# Lesson 2 The Roman Republic

## MAIN IDEAS

Economics Early Roman society was divided into two unequal classes.

Government The Roman Republic had a government divided into three parts, similar to the U.S. government today.

Government To gain more land and wealth, Rome began to expand by conquering neighboring peoples.

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## Early Strengths of Roman Society

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How was Roman society structured?

### Patricians and Plebeians

- Complex civilization developed, along with two unequal classes
  - **patricians**—upper-class landowners, held high government positions (THIS IS IMPORTANT)
  - **plebeians**—common farmers that could vote but not hold power
- Tension over patricians' power led to written constitution
  - around 450 B.C., Twelve Tables set forth citizens' rights, duties

The first decemvirate (10 men) were appointed to draw up the 12 Tables, condensing the common law of all regions of Rome into one set of laws. They sent an embassy to Greece to study their legislative system (Solonian Constitution).

**REVIEW QUESTION**

Why did the division of Roman society cause tension?

Because laws were applied by the rich, could only be read by the rich, and protected only the rich. Laws were also applied unfairly, because of this fact, Riots led to 12 Tables.

# Republican Government

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How was the republican government organized?

## Legislative and Judicial

- Roman government established tripartite, or three-branch, government
  - legislative makes law, executive enforces law, judicial interprets law (Important)
- Legislative branch included Senate, assemblies
  - **Senate**—300 members, mostly patricians, advised leaders
  - assemblies—mostly plebeian, protected plebeian rights
- Eight judges of judicial branch oversaw courts, governed provinces

## Executive

- Two **consuls** led executive branch
  - commanded army, ran government for a year (Important)
  - each consul could veto the other
- In a crisis, consuls could choose dictator to rule for limited time
  - **Cincinnatus** was made dictator; legend says he ruled for one day

Julius Caesar named himself "Dictator Perpetuo"
Which means, perpetual dictator, or dictator for life.

## Legacy of Roman Law

- U.S. government adopted Roman Republic's tripartite system
  - checks and balances keeps one branch from getting too powerful
  - government based on written constitution
- Citizenship is important in republican government
  - citizens expected to perform civic duties
  - American citizens vote, pay taxes, serve on juries

**REVIEW QUESTION**

What made up the three branches of the Roman Republic?

Legislative: Senate: 300 patrician members, Assemblies: plebians, protecting their rights.
Executive: 2 Consuls (most of the time), sometimes 3 (triumvirate: Pompey, Crassus, Caesar)
The consuls could "veto" each other's decisions. They also ran the armies.
Judicial: 8 Judges oversaw courts. Think Pontius Pilate

# The Republic Expands

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How did Rome expand?

## The Punic Wars

- Rome expanded, controlled entire Italian Peninsula by 275 B.C.
  - those conquered governed selves but gave taxes, soldiers to Rome
- Punic Wars began in 264 B.C. against Carthage (series of three wars) (Hannibal and his War Elephants)
- Roman general Scipio defeated Carthage general Hannibal in 202 B.C.
- Rome captured, destroyed Carthage at end of third war in 146 B.C.

## Effects of Expansion

- After Punic Wars, Roman territory extended from Spain to Greece
  - conquerors brought back wealth, slaves; bought large estates
- Many small farmers couldn't compete, lost their farms
  - poverty and unemployment increased
- Gap increased between rich and poor
  - anger and tension grew between classes

**REVIEW QUESTION**
What was the result of Roman expansion?

They took Spain and Greece (GOOD)
Conquerors brought back wealth and slaves; bought land.
Small farmers could not compete with this new system (slave farmers)
Gap increases between rich and poor, and tension grows (revolts)

## Lesson Summary

- Early Rome was divided into two classes—patricians and plebeians.
- The Roman Republic was a tripartite system that provided a model for the U.S. government.
- Roman expansion brought new lands and great wealth for Rome.

## Why It Matters Now . . .

Some of the most basic values and institutions of the United States, such as civic duty and a separate judicial branch, began in the Roman Republic.