

- Explain the following statement:

In Roman times and today plebeians were and are more numerous than patricians.

2. The Roman Republic. From 616 B.C. to 509 B.C., Etruscan kings ruled Rome. After winning their freedom from the Etruscans, the Romans did not want any more kings. They organized a new type of government, one in which elected officials held power and made the laws. This government was called a *republic*.

At first, only patricians could hold public office in Rome. But the plebeians kept demanding more rights for themselves. Finally, in 287 B.C., the plebeians won equal rights as citizens. As members of the Assembly of Tribes and the Assembly of Centuries, they voted on issues and passed laws.

During the period of the Roman Republic, the highest officials were the *consuls*. The assemblies elected two each year. The consuls enforced the laws, ensured that the city was properly administered, and commanded the army in time of war.

Officials called *magistrates* assisted the consuls. The Assembly of Centuries elected the magistrates, who had special titles and duties. *Quaestors* handled such matters as counting the number of people in the city and determining the value of property for tax purposes. *Aediles*, officials like mayors, kept order and took care of public buildings. *Praetors*, or judges, presided over trials in the courts.

In times of emergency, when quick decisions were needed, the consuls sometimes chose one man to rule. Called a *dictator*, he could serve for no more than six months. The government followed the dictator's decisions without question.

The government body called the *Senate* had the most power. The consuls appointed the 300 members of the Senate for life terms. Originally only patricians could be senators. Later, plebeians could hold this office. The Senate proposed laws, handled foreign affairs, and controlled public finances.

To protect their rights, plebeians in the Assembly of Tribes elected ten men called *tribunes*. These powerful men could *veto* decisions of the consuls and the Senate.

The Roman Republic functioned efficiently for nearly 500 years. The Republic broke down during the civil wars that occurred between the patricians and plebeians. A number of changes caused these conflicts. Two major changes were the growth of an empire and the need to govern the many different peoples in it.

Political organization was one of the Romans' greatest talents. In more recent times, the organization of the Roman Republic served as a model for the governments of many nations, including the United States.

- Compare government in ancient Rome with modern American government by completing the chart below:

Branches of Government

	<i>Legislative (makes laws)</i>	<i>Executive (enforces laws)</i>	<i>Judicial (judges and interprets)</i>
Rome			
United States	Congress: Senate and House of Representatives	President and Cabinet	Supreme Court and Federal Courts

3. Roman Law. Another Roman contribution to the world was the development of a body of laws, a legal code. The Romans had great respect for the law. They insisted that all citizens be treated fairly. To make sure that everyone would know the laws, the laws were written on 12 tables, or tablets. About 450 B.C., the Romans set up the tables in a public place. Children had to memorize the laws on the Twelve Tables.



Romans studying and discussing the laws on the Twelve Tables.