

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Roman Republic

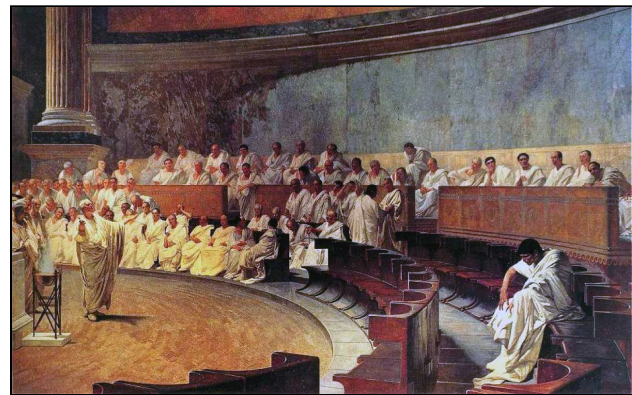
By USHistory.org
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In the late sixth century B.C., the ancient Romans overthrew the monarchy and established what would become the Roman Republic. It would last for approximately 500 years, and the impact it would have on the Western world and similar forms of government would be profound. The following text details the formation of the Roman Republic, its citizenship, its achievements, and its transition into an empire. As you read, take notes on the structure of the Roman Republic: how was power distributed amongst the citizens and their representatives in the Senate?

- [1] The Romans established a form of government — a republic¹ — that was copied by countries for centuries. In fact, the government of the United States is based partly on Rome’s model.

It all began when the Romans overthrew their Etruscan² conquerors in 509 B.C.³ Centered north of Rome,⁴ the Etruscans had ruled over the Romans for hundreds of years.

Once free, the Romans established a republic, a government in which citizens elected representatives to rule on their behalf. A republic is quite different from a democracy,⁵ in which every citizen is expected to play an active role in governing the state.



"Cicero Denounces Catiline" by Cesare Maccari is in the public domain.

The Roman concept of the citizen evolved during the Roman Republic and changed significantly during the later Roman Empire.⁶ After the Romans freed themselves from the Etruscans, they established a republic, and all males over 15 who were descended from the original tribes of Rome became citizens. Citizens of Rome distinguished themselves from slaves and other noncitizens by wearing a toga;⁷ most wore a white toga. During the Empire, each emperor wore a purple toga to distinguish himself as the princeps, or “first citizen.”

1. **Republic (noun):** a state in which supreme power is held by the people and their elected representatives, and which has an elected or nominated president rather than a monarch
2. The Etruscan civilization was located roughly in the regions now known as Tuscany, western Umbria, and northern Lazio in modern Italy. It was founded in 768 B.C. and lasted until its gradual absorption into the Roman Republic starting in the late 4th century B.C.
3. The seventh and last king of Rome was Lucius Tarquinius Superbus (r. 535-509 B.C.). Though a Roman king, his family line was Etruscan.
4. Rome is the current capital of Italy and is located in the central-western region of the Italian peninsula in the Lazio region.
5. The text is referring to a direct democracy. There are two basic types of democracy: direct and representative. In direct democracies, like the one in ancient Athens, citizens were required to vote and decide on issues themselves. In most modern democracies, citizens vote for people to represent their interests and make decisions in government — which is similar to the definition of a republic.
6. The Roman Empire followed the Roman Republic, which was destabilized in a series of civil wars after the assassination of Julius Caesar. In 27 A.D., Caesar’s adopted son was titled Emperor Augustus, simultaneously creating

- [5] Citizenship varied greatly. The full citizen could vote, marry freeborn persons, and practice commerce.⁸ Some citizens were not allowed to vote or hold public office, but maintained the other rights. A third type of citizen could vote and practice commerce, but could not hold office or marry freeborn women.

In the late Republic, male slaves who were granted their freedom could become full citizens. Around 90 B.C., non-Roman allies of the Republic gained the rights of citizenship, and by 212 A.D., under the Edict of Caracalla,⁹ all free people of the Roman Empire could become citizens.

The aristocracy (wealthy class) dominated the early Roman Republic. In Roman society, the aristocrats were known as patricians. The highest positions in the government were held by two consuls, or leaders, who ruled the Roman Republic. A senate composed of patricians elected these consuls. At this time, lower-class citizens, or plebeians, had virtually no say in the government. Both men and women were citizens in the Roman Republic, but only men could vote.

Tradition dictated¹⁰ that patricians and plebeians should be strictly separated; marriage between the two classes was even prohibited.¹¹ Over time, the plebeians elected their own representatives, called tribunes, who gained the power to veto¹² measures passed by the senate.

Gradually, the plebeians obtained even more power and eventually could hold the position of consul. Despite these changes, though, the patricians were still able to use their wealth to buy control and influence over elected leaders.

The Roman Senate

- [10] The history of the Roman Senate goes as far back as the history of Rome itself. It was first created as a 100-member advisory group for the Roman kings. Later kings expanded the group to 300 members. When the kings were expelled from Rome and the Republic was formed, the Senate became the most powerful governing body. Instead of advising the head of state, it elected the chief executives,¹³ called consuls.

Senators were, for centuries, strictly from the patrician class. They practiced the skills of rhetoric¹⁴ and oratory¹⁵ to persuade other members of the ruling body. The Senate convened¹⁶ and passed laws in the curia, a large building on the grounds of the Roman Forum.¹⁷ Much later, Julius Caesar¹⁸ built a larger curia for an expanded Senate.

the empire and ending the republic. The Roman Empire was one of the largest in the world and held territories in Europe, Africa and Asia. The Roman Empire fell in 476 A.D., but its eastern half (the Byzantine Empire) was not officially dissolved until 1453.

7. A toga is a loose garment made of a single piece of cloth, wrapped around and covering the body apart from the right arm.
8. **Commerce (noun):** the activity of buying and selling; business
9. The Edict of Caracalla, also known as the Constitutio Antoniniana, was issued in 212 by Roman Emperor Caracalla, declaring that all free men in the Roman Empire would be given Roman citizenship and that all free women in the empire would be given the same rights as Roman women.
10. **Dictate (verb):** to give orders or lay down authoritatively
11. **Prohibit (verb):** to formally forbid something by law, rule, or other authority
12. **Veto (verb):** to reject (a proposed bill or law)
13. **Executive (noun):** a person or branch of government responsible for putting policies or laws into effect
14. **Rhetoric (noun):** the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the use of figures of speech and other compositional techniques
15. **Oratory (noun):** public speaking or speechmaking

By the 3rd century B.C., Rome had conquered vast¹⁹ territories, and the powerful senators sent armies, negotiated terms of treaties, and had total control over the financial matters of the Republic.

Senatorial control was eventually challenged by Dictator Sulla²⁰ around 82 B.C. Sulla had hundreds of senators murdered, increased the Senate's membership to 600, and installed many non-patricians as senators. Julius Caesar raised the number to 900 (it was reduced after his assassination).²¹ After the creation of the Roman Empire in 27 B.C., the Senate became weakened under strong emperors who often forcefully coerced²² this ruling body. Although it survived until the fall of Rome, the Roman Senate had become merely a ceremonial²³ body of wealthy, intelligent men with no power to rule.

Occasionally, an emergency situation (such as a war) arose that required the decisive²⁴ leadership of one individual. Under these circumstances, the Senate and the consuls could appoint a temporary dictator to rule for a limited time until the crisis was resolved. The position of dictator was very undemocratic in nature. Indeed, a dictator had all the power, made decisions without any approval, and had full control over the military.

- [15] The best example of an ideal²⁵ dictator was a Roman citizen named Cincinnatus.²⁶ During a severe military emergency, the Roman Senate called Cincinnatus from his farm to serve as dictator and to lead the Roman army. When Cincinnatus stepped down from the dictatorship and returned to his farm only 15 days after he successfully defeated Rome's enemies, the republican²⁷ leaders resumed control over Rome.

The Twelve Tables

One of the innovations²⁸ of the Roman Republic was the notion of equality²⁹ under the law.³⁰ In 449 B.C., government leaders carved some of Rome's most important laws into 12 great tablets. The Twelve Tables, as they came to be known, were the first Roman laws put in writing.³¹ Although the laws were rather harsh by today's standards, they did guarantee every citizen equal treatment under the law.

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16. **Convene (verb):** to come together for a meeting or activity; to assemble
 17. The Roman Forum is a plaza in the center of Rome.
 18. Julius Caesar (100 – 44 B.C.) was a Roman politician and general who played a key part in the end of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire. He served as Dictator of the Roman Republic for five years, after refusing to give up this power, until his murder in 44 B.C.
 19. **Vast (adjective):** of very great extent or quantity
 20. Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix (138 – 78 B.C.), or more commonly known as just Sulla, was a Roman general and statesman who held the office of consul twice and revived the office of dictatorship.
 21. **Assassination (noun):** murder (of someone famous or important, especially for political reasons)
 22. **Coerce (verb):** to persuade, especially by force or threats
 23. **Ceremonial (adjective):** involving only small authority or power, describing a position or action that is mostly for show
 24. **Decisive (adjective):** settling an issue; deciding
 25. **Ideal (adjective):** perfect or the best possible
 26. Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus (519 – 430 B.C.) was a Roman patrician, statesman, and military leader of the early Roman Republic. He was a retired general when he was chosen as dictator. He became an example of Roman virtues, such as civic virtue and masculinity.
 27. as in “of the republic,” not referring to a certain political party
 28. **Innovation (noun):** a new method, idea, product, etc.
 29. **Equality (noun):** the state of being equal in status, rights, and opportunities
 30. This does not mean that everyone, regardless of status or gender, held the same rights and privileges. Rather, it means that all citizens have a right to justice under the law — though how this justice is determined may be skewed based on the people involved.
 31. what we might call codifying, making a set of laws official instead of simply understood

Here are some examples of laws from the Twelve Tables:

Females shall remain in guardianship even when they have attained their majority³² (except Vestal Virgins).³³

A spendthrift³⁴ is forbidden to exercise administration³⁵ over his own goods.

It is permitted to gather fruit falling down on another man's farm.

If any person has sung or composed against another person a song such as was causing slander³⁶ or insult to another, he shall be clubbed to death.

Quickly kill... a dreadfully deformed child.

With respect to the law and citizenship, the Romans took a unique approach to the lands that they conquered. Rather than rule those people as conquered subjects, the Romans invited them to become citizens. These people then became a part of Rome, rather than enemies fighting against it. Naturally, these new citizens received the same legal rights as everyone else.³⁷

The Punic Wars

The early Roman Republic often found itself in a state of constant warfare with its surrounding neighbors. In one instance, when the Romans were fighting the Carthaginians, Rome was nearly conquered. The people of Carthage (a city in what is today Tunisia in northern Africa) were a successful trading civilization whose interests began to conflict with those of the Romans.

- [20] The two sides fought three bloody wars, known as the Punic Wars (264-146 B.C.), over the control of trade in the western Mediterranean Sea. In the second war, Hannibal,³⁸ a Carthaginian general, successfully invaded Italy by leading an army — complete with elephants — across the Alps.³⁹ He handed the Roman army a crushing defeat but was unable to sack the city of Rome itself. After occupying and ravaging⁴⁰ Italy for more than a decade, Hannibal was finally defeated by the Roman general Scipio⁴¹ at the Battle of Zama⁴² in 202 B.C.

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32. Even when women reached adulthood (or “majority”) they were expected to be in the care of male figures, such as a father or husband, who would make all decisions for them.
 33. In ancient Rome, a “Vestal Virgin” was a young woman, or maiden, dedicated to Vesta (the goddess of the hearth, home, and family and the Roman equivalent to the Greek goddess Hestia) and charged with keeping the symbolic sacred fire of Vesta burning in the goddess's altar.
 34. someone who spends money in an irresponsible or expensive way
 35. **Administration (noun):** management
 36. **Slander (noun):** making a false spoken statement that damages or intends to damage a person's reputation
 37. This was done also as a way of Romanizing the conquered peoples, making them more like the Romans and thus easier to understand and control. This process resulted in: adoption of Roman names, the spread of Latin, the expansion of Roman law and culture, and (later, after Constantine I became the first Roman Emperor to convert in 313 A.D.) the spread of Christianity.
 38. Hannibal (247 – 183/181 B.C.) was a military commander from Carthage and is considered one of the greatest military leaders in history.
 39. The Alps is a mountain range in Europe that extends from southeastern France to Slovenia.
 40. **Ravage (verb):** to cause great damage to; to lay waste to
 41. Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (236 – 183 B.C.), or simply Scipio, was a Roman general and consul, generally regarded as one of the greatest military strategists in history.
 42. The Battle of Zama (October 202 B.C.) took place in Zama near Carthage, or what is now in the modern African country of Tunisia, and signaled the end of the Second Punic War with the defeat of Hannibal.

By the Third Punic War, Rome was ready to end the Carthaginian threat for good. After a successful several-year siege⁴³ of Carthage, the Romans burned the city to the ground. Legend has it that the Romans then poured salt into the soil so that nothing would ever grow there again. Carthage was finally defeated, and the Roman Republic was safe.⁴⁴

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43. **Siege (noun):** a military operation in which the enemy forces surround a town or base, cutting off supplies to the base, with the intention of forcing a surrender of the people inside
44. While the Roman Republic survived the Punic Wars, it would not last forever. In a little over a decade, the Republic would begin to decline; in a little over a hundred years, the Republic would be replaced by the Roman Empire, in 27 B.C.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. How did the make-up of the Roman Senate change over time? [RI.3]
 - A. The Roman Senate changed very little over time; senators were elected and consuls were always chosen by the emperor.
 - B. By the first century B.C., the Roman Senate changed so much that it was made up entirely by plebeian tribunes, but only patricians were allowed as the consuls.
 - C. The Roman Senate was originally made up of only patricians, though some plebeians were eventually granted power as tribunes and even rose to the position of consul.
 - D. The Roman Senate was at first made up of only plebeians, or lower class people, but as Rome became wealthier, the upper class, or patricians, soon took over the Senate.

2. How did the shift from republic to empire affect the government of Rome? [RI.3]
 - A. The larger territory made it easier for Rome to rule, as the number of senators increased.
 - B. The consuls lost power under the new emperors, and the Senate was likewise reduced in power over time.
 - C. The Senate gained more power in the empire, as the new emperors didn't care about governing and let the senators do what they wanted.
 - D. The Roman government achieved less and collapsed because the Senate was in constant conflict with the emperor and the consuls.

3. How does paragraph 15 contribute to the author's central ideas? [RI.5]
 - A. Paragraph 15 describes the ideal dictator in the form of Cincinnatus; this example shows how the use of a temporary dictator could work within the republic, though this was rare.
 - B. Paragraph 15 shows that despite Roman influence on the later United States government, the Roman Republic, with its use of a dictator, was still very different from the current U.S. model of governance.
 - C. Paragraph 15 describes the ideal dictator in the form of Cincinnatus; this example shows that promoting even a "perfect" dictator was nevertheless a violation of citizen rights.
 - D. Paragraph 15 describes the ideal dictator in the form of Cincinnatus, a plebeian military leader, showing that power does not corrupt those not used to it.

4. How did the establishment of the Twelve Tables affect the Roman Republic? [RI.3]
 - A. The Twelve Tables was the first written set of Roman laws, which secured rights such as equal treatment under the law.
 - B. The Twelve Tables made sure that all citizens — regardless of age, race, gender, status, etc. — shared equal rights and privileges.
 - C. The Twelve Tables established the concept of trial by jury and allowed people the opportunity to defend themselves in court.
 - D. The Twelve Tables allowed conquered people to become Roman citizens, which made the republic larger and more diverse.

5. Based on your reading of the text, summarize how the concept of Roman citizenship [RI.2] evolved in 3-5 complete sentences. Cite evidence in your answer.
