consider to help him make his decision?

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

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### Focus Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOCUS WORD OR RELATED FORM</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>SAMPLE SENTENCE</th>
<th>TURN AND TALK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>authority (noun)</td>
<td>the power to make people follow rules or laws; a person who has the power to enforce rules</td>
<td>The patricians, or aristocrats, claimed they had the authority to make the laws and to send the plebeians to war.</td>
<td>Who in your life has the authority to tell you what you can or cannot do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authoritative (adjective)</td>
<td>having complete knowledge about a subject</td>
<td>It is important for students to have an authoritative stance when they present to the student government.</td>
<td>Where would you look to find authoritative information on how Mt. Vesuvius erupted? I would search for authoritative information on Mt. Vesuvius by __________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality (noun)</td>
<td>how good something is; a characteristic of something or someone</td>
<td>The plebeians could not improve the quality of their lives without representation in government.</td>
<td>What is one way that your representative could improve the quality of your neighborhood? One way to improve the quality of __________ is to __________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class (noun)</td>
<td>status or group based on people’s jobs, money, education, etc.</td>
<td>The lower class, or poor people, of Rome had much less power.</td>
<td>Based on your understanding of history, what class of people have done most of the labor in building monuments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>republic (noun)</td>
<td>a system of government where elected officials, like a president, govern instead of a non-elected leader, like a queen or pharaoh</td>
<td>We’re studying democracy and republics in civics class now, but our school definitely isn’t one. It’s more of a dictatorship.</td>
<td>What are the benefits of being part of a republic rather than a kingdom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>representative (noun)</td>
<td>a person who is chosen to speak, vote, or make decisions for a large group of people</td>
<td>Finally in 287 BCE the plebeians convinced the patricians to agree to a set of written laws that recognized their right to have their own representatives in government.</td>
<td>If you were a representative in your school’s student government, what would you want to change for your classmates? As the representative of my class in our school’s student government, I would try to __________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>represent (verb)</td>
<td>to vote or make a decision on behalf of a large group of people; to stand for or symbolize something</td>
<td>The upper-class patricians did not represent the concerns and needs of the working-class plebeians.</td>
<td>Who represents the interests of the students in your school or community? __________ represents the interests of students in our __________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>citizen (noun)</td>
<td>someone who is a member of a particular city, state, or country</td>
<td>The plebeians were Roman citizens but did not have full citizenship rights.</td>
<td>What are some things that a citizen should expect from its representatives in city government? Citizens should expect that their representatives will __________.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>