

Ancient Rome

The Roman Republic

For 500 years Ancient Rome was governed by the Roman Republic. This was a form of government that allowed for people to elect officials. It was a complex government with a constitution, detailed laws, and elected officials such as senators. Many of the ideas and structures of this government became the basis for modern democracies.

Who were the leaders of the Roman Republic?

The Roman Republic had a number of leaders and groups that helped to govern. Elected officials were called magistrates and there were different levels and titles of magistrates. The Roman Government was very complicated and had lots of leaders and councils. Here are some of the titles and what they did:



The Roman Senate

Consuls - At the top of the Roman Republic was the consul. The consul was a very powerful position. In order to keep the consul from becoming a king or dictator, there were always two consuls elected and they only served for one year. Also, the consuls could veto each other if they didn't agree on something. The consuls had a wide range of powers; they decided when to go to war, how much taxes to collect, and what the laws were.

Senators - The Senate was a group of prestigious leaders who advised the consuls. The consuls usually did what the Senate recommended. Senators were selected for life.

Plebeian Council - The Plebeian Council was also called the Peoples Assembly. This was how the common people, plebeians, could elect their own leaders, magistrates, pass laws, and hold court.

Tribunes - Tribunes were the representatives of the Plebeian Council. They could veto laws made by the Senate.

Governors - As Rome conquered new lands, they needed someone to be the local ruler. The Senate would appoint a governor to rule the land or province. The governor would be in charge of the local Roman army and would also be responsible to collect taxes. Governors were also called proconsuls.

Aedile - An Aedile was a city official who was responsible for the maintenance of public buildings as well as public festivals. Many politicians who wanted to be elected to a higher office, like consul, would become aedile so they could hold big public festivals and gain popularity with the people.

Censor - The Censor counted the citizens and kept track of the census. They also had some responsibilities to maintain public morality and to look after public finances.

The Constitution

The Roman Republic did not have a precise written constitution. The constitution was more of a set of guidelines and principals that were passed down from generation to generation. It provided for separate branches of government and balances of power.

Were all people treated equally?

No, people were treated differently based on their wealth, gender, and citizenship. Women did not get the right to vote or hold office. Also, if you had more money, you got more voting power. Consuls, Senators, and Governors only came from the rich aristocracy. This may sound unfair, but it was a big change from other civilizations where the average person had no say at all. In Rome, the regular people could band together and have considerable power through the Assembly and their Tribunes.

The Roman Republic – Multiple Choice Questions

1. What was the highest position in the government of the Roman Republic?
 - A. Senator
 - B. Aedile
 - C. Governor
 - D. Consul
2. What were the job responsibilities of the Roman aediles?
 - A. They ruled foreign provinces and collected taxes for the Senate
 - B. They represented the Assembly and could veto laws
 - C. They were in charge of public works and festivals
 - D. They counted the citizens and collected taxes
3. How long were Roman Senators elected for?
 - A. 2 years
 - B. 4 years
 - C. 6 years
 - D. For life
4. True or False: The Roman Republic had a detailed written constitution that protected the rights and freedoms of all the citizens of Rome.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. About how long did the Roman Republic last?
 - A. 50 years
 - B. 100 years
 - C. 300 years
 - D. 500 years

6. Which of the following people typically held the most power in the Roman Republic?
 - A. Wealthy men
 - B. Wealthy women
 - C. Poor men
 - D. Poor women

7. What type of current modern government gets its basis from the Roman Republic?
 - A. Communism
 - B. Monarchy
 - C. Democracy
 - D. Dictatorship

8. How many consuls were elected and for how long did they serve?
 - A. 2 consuls for 1 year
 - B. 2 consuls for 2 years
 - C. 4 consuls for 1 year
 - D. 4 consuls for 2 years

9. What role did the tribunes play in the Roman Republic?
 - A. They were the top leaders in the land
 - B. They wrote the laws and advised the consuls
 - C. They were the representatives of the plebeian council and the common people
 - D. They were in charge of public works

10. What was the name of the group of leaders who advised and guided the consuls?
 - A. Tribunes
 - B. Senators
 - C. Censors
 - D. Aediles

