

UNIT 5

Note that not all of the 20 unit words are used in this passage. *Benefactor, chivalrous, pungent, truculent* and *virulent* are not included in the passage.

Read the following selection, taking note of the **boldface** words and their contexts. These words are among those you will be studying in Unit 5. As you complete the exercises in this unit, it may help to refer to the way the words are used below.

CCSS Vocabulary: 4; Reading (Informational Text): 4, 6. (See pp. T14–15.)

Democracy: From Athens to America

<Speech>

As your student body president, it is my pleasure to address you during this celebration of the anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Lincoln spoke with **unfeigned** love for democracy when he delivered his magnificent speech. Today, we not only honor that momentous event, but also acknowledge the history behind it that reaches back over 3,000 years.

Lincoln's United States was a fledgling democracy—an experiment, really, or perhaps a stage in a long, **plodding** journey—that our forebears had boldly **embarked** upon. But in 1863, the country was divided by the Civil War. So when Lincoln stated that ours was a "government by the people, for the people," he expressed his **indomitable** belief in democracy.

What is democracy? It is a form of government in which political authority rests with the people and is conducted by and with their **assent**, or agreement. In a democracy, all citizens are entitled to equal opportunity and equality before the law. Furthermore, democracies are committed to the idea of majority rule. Although in practice democracy is not **infallible**, it is the most natural form of government we know. For as the ancient



Lincoln at Gettysburg

Greek philosopher Aristotle asserted, man is by nature a political animal.

The roots of our democracy go back to ancient Greek city-states. These entities were small, fortified, independent communities made up of a city and the surrounding countryside. Athens was the most populous—and the one where democracy first took hold. It was ruled by its citizens rather than by monarchs or aristocrats. But at a time when **diffident** and obedient populations ruled by tyrants or kings were the norm, democratic ideas

did not take hold overnight; rather, they emerged over time to the point we are at today in this country.

But democratic ideas did take hold eventually—after their early start some 2,600 years ago, when the aristocrat Draco gave Athens a written code of laws. These laws were harsh but clear, and though they favored the nobility, they became a foundation.

Democratic ideas built on these laws a generation later, thanks to the **astute** and generous reformer Solon. He repealed many of Draco's harsh laws and replaced them with ones allowing for **clemency**. He also gave citizens a greater voice by establishing a lawmaking assembly. But it was under the leadership of Pericles that ancient democracy peaked and Athens entered its Golden Age. Pericles believed in citizen participation in government, and he had the **temerity** to give all citizens the right to criticize their leaders and generals. At a time when there was a **dearth** of individual rights, the forerunner of the modern democratic state had arrived. And with it came the first politicians, for Athenians prized the skills of oratory and persuasion.

While we must praise the Athenians for introducing democratic ideals to the world, we would be **remiss** not to recognize the **discrepancies** between their form of democracy and ours. Ours is a representative government, while theirs was a limited, direct form in which only



Solon of Athens

Athenian men participated. Indeed, only men who owned land were entitled to citizenship then. And only they could get an education or participate in cultural festivities. Women shared none of those rights. Neither did slaves, though they made up one-fourth of the population. That said, I believe it would be **facile** and insincere of me to condemn outright the shortcomings of the world's first democracy. Out of it developed the country that Abraham Lincoln was trying to unite and preserve on the day he dedicated a cemetery for the **repose** of the Civil War soldiers at Gettysburg. The gifts handed down to this country from ancient Greece and defended by our citizens and our leaders through the ages are something we should all cherish.

Reconstruction of Athens, Greece, at the time of Hadrian

Words



Snap the code, or go to vocabularyworkshop.com