

Definitions of Democracy

Take a moment to read through the thoughts and understandings regarding democracy from some very famous (and intelligent) thinkers, politicians, authors, and philosophers throughout history and then answer the questions below.

“Canada will be a strong country when Canadians of all provinces feel at home in all parts of the country, and when they feel that all Canada belongs to them.” Pierre Trudeau (Prime Minister)

“Authentic democracy is possible only in a state ruled by law, and on the basis of a correct concept of the human person.” Pope John Paul II (Clergyman and Pope)

“Parliament is more than procedure - it is the custodian of the nation's freedom.” John Diefenbaker (Prime Minister)

“Democracy is essentially anti-authoritarian -- that is, it not only demands the right but imposes the responsibility of thinking for ourselves.” John Dryden (author)

“Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.” Reinhold Niebuhr (author)

“If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in government to the utmost.” Aristotle (Philosopher)

“As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy.” Abraham Lincoln (U.S. President)

“Democracy is a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder, and dispensing a sort of equality to equals and unequal alike.” Plato (Philosopher)

“Democracy is based upon the conviction that there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people.” Harry Emerson Fosdick (Clergyman)

Questions:

1. Which quote do you find best represents your understanding and definition of democracy? Why?
2. Which quotes do you find the most similar?
3. Are there any quotes that seem to contradict any of the other definitions of democracy?
4. Which group of people seem to give the best definition of democracy?