

Activity 1. Democracy Chronology?

Instructions: Diane Ravitch and Abigail Thernstrom were two of the leading conservative opponents of multiculturalism during the 1980s and 1990s and were influential in shaping social studies and history curricula. From 1991 to 1993 Ravitch was an Assistant Secretary of Education during the first Bush presidency. Thernstrom served as vice-chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights during the second Bush presidency. In 1992 Ravitch and Thernstrom published *The Democracy Reader: Classic and Modern Speeches, Essays, Poems, Declarations, and Documents on Freedom and Human Rights Worldwide* (New York: HarperCollins). In Section 1, Classical and European Thought, they present what they see as the pathway of democracy from Thucydides (*The Peloponnesian War*) through Plato (*The Republic*), Aristotle (*The Politics*) to Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologia*) and Niccolò Machiavelli (*The Discourses*).

Questions

1. Can the ideas discussed by Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Machiavelli reasonably be considered democratic in the modern sense of the word? When do institutions we would recognize as democratic emerge? Explain.
2. How did “democratic” ideas leap across time from ancient Greece to early modern Europe?
3. Could democracy and democratic institutions develop independently unrelated to other historical events that are taking place? Explain.