

**RESPONSE PAPER 1:  
ANCIENT TO EARLY MODERN WRITERS ON THE CITY**

(Due Tuesday, January 30)

A. Thucydides 2.34-46

Thucydides was one of the greatest ancient historians. He compiled a detailed account of the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.E.), the conflict between the Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta that led to the fall of Athens after its long period of dominance among the Greek polities. In this famous passage, Thucydides recounts a funeral oration by Pericles, the Athenian general and leading statesman. Pericles delivered this speech in the winter of 431/430 at the public burial ground at Athens, in memory of those soldiers who had died in war. In commemorating the war-dead, Pericles also vividly portrays his home city.

1. Which qualities does Pericles consider uniquely Athenian?
2. What spaces or monuments might have accommodated the various civic experiences that Pericles mentions in his speech?
3. Do you think that Pericles' evaluation was widely held by the Athenians? Might it have been distorted? What is his motivation for painting such a positive picture of his homeland?

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B. Aristotle, *Politics* 3.1

Aristotle was the most influential ancient philosopher along with his teacher, Plato, both of whom lived in Greece during the fourth century B.C.E. Among his many contributions to western thought were his systematic analyses of ethics, politics, physics, metaphysics, logic, poetics, and aesthetics. In his major work *Politics*, Aristotle examined the composition of "states" (meaning cities) and "constitutions" (meaning the organization of officials). In this central passage, the philosopher defines a city in terms of its citizens.

1. In this famous philosophical discussion of constitutions, how does Aristotle define a state?
2. Is it fair or accurate to apply Aristotle's view of the constituents of a state to the definition of a city?

### C. Strabo 5.3.7-8

Strabo was a Greek geographer who wrote an encyclopedic survey of diverse peoples and places in the known regions of the world during the reign of the Roman emperor Augustus (ca. 30 B.C.E.-14 C.E.). His work in 17 books covered many large regions of the Mediterranean and Europe, often describing cultural diversity in terms of the unique customs of cities or groups of cities. This passage describing and praising Rome was included in Strabo's longer description of cities of the Italian peninsula.

1. How does Strabo characterize Rome? What are its natural resources and technological distinctions?
  2. Does Strabo bring a historical dimension to his discussion of Rome?
  3. According to the geographer, how does Rome differ from other cities?
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### D. Pausanias 4.37

Pausanias, an educated writer from western Asia Minor during the late second century C.E., wrote one of the most fascinating works that surveys from ancient times: a sort traveler's guide of the Greek world. The work describes how someone walking from site to site in different regions of Greece would encounter ancient monuments one by one in the landscape. Scholars have debated his purpose: was he writing a tourist's guide, or was he just a meticulous antiquarian? This passage describes the small city of Pylos, located in the region of Messenia in the extreme southwestern corner of Greece.

1. In Pausanias' description of the small city of Pylos in southwestern Greece, which features of the city does he highlight?
2. How does Pausanias' focus differ from Strabo's?

E. Pierre Giles, *The Antiquities of Constantinople* 4.11

Pierre Giles was in some ways like a latter-day Pausanias. He was a leading French naturalist of the mid-sixteenth century and a devote humanist, or a polymath who mastered both ancient philosophy (especially Plato), Christian theology, literature, science, and history in order to understand the human capacities for artistic expression, government, and technology. As a tutor to French princes he was chosen to join an embassy to Constantinople to cement relations between France, under the king François I, and the Ottoman Empire, under the sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. During his official stay in this enormous and diverse metropolis in 1544-1547, Gilles travelled throughout the city and systematically described the standing monuments that predated the Turkish conquest of the city in 1453. Most of the early buildings he viewed and chose to describe were erected during the Roman Empire and Late Antiquity, when the city served as the eastern Imperial capital, long before the arrival of Ottoman sultanate. This passage is the conclusion to his description.

1. To conclude his work on the ancient ruins of Constantinople, Gilles turns to the contemporary Ottoman city. What is his evaluation of the city's landscape in the mid-sixteenth century compared to its landscape in earlier centuries? What is his evaluation of the city's inhabitants in his time compared to those in prior eras?
2. What are the underlying themes and tone of Gilles' discussion of Constantinople past and present?
3. On what note does he conclude? Are his final two paragraphs surprising or not?