

IDEAS 98

**International Online Teachers Society
Debate
Educational Materials For
Advance and Upper Intermediate
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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THE 98th INTERNATIONAL ONLINE TEACHERS SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST

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DEMOCRACY IN A THIRD-WORLD COUNTRY

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Social studies during my younger years had a single concept or definition of democracy. Democracy then, as it is now, is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. In its purest form, democracy may yet be the ideal form of government that all nations in the world need. It definitely is a much better alternative to a communist form of government, with democracy having non-despotic rulers who serve at the behest of the people that vote them into position. Ideally, tyrants do not belong in democratic rule. Democratic officials keenly observe the principle that they are put in government not to impose their will on the people but rather to serve the people.

From <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/democracy>, we take the following meanings of democracy, which is: a system or form of rule by representatives elected into power as empowered by the people; a social or political party ruled by every one of its members; the exercise of social egalitarianism; a social state or circumstance where there exists equality and absence of social and economic distinctions; ordinary people, esp. as a unit exercising political influence. By and large, a democratic form of government in which the people hold supreme power which they use to govern themselves or to govern through elected representatives. Many nations of the planet subscribe to the very principles of democracy, with the world's most powerful nations unflinchingly recognized for being pioneers in this form of governance. For everyone, to be recognized as being under democratic influence is tantamount to being in a strong status among all. For a country to attain democracy is equivalent to having achieved a degree of maturity and effect on others.

My own country has had a long and painful history of democracy with false starts and uncertainties. We began as a young upstart on democracy, with American-style democracy that merely allowed us to have elections regularly. But those who were voted into power were the educated few, the elite rich, or the more widely-recognized parties. Military, although initially meant to be in subservience to civilian government, easily became a powerful component as they became controllable by influential politicians who had dared use military might as a way of exerting power over the people.

Despite the decades it has had to optimize democracy on a much deeper level, my nation has had to undergo a lot of bloodshed, senseless killings and martyr-like deaths from many who dared rise up and question politics in order to get their voices heard and the desire for true democracy to clamor loudly within the hearts of more people. The journey to democracy has been difficult and full of woes, but what we need to remember is that power rests in us, and we deserve the leaders we catapult into power. May we use that power wisely!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Define democracy in your own words.
2. Does your country have a democratic form of government? If not, how will you compare your country's form of government to a democratic one?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a democratic form of government?
4. How can powerful nations help developing countries optimize democracy?
5. If you were born under a communistic regime, would you struggle to migrate to a country that enjoys democracy? Why or why not?



THE ROAD TO ACHIEVING DEMOCRACY

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There was a time in the past when democracy had been considered demo-crazy by many in my country. Having had to inherit American-style democracy, my country had no definite perspective on this form of government largely because it was a young republic then. Now, many decades into self-governance later, my country has had generation after generation of leaders who have, in one way or another, attempted to make their mark in a third world nation struggling to achieve self-identity and independence. It's been a long and bumpy ride overall, but my people, resilient as they are, can only hope that there are brighter days ahead for all of us.

Aristotle wrote that democracy had its roots in Athenian democracy, but which was of oligarchic style. In this respect, such Grecian democracy observed empowerment of a minority group, the archons, who were elected into power by virtue of their birth and wealth. It also had societal classes, where the poorer peoples served the rich, tilled, planted and harvested on the lands of the rich and paid rent to the rich. (<http://constitution.org/elec/Democracy.htm>) Apparently, Grecian democracy was not the real thing. Through the centuries, democracy apparently grew in structure and broader in context. With a more enlightened perspective on what democracy truly was, a clearer view of what representative government was supposed to embody was achieved. However, it could not be sufficiently proven that early whether a representative government truly embodied all the wishes of the people it was supposed to represent, and not the wishes of the few that controlled it.

In my youth, I remember there being a lot of action on the streets because of how people generally disagreed with the policies of government. People disappeared just for daring to give voice to the fears of the general populace, and just because they were brave enough to stand for the people's rights. Before Big Brother was even conceived, it had already seemed that walls had ears and words had wings. Saying anything that was not in agreement with any government policy or political decision was like giving oneself a death sentence. Obviously, Grecian democracy was still in power, with influence exercised by the elite few.

Perhaps, what my country has been enjoying now is more or less a more potent form of democracy. Now, we are able to write and speak freely without fear of being branded anarchists, enemies of the state or subscribing to treason. Mass media enjoys a freedom where it can broadcast without fear of being shut down or without its members readily thrown into prison for citing progressive ideas. We have free use of social networking sites to voice even our tiniest disappointments with how our government is being run. The road is still long, but hope springs eternal.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you personally subscribe to a democratic form of government? Why or why not?
2. What are the problems of a democratic form of government?
3. Is democracy the final solution to all of the world's governance problems? Why or why not?
4. What are the qualifications that a democratic leader must possess?
5. Why do the notions of freedom and democracy rest on the same foundations?



DEMOCRACY IN THE FAMILY, ANYONE?

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Politics is not the only field where democracy is practiced. As a parent, I have often found the need to be democratic in my role as a mother, especially now that I no longer share parenthood roles with a partner. The parenthood journey I have taken is never easy, not on any level. I am definite that all parents out there, whether single or sharing parenting roles with their partners, also undergo the same travails I have.

What exactly do you do when a child asserts their independence? The only thing you can do at that point is to allow that independence to develop as it may. There is this mistaken notion that giving advice is what parenting is all about. But as our children become teenagers, there occurs a shift in parental roles that we need to pay attention to. As our children no longer need constant care-and tireless surveillance, for that matter-we need to see the bigger need they have for respect. We need to respect our children as much as we respect our own friends. In doing so, we also have to make our children understand that we always want to help them in whatever way we can, but we may not always know how. Thus, with open communication lines, we empower our kids to have direct access to us whenever and wherever they need our words and comfort.

The solace of family empowers our children to grow in a totally democratic environment. A family setting that allows free flow of information and ideas between us and our kids will ensure that they believe in the strength that comes from being a member of our family. Their formative years are important, yes. But as our kids mature, they should be given freedom to choose their friends and make their own choices, mistakes and decisions in their lives. We can not always be with them much like the police or the military can not always be at every corner of the country to ensure the safety of all citizens. However, in their younger years, we have the opportunity to mold our children's character, to do changes that can still be made. As they develop into adults, our children will no longer give us the freedom to perform changes on their overall make-up. By then, they will have learned to optimize their own life values.

Children who grow in a home where there is the right amount of freedom and responsibility will develop into responsible, freedom-loving adults. Striking a balance between freedom and responsibility requires a healthy amount of common sense and practicality. Look to the golden rule to achieve the balance: do unto others what you would have others do unto you. With that, all else will follow, including democracy in the family.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you believe your parents raised you in a democratic way? How?
2. Why is it important for children to have freedom to decide for themselves?
3. In your family, were you free to choose your own religion? If yes, what religion do you have? Why is that your choice?
4. What problems crop up when children's rights are not respected?
5. At what stage in a child's life does it become more difficult for a parent to assert authority? Why do you think this is the case?



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