

C. Republic and Democracy: Crucial Ideas, and Our Greatest Connection to the Past

1. In order to understand the value of studying ancient history, we must clearly understand the terms “republic” and “democracy,” and how they matter to modern *American* life.
2. Democracy
 - a) “Democracy” means “the rule of the people” (the “demos”).
 - b) To decide the laws in a democracy, the people vote.
 - c) The winning side in a vote is called a "majority."
 - d) The losing side is the "minority."
 - e) In a democracy, the majority *rules* (the minority).
 - f) Athenians invented democracy.
3. Republic
 - a) A “republic” is also a government involving the people (the "public").
 - b) In a republic, however, certain laws cannot be changed -- the "constitution."
 - c) A (republican) constitution prevents the majority from taking away the rights of the minority by vote.
 - d) In a republic a system of representation is also used (where people elect government officials), and people sometimes state that this is the essence of a republic. The purpose of representation, however—as explained by founding father James Madison in his essay *Federalist No. 10*, which people so often quote from—is to protect rights, specifically from “factions” in society, such as the majority, that would take away peoples’ rights.
 - e) This is why a republic is best defined as a system of government that protects individual rights.
 - f) The first republic was Rome.
 - g) America was created as a republic, but has become more of a democracy.