

Student Handout 2 Introduction to Ancient Rome..... Republic to Empire

Working with a partner, read the following excerpts from primary documents about the Roman Republic. Skim the document and the guiding questions for notes before reading. Use the summaries in the middle column to help you understand the documents. Think about your purpose for reading each document, and then take notes in response to the prompts as you read. You can talk quietly about the important ideas with your partner to help you take notes, but stay focused! Write directly in the note-taking column.

Constitution of the Roman Republic - A translation of an account written by Polybius, a Greek historian who lived in Rome and observed the transition from Republic to Empire firsthand.

Gary Edward Forsythe: Assistant Professor of Classical Languages and Literatures, University of Chicago. Author of *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi and the Roman Annalistic Tradition*. Robert A. Guiseppi: Author of *Ancient Voices*

Polybius 6.11-18: [Polybius here sets forth a general analysis of the Roman constitution at the time of the Second Punic War.]

Text Excerpts:	Summary:	<i>Note Taking column.... answer the questions:</i>
<p>I have already mentioned the three divisions of government in control of state affairs. All three were so equally and fittingly set out and organized in all respects as regards their respective roles that no one, not even any of the Romans themselves, could say for certain whether their system of government was aristocratic in its general nature, or democratic, or monarchical. And this uncertainty is only reasonable, for if we were to focus on the powers of the consuls it would appear to be altogether monarchical and kingly in nature. If, however, we were to focus on the powers of the Senate, it would appear to be a government under the control of an aristocracy. And yet if one were to look at the powers enjoyed by the people, it would seem plain that it was democratic in nature. As for the parts of government controlled by each element, they were at that time and (with a few exceptions) still are as follows:</p>	<p>The government had three parts. These three parts seemed equal to each other in power. There was a part that was more <u>aristocratic</u> (controlled by a small group of wealthy people), a part that was more <u>democratic</u> (controlled by a larger group of people), and a part that was <u>monarchical</u> (controlled by one person, like a king).</p> <p>The consuls were sort of like kings. The Senate was like an aristocracy (small group of rich guys). Yet the larger population had some power too, so that was more democratic.</p>	<p><i>How was this government, with consuls, a Senate, and the people, similar to and different from Athens?</i></p>

<p>The consuls, when in Rome prior to leading out <u>their armies</u>, are <u>in charge of all public affairs</u>. For all of the other public officials, with the exception of the <u>tribunes</u>, are below the consuls and subject to their authority, and it is the consuls who <u>introduce foreign ambassadors to the Senate</u>. In addition to the powers just mentioned, the <u>consuls introduce to the Senate urgent matters</u> for its consideration and bring about the detailed implementation of its <u>decrees</u>. Moreover, it is the consuls' duty to <u>consider all matters of public concern</u> which are to be decided by the people... Furthermore, they enjoy nearly <u>autocratic powers as regards preparations for war and the conduct of military affairs</u>. ...</p>	<p><i>Copy the underlined phrases from the passage to the left in the space below:</i></p>	<p><i>As best you can, see if you can re-write these phrases and list the powers of the <u>consuls</u>:</i></p>
<p>The Senate, first of all, has control of the <u>treasury</u>, for it has complete authority over all <u>revenues</u> and <u>expenditures</u>. For the <u>quaestors</u> are unable to disburse funds for any particular need without a decree from the Senate, the only exception being in the case of the consuls [see above]. The Senate is in charge of by far the most important and the greatest <u>expenditure of public funds</u> -- that which the censors make every <i>lustrum</i> [i.e. every five years] for <u>the repair and construction of public works</u>: it is through the Senate that the funds are allocated to the censors. Similarly, whatever <u>crimes</u> committed in Italy <u>require a public investigation</u> -- for example, treason, conspiracy, poisoning, willful murder -- these all fall under the <u>jurisdiction of the Senate</u>.</p>	<p><i>Copy the underlined phrases from the passage to the left in the space below:</i></p>	<p><i>As best you can, see if you can re-write these phrases and list the powers of the <u>Senate</u>:</i></p>

... the people alone amid the organs of state have **jurisdiction** over the conferring of rewards and punishments, these representing the sole bonds by which kingdoms and states and, in a word, human society are held together. ... The people pass judgment, then, whenever the punishment for a crime involves a substantial penalty, and especially when the accused have held high office. And the people alone can pass judgment in capital cases. ... It is the people who grant offices to the deserving, the most noble prize for virtue in a state. They also have authority over the **ratifying** of laws and -- the greatest of their powers -- they deliberate and pass judgment concerning war and peace. They also confirm decisions concerning the various military alliances, truces, and other treaties, rendering them valid or rejecting them. The result is that, with a view to these powers, one might reasonably say that the people have the greatest role in the state, and that the constitution is democratic in nature.

Summary:

The people get to decide guilt or innocence in public trials.

The people get to elect some of their leaders.

The people get to vote to pass laws.

The people have a voice in decisions relating to war and peace.

Do you think that all people really had these powers? Did they have this power in Greece? Who do you think "the people" included?

Turn and Talk, and then Stop and Jot below:

In the Roman Republic, based upon what you read above, how were decisions made? How is this similar to Athens? How is it different? Who had power and authority in the Roman Republic?

