**To what extent did life in the fifth century provide opportunities for all the inhabitants of Attica?**

There were various opportunities open for the inhabitants of Attica in the 5th century BC, however, the opportunities were exclusively for certain social groups and classes and were not available to the majority. Groups such as slaves, metics, women and even citizens who simply lived a distance from Athens were all at a disadvantage and had many, if not all, of the opportunities available to male citizens kept from them.

Athenian born women in particular had few opportunities outside of the oikos. As Thucydides record in Pericles’ Funeral Oration, Pericles stated that a woman’s highest honour is to be least talked about by men. While Pericles’s marriage reforms later gave women who were Athenian-born a higher social standing they remained generally oppressed by their male counterparts as they had limited opportunities to leave the house and had to remain with the ‘separate spheres’ from the male citizens. Aristophanes gives a potential insight into complaints Athenian women may have had regarding their position in his play ‘Thesmophoriasuzae’ (women at the Thesmophoria) in which women vent against the male population, pointing out the irony that men keep them shut away and yet long to steal glances at them through windows. However, this play shows that despite women’s sufferings they did have opportunities to form and interact within their community. The all-female festival of the Thesmophoria is a perfect example to illustrate this point. However, Aristophanes wrote this play from a male perspective, with a male audience in mind. He was not a ‘feminist’ at all and simply wrote these complaints for comedic effect. He used the perfect ideal of a quiet, subservient and domestic wife to contrast with his outspoken and opinionated characters who are much closer to male Athenian stereotypes at the time. Despite this potential cause for unreliability, Aristophanes still manages to articulate the arguments women may have against men despite his satirical nature. Not all women necessarily were as downtrodden as wealthy Athenian women. Poorer women would be allowed increased social freedom due to necessity for two incomes to support a household and the same increased social mobility also applied to metic women. The freedoms metic women had can primarily be seen through the figure of Aspasia, Pericles’ mistress. Plutarch writes of how Pericles sobs and begs Aspasia at a trial, displaying actions highly inappropriate for an Athenian man. Her power and influence can also be seen in the sources describing the Megarian decree. In his play ‘Archarnians’ Aristophanes suggest that one of the causes of the 432 BC decree may have been a disagreement between a Megarian and Aspasia after the Pegarian supposedly kidnapped some prostitutes or ‘pornai’. It seems unlikely that this was the true cause for the decree but, overlooking the play’s comedic nature, it shows that metics could gain large amounts of influence and power and had more opportunities than many Athenian women.

Metics overall had many opportunities available to them in 5th century BC Attica. The massive Athenian empire and lack of an ability to grown many crops in Attican soil meant that Athens greatly encouraged trade. The metics were allowed to stay in Athens in exchange for their skills in various trades and their payment of the metic tax. Their stay also created opportunities for other inhabitants of the region as Athenians could rent out lodgings to the metics. Despite their utility, the metics were often viewed as second class and this can be seen through the Old Oligarch’s political pamphlet ‘Athenian Constitution’. Due to the writer’s conservative and aristocratic views the source is naturally hostile to the foreigners who diluted Athenian bloodlines and it is likely that the influence of foreigners is what caused Pericles’ marriage reform. The Old Oligarch was alive in 5th-century Athens and so saw how the metics aided his city first-hand. Therefore his admittance that the metics were useful due to their skills and use in the fleet is highly useful and reliable.

For the male citizens of Attica more opportunities became available to them as Athenian democracy developed over the course of the 5th-century BC. Athens allowed freedom of speech for its citizens in the law courts, ecclesia and men in the agora. Pericles’ socio-economic reforms in the 450s BC made the laws and the law courts more representative of poorer citizens and even more socially accessible. He allowed down to the class of zeugitai to become archons, a position previously confined to the richest classes of citizen. He also introduced payment for jury service, allowing poorer citizens to afford to do jury service. However, the ancient sources generally view these socially liberating reforms negatively. IN Aristophanes’ ‘Knights’ the character Paphlagon, a characterisation of Cleon whom Aristophanes greatly disliked, addressed the audience as ‘men of the three obols’. Aristophanes here suggests that Athenian jurors only come to the law courts for this payment and therefore they made poor, unjust judgements. While this source is unreliable due to Aristophanes hatred of Cleon after the latter sued him, these criticisms of the supposed equality in the law courts and in the ecclesia are repeated both in the Old Oligarch’s ‘Athenian Constitution’ and in Aristotle’s ‘Constitution of the Athenians’. These both emphasise the fact that the poorer people allowed into the boulē, ecclesia and law courts make unjust and self-serving judgements that will cause the downfall of Athens. These sources are both naturally hostile towards democracy as they are conservative and aristocratic, however, the Old Oligarch’s account is contemporary and Aristotle had a large school of students who carefully researched the things he wrote about. This means that they both reflect the opinions of a person of their status on the democratic system. While this seems a very popular opinion as three authors all share it, it is actually impossible to accurately estimate how common of an opinion this was as the pro-democracy writers were often the poorer classes who were unable to leave any written record as they lacked both the time and the education to compose a book. This shows that there were many opportunities available for male citizens, however, they were still governed by class and status with many unavailable to the poor.

The group that had the fewest opportunities in this era was the slaves. While the treatment of slaves varied greatly depending on the slaves slave’s owner, skills and role, slavery was universally viewed as a form of punishment. This can be seen in Thucydides writing about the Mytilene revolt and subsequent debate. The proposed punishment of killing all the men and enslaving all the women and children shows that slavery was a punishment equal to death in the eyes of the Athenians. The Old Oligarch writes that slaves in Athens were better off than in other places and this is certainly true when looking at the brutal treatment of Spartan Helots in the Crypteia, however, this point is greatly exaggerated in order to allow for continued criticism of democratic Athens.

In conclusion, the opportunities available to an inhabitant depended on a number of factors, the most important of which being social class. The opportunities were not universally available even to on category such as Athenian citizens as there were still heavy traces of the old aristocracy and tyranny in the democratic system of the 5th century BC which placed an emphasis on bloodline and family rather than purely on abilities, as democracy aimed to do.

**Overall Mark – L6 32/36**

**Strengths:**

**Improvements:**