

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Roman Republic - Who Did What in the Roman Republic?

When the Romans revolted and expelled the Etruscan king, Tarquin the Proud, in 509 B.C., they vowed never to be governed by kings again. Thus, they borrowed the Greek idea of democracy and created the Roman Republic.



In the Roman Republic, power was in the hands of two consuls (kŏn'səls – KAHN-sels). Once a year, the Romans gathered together and elected two capable men to be their consuls. The election was open to all Roman *male* citizens. Women, slaves, foreigners, and people born in provinces were not allowed to vote.

The actual authority of a consul was somewhat limited. First, the term of consul lasted only one year. The short serving period made it hard for any one person to gain enough influence. Second, before any action was taken, the two consuls must attempt to reach an agreement.

If one consul opposed an idea put forth by the other consul, he could simply say "veto" ("I forbid") and have the matter dropped. Having two consuls always agree on everything was impossible. To avoid one abusing his veto power, a Roman law gave the senate the right to choose a dictator in the event of an emergency (e.g. Cincinnatus). The law specified the term of a dictator to be six months.

Senators in the Roman Republic were not law-makers. They were normally former consuls who acted as the new consuls' advisors. Senators normally served for life.

Once a year, Romans chose 8 praetors (prē'tərs – PREE-ters), 4 aediles (ē'dīls – E-diles), and 20 quaestors (kwēs'tərs – KWEES-ters). Praetors were judges. They would assume consuls' administrative duties in their absence. Aediles were the supervisors of public places and organizers of public games. Quaestors were the financial administrators or treasurers.

Once every five years, they chose 2 censors. Censors served a term of 18 months. Their primary responsibilities were to remove any unworthy senators and to enroll the new ones. They were also in charge of assessing property tax, granting contracts for public works, and conducting census of citizens.

Under the Roman law, a dictator, the consuls, or the praetors had the right to exercise *imperium*. *Imperium* was the utmost form of power. It's where the word "imperial" comes from. It included the right to command armies, to interpret and carry out the law, and to give out death sentences.

In the early days of the Roman Republic, only patricians (pə-trīsh'əns – pah-TRISH-ens) could become senators or hold senior government posts. Patricians were nobles or people from affluent families. They represented the Roman society's upper class. Their tight grip on power made the commoners, or plebeians (plī-bē'əns – plib-E-ans), very uneasy.

Later in history, plebeians' assembly consolidated legislative power from all other assemblies. The laws made by its 10 tribunes became the laws that all Roman citizens - no matter if they were patricians or plebeians - must follow.

The Roman Republic came to a halt in 27 B.C. when Octavian won the civil war that had been raging for more than a decade. The victory won him both fame and support. The senate gave him the title of Augustus, which means "highly respected." It also gave him full control over Rome, effectively making him an emperor. Though Augustus never coined the term "Roman Empire", historians all agree that he was the first king of this new era. After nearly 500 years, Rome came full circle and returned to the hands of monarchy.

I.	Which position in the Roman Republic had the most power?	VI.	What were the two main responsibilities of the censors?
II.	Which position in the Republic had the longest term?	VII.	Which government officials in the Roman Republic did <b>not</b> have the right to exercise <i>imperium</i> ?
III.	Which government official in the Roman Republic was in charge of organizing public sports?	VIII.	Who in the Roman Republic were responsible for making laws?
IV.	The senate could appoint a dictator if the two consuls disagreed with each other. True or False?	IX.	Who ended the Roman Republic?
V.	Who in the Roman Republic had the right to vote and become a consul?	X.	For how many years did the Roman Republic last?