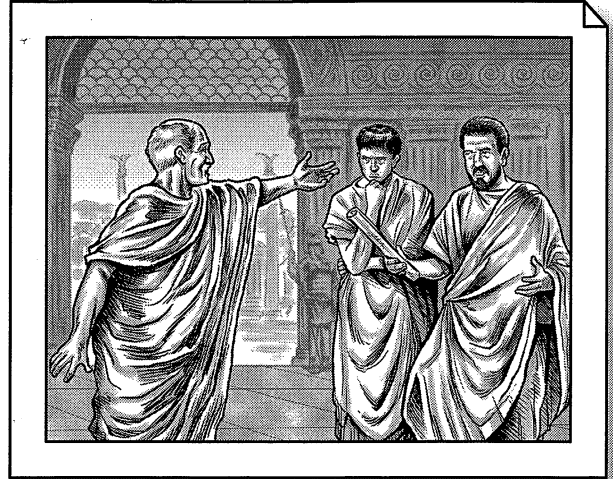


The Roman Republic

In 509 B.C., the Romans overthrew the last Etruscan king who had ruled Rome for years. Because their last king was a tyrant, Romans said they would never have a king again. Instead, the Romans came up with a different kind of government. They started a republic, a form of government in which citizens choose their leaders by voting.

Early Rome was divided into two groups, the patricians and the plebeians. Made up of rich landowners, the patricians were Rome's ruling class. Craftspeople, merchants, and farmers formed a larger group called the plebeians. Males in both groups were citizens and could vote.



A group of 300 patricians made up early Rome's Senate, or group of representatives that helped run the government. Membership was for life, and the Senate had the power to pass laws. Rome also had a council made up of plebeians. This assembly eventually gained the power to pass laws for all of Rome as well.

Instead of a king, the chief executives of the Roman Republic were consuls. An assembly of citizens elected two consuls each year. These elected officials ran the government and the army. The two consuls had to agree on each decision they made. In times of war, the Senate could elect a dictator who had complete control over the government and the army. A Roman dictator could rule for six months. After that time, he had to give up his power.

One of Rome's greatest contributions to the world is its system of law. The Roman Republic's set of written laws was called the Twelve Tables. Laws were carved on twelve stone tablets, or tables. The Romans established the idea that all free citizens had the right to be protected by the law.

Under Roman law, a person was thought to be innocent until proven guilty. People accused of crimes could defend themselves in front of a judge. A judge was expected to think carefully about evidence before making a decision in a case. These ideas continued long after the end of the Roman Republic. Many of today's standards of justice were established in early Rome.

Roman law is not the only thing that was passed down through the centuries. The Roman Republic set an example for later governments in Europe and the Americas. For example, the United States and the Roman Republic share some characteristics. Both governments have elected officials, branches of government, and a basic law that governs the land.



The Roman Republic

Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

1. A/An _____ is a form of government in which citizens choose their leaders by voting.

- A. empire
- B. dictatorship
- C. republic
- D. monarchy

2. The _____ made up the ruling class of Rome.

- A. consuls
- B. patricians
- C. plebeians
- D. judges

3. _____ made up the patrician class.

- A. Craftspeople
- B. Merchants
- C. Farmers
- D. Rich landowners

4. Under Roman law, _____.

- A. a person was thought to be innocent until proven guilty
- B. accused people could defend themselves in front of a judge
- C. a judge was expected to think carefully about evidence before making a decision in a case
- D. all of the above

5. The Roman Republic's set of laws was called the _____.

- A. Twelve Tables
- B. Twenty-Five Theses
- C. Ten Commandments
- D. Standards of Justice



The Roman Republic

Chart – Comparing Governments

Use the chart to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.

	Roman Republic	United States
Executive	Two consuls elected for a term of one year	A President elected for a term of four years
Legislative	Senate of 300 members, Centuriate Assembly; and Tribal Assembly	Senate of 100 members, House of Representatives
Judicial	Eight judges chosen for a term of one year	Nine Supreme Court justices appointed for life
Supreme Law	Twelve Tables	Constitution
Citizenship	Adult males	All native-born or naturalized people

1. What is the supreme law of the United States?

2. How long did Rome's judges serve?

3. How many more Senate members did the Roman Republic have than the United States?
