

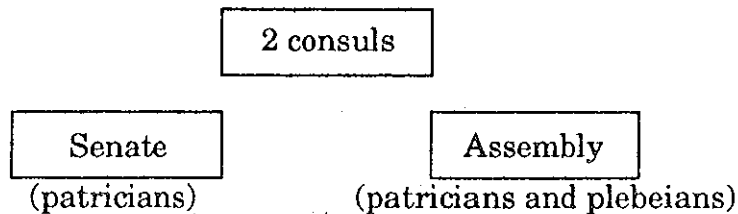
THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

In 500 B.C., Rome was just one of many small towns in Italy. But by 133 B.C., it had gained control of all of Italy and had conquered foreign lands as well. Roman armies won victories in Spain, Greece, Macedonia, Asia Minor, and North Africa.

There were several reasons for the success of the Romans. First, Rome was located in the center of the Mediterranean world. This made it easy for its army and navy to move quickly in any direction. Second, soldiers were courageous and well-trained, and battles were carefully planned ahead of time by able generals. Also, the Romans had the ability to turn their defeated enemies into friends. Eventually, conquered peoples accepted wise and capable Roman rule and the peace that it brought.

The government in the early years of the Roman Republic had three branches -- the consuls, the Senate, and the Assembly. Each branch had various powers. Read the information on the chart below, then answer the questions on the following pages.

3 Branches of Early Roman Government



Separation of Powers Among the 3 Branches

<u>2 consuls</u>	<u>Senate</u>	<u>Assembly</u>
(1) oversaw the work of other government officials	(1) held office for life	(1) voted on laws suggested by government officials
(2) acted as judges	(2) were advisors to the consuls and other government officials	(2) could declare war or make peace treaties
(3) directed the army in wartime	(3) could approve or disapprove laws passed by the Assembly	(3) elected the 2 consuls
(4) elected for a 1-year term	(4) decided how money should be spent	(4) elected government officials
(5) both consuls had to agree before the government could take action	(5) made decisions concerning relations with foreign countries	
(6) in an emergency, consuls could choose a "dictator" -- a single powerful ruler to make quick decisions	(6) had influence over the consuls and the army	
(7) the consuls chose the senators		

Chart Questions

- (1) _____ Instead of a king, the Romans preferred having these at the head of their government.
- (2) _____ A "republic" is a type of government in which representatives of the people make the laws. Was Rome a republic? (yes or no)
- (3) _____ They were rich landowners who controlled the Senate. They also had the most power in the Assembly.
- (4) _____ They were the "common people" of Rome who belonged to the Assembly, but had little real power in the government.
- (5) _____ These people suggested laws for the Roman Republic.
- (6) _____ The two consuls were elected by this group.
- (7) _____ Rich, well-to-do citizens who often owned large tracts of land were called "nobles." What is another name for these people?
- (8) _____ Which two branches of government had a part in making the laws?
- (9) _____ Which branch controlled the spending of money?
- (10) _____ Which branch decided whether or not Rome should go to war with another country?

Thought Questions

- (1) Before 509 B.C., Rome was ruled by a king. Then, the city established the Roman Republic with power divided among three branches of government. Why do you think the Romans preferred having a republic instead of a government ruled by a king?

- (2) Which branch of government -- the consuls, Senate, or Assembly -- had the most power? Explain your answer.

(3) In what two ways was the power of the two consuls limited?

(4) Why was a dictator chosen to head the government in times of emergency?

(5) The government of the United States has a president, Congress, and Supreme Court. Explain one way that the American government is like the ancient Roman government, and one way that it is different.

(6) When the Roman Republic was established in 509 B.C., power was in the hands of the wealthy landowners -- the patricians. The common people, or plebeians, had many complaints. They had little voice in the government, and were treated unfairly under the law. Punishments were often severe. They had to pay high interest rates on loans, and could not marry patricians. Between 494 B.C. and 287 B.C., the plebeians struggled to gain equality with the patricians. This period of time was known as the "Conflict of the Orders." The main reason equality was finally achieved was that plebeians were needed for the army and navy. Why do you think this forced the patricians to give plebeians the rights they demanded?

(7) In your opinion, what was the most important power of the consuls? the Senate? the Assembly?
