

Regents Global History and Geography 9
Thematic Essay
January 2008

There is a tendency in history for land and wealth to become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few over time. Typically, this leads to tensions in society between the powerful few and the powerless many.

Discuss this process in ancient Greece.

- How does land ownership become consolidated over time in the hands of fewer and fewer?
- What steps do the land owners take to keep their power and property from generation to generation?
- What kinds of problems are caused?
- How did the Greeks try to resolve the problem of social tension between the few “haves” and the many “have-nots”? To what degree were any of these solutions successful?

Key ideas to review:

- ✓ Farmers borrow money and the cycle of indebtedness and land as collateral
- ✓ Farmers as phalanx and political power of the foot soldier
- ✓ Democracy as a solution to friction between social classes
- ✓ Solon’s reforms, Athens, 6th century BC
- ✓ Peisistratus’ reforms, Athens, later 6th century BC