

AP Government & Politics with Honors Civics & Economics

Directions: As you read your assigned reading, please answer the following questions. Please note that the copies are yours to keep; as a result, you should feel free to write and/or dialogue with the readings as they are reviewed. In other words, taking notes on the document is strongly suggested.

C. Wright Mills from *The Power Elite*

- What, in your own words, is the main argument of the author?
- Who are the "power elite"?
- Who helps them with their agenda?
- "No matter how great their actual power, they tend to be less acutely aware of it than of the resistances of others to its use." Do you agree?
- How does one understand the power of the elite? Where does it reside?
- What are the big three institutional units? Do you agree with these three? Is anything missing?
- How do they work together? Who is at the top of each unit?
- How did it use to be when small entrepreneurs made up the economy?
- Is the rise of the elite a plot?
- Review the last paragraph of the article. What other places might this argument be used?

Robert Dahl, "The Ambiguity of Leadership from *Who Governs?*

- What, in your own words, is the main argument of the author?
- Why is the question of "who governs?" so important?
- What are 3 questions the author asks about who governs?
- When one is better off in wealth, what else are they better off in?
- Define pluralist and oligarchy?
- What three things cause ambiguity in the relations of leaders and constituents?
- Do we have a political strata or an apolitical strata? How can you tell?
- "A political issue can hardly be said to exist unless and until it commands the attention of a significant segment of the political stratum." What does this say about political issues?
- What drives leaders?
- What is the difference between indirect and direct influence? What do you think is most important?

Michael Parenti from *Democracy for the Few*

- What, in your own words, is the main argument of the author?
- Is power plural and fluid? Explain?
- What are pluralists?
- Is America ruled by secretive elite? Explain.
- Why do the elites seldom take into account the interest of the public? Do you think that this is so?
- What was the difference between symbolic and substantive political systems?
- "Those who have the interest in fundamental change have not yet the power, while those who have the power have not the interest, being disinclined to commit class suicide." What does this mean and how does this relate to today?
- Identify socialism. Can it work?
- Towards the end of the article, the author notes that progressive change and the longing for a better social life grows stronger. Has this happened? Why or why not?

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Benjamin Barber from *Strong Democracy*

- What, in your own words, is the main argument of the author?
- What do you think the author means by "liberal democracy"?
- How is the American political system anarchist? Realist? Minimalist?
- What is the difference between thin and strong democracy?
- "In strong democracy, politics is something done by, not to, citizens." What do you think this means?
- Do you agree?
- "Strong democratic theory begins but does not end with conflict; it acknowledges conflict but ultimately transforms rather than accommodates or minimizes it." What does this mean?
- Do you agree?
- What is significant about voting?
- Do you think that the United States has a "strong democracy"?

Bernard Crick, "A Defence of Politics Against Democracy" from *In Defence of Politics*

- What, in your own words, is the main argument of the author?
- Provide various ways 'democracy' has been defined.
- Summarize the comments of Alexis De Tocqueville in your own words.
- According to Aristotle, what is democracy sociologically speaking? Intellectually speaking? Constitutionally speaking?
- Do you agree with any of these? Why or why not?
- Justice Holmes said that "Democracy is what the crowd wants." What does this mean?
- Do you agree or disagree?
- "Democracy is one element in politics; if it seeks to be everything, it destroys politics." What does this mean?
- Do you agree or disagree?

- What, in your own words, is the main argument of the author?
- Is power plural and fluid? Explain.
- What are pluralists?
- Is America ruled by secretaries of state?
- Why do the elite seldom take into account the interest of the public? Do you think that this is so?
- What was the difference between syndicalism and socialism (the political systems)?
- "Those who have the interest in fundamental change have not, at the power, while those who have the power have not the interest, being distinguished to commit class suicide." What does this mean and how does this relate to today?
- Identify socialism. Can it work?
- Towards the end of the article, the author notes that progressive change and the longing for a better social life grows stronger. Has this happened? Why or why not?