

Cammy Toddy

Dr. Munson

HIST 100-01

2 October 2017

### Aristotle Extra Credit Prompt

Aristotle is often grouped with famous Ancient Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato, who are responsible for laying the foundation of western philosophy. This trio was all exposed to life in high society, where leadership meant knowledge and power. Aristotle was the son of Nichomachus, a court physician and King Amyntas of Macedonia, which afforded him a privileged lifestyle. Aristotle's customs did not reflect that of the common man, a middle class worker. However, Aristotle understood the role that a strong middle class plays a crucial role in society and preventing tyranny. Aristotle is correct in saying that the shrinking middle class is a danger to public affairs and is being misrepresented in positions of leadership. However, we have been able to see the successes of the middle class through exemplary men from middle class upbringings, who have gone on to lead our country.

Aristotle was sent to study in Athens, where he was taught under Plato, who in turn was taught under Socrates. Aristotle's lifestyle and education were not available to all people during the time, only the richest people were able to get sent away to study. In this prompt, Aristotle highlights the greatness of the middle class, explaining those in between the very rich and very poor are more likely to obey. He even goes on to say that they are the least likely to shun and covet office; meaning, they follow what the government has to say more so than the very rich and very poor. Those with a greater amount of wealth do not like to be governed, but they think that their status and power allows them to rule themselves. Due to the separation among social

classes, the state resulted in a land of masters and slaves with little to no representation of free men. Aristotle makes an interesting point, that the state should be made up of mainly middle class citizens, and therefore represent the state. He goes on to say that the middle class is the strongest because they are well balanced, strong in numbers, and do not look possess another man's goods. Aristotle is indeed correct to think that the shrinking middle class is a great danger to public affairs because with less members in the middle class the less balance a society has.

In modern times in the United States of America, we have been led by several men from middle class upbringings, who have been able to advocate for the common man. One that comes to mind is Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president. He is highly regarded for preserving the Union during the Civil War and emancipation of slaves. His success however did not come from an affluent background yet a challenging childhood. First Lincoln's siblings both died at a young age and his mother passed when he was only nine years old. Around the same time that his mother passed, Lincoln's family moved from his birthplace in Kentucky to Indiana. Unlike Aristotle, Lincoln's parents were illiterate and his education consisted of sporadic schooling. He held a variety of jobs such as a store clerk, postmaster, and mill hand, and found his love for politics along the way. He became part of the Illinois Legislature in 1834. Lincoln truly worked his way to the top through ambition and hard work and was elected president in 1860. Abraham Lincoln resembles the values of the struggle and perseverance of the middle class, in which he was able to unify the North and South in his decree of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Most recently, Barack Obama has epitomized the success of growing up in the middle-class and working his way up the political ladder. Barack Obama's father was from Kenya and his mother was from Kansas. He was born in Hawaii on August 4, 1961, yet three years later in 1964 his parents divorced. Obama's father him and his mother at a young age. This hurdle caused

Obama to live with his grandparents, he was able to work his way through college. He attended Columbia University and moved to Chicago shortly after to work in low-income communities. After his time at Harvard Law School, Obama was determined to make a difference in people's lives, so he ran for Illinois State Senate in 1996. Later in 2004 Obama joined the U.S. Senate, and on November 4, 2008 Barack Obama was elected the forty-fourth president of the United States. He is the first African American to become president, who undertook on a great financial deficit to restore prosperity to our nation.

Both Abraham Lincoln and Barack Obama came from middle class upbringings and where able to overcome obstacles in their own lives to ensure the greatness of our country. I agree the middle-class is more suited to hold positions political leadership because not only can they relate to everyday people but also they will take in the views of all and work to unify them. With a shrinking middle class, it calls us to wonder what will happen to the balance in society. Through past presidencies such as Abraham Lincoln and Barack Obama, we see the benefits of having a leader work for the common good of all.