



## Green-Schools Global Citizenship HISTORY OF CITIZENSHIP

The first form of citizenship was based on the way people lived in ancient Greece, in small-scale organic communities of the polis. The responsibilities and duties of citizenship were deeply connected with everyday life in the polis. This form of citizenship was based on the obligations of citizens towards the community, rather than rights *given* to the citizens of the community. In those days, people's own destiny and the destiny of the community were strongly linked. In addition, by fulfilling their obligations to the community, citizens earned respect and honour. In Athens, citizens were both ruler and ruled. Important political and judicial offices were rotated and all citizens had the right to speak and vote in the political assembly.

**ju'di'cial (adjective)**

**1. relating to judges**

Relating or belonging to a body of judges or to the system that

However, an important aspect of polis citizenship was *exclusivity*. Citizenship in ancient Greece and Rome (as well as in medieval cities that practiced polis citizenship) was exclusive and equality of status did not exist. This was very acceptable at the time. Citizenship was only given to some; and those who had it, had a much higher status than non-citizens. Women and slaves were never afforded citizenship as they were thought to be incapable of making rational decisions and participating politically. The decision to determine if someone

**What is a polis?** - The word 'polis' originates from ancient Greece. It is a city or city-state. It can also be interpreted as 'a body of citizens' or 'citizenship'

was worthy of citizenship was often based on their wealth, their political participation and their

heritage, because both parents had to have been born in the polis.

In the Roman Empire, Citizenship was expanded to include the entire empire. Romans encouraged *dual citizenship*, demanding loyalty to both the local community and the Roman Empire. In other words, an individual had to be loyal to Rome. This allowed Roman citizens freedom of trade and freedom of movement within the whole empire. They found that taxes were collected more easily and the need for expensive military power in areas where the population were citizens was reduced. In the Roman era, citizenship became no longer a status symbol for political participation but had been reduced to a judicial safeguard and the expression of rule and law. However, active citizenship rights were still only given to the higher classes and thus citizenship was still, in part, seen as a status symbol.