

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Early Rome: A Blend of Cultures

Italy is a peninsula in the Mediterranean Sea to the west of Greece. Greece and Rome share similar climates of warm, dry summers and mild winters. Unlike Greece, Italy does not have very good mineral resources or harbors. Italy, however, is less mountainous than Greece, is easier to travel through, and has much fertile land. It is no surprise that Rome was founded as an agricultural society while Greece had to rely on trade and the seas to survive.



The Italian **Peninsula** is more closely linked to the rest of Europe than Greece is. While a mountain range known as the Alps to the north is a natural barrier, many tribes crossed into Italy or sailed and established colonies on its shores (including the Greeks!). The early Romans developed a strong military to defend against raids and a navy to defend ships using the Mediterranean for travel.



It is believed that, after Rome was founded by Romulus, the Romans began to expand and conquer neighboring tribes called the Latins and Etruscans. While Greeks sought to spread their own culture, early Romans were very adaptable and borrowed ideas from everyone they met. They learned metalworking and architecture (especially using arches) from the Etruscans, learned how to grow grapes and olives from the Greek colonies, borrowed the alphabet and language from the Latins, and even developed a religion based on Latin and Greek **deities**.

Rome gradually expanded but was still controlled by Etruscan kings. Romans wanting their own identity and unhappy with paying tribute to a harsh ruler overthrew the Etruscan king in 509 BCE and founded a new government called a **republic**. They swore to never again be ruled by a king and instead let the people elect leaders to lead and serve the best interests of Rome. This was the beginning of what is known as the Roman Republic.

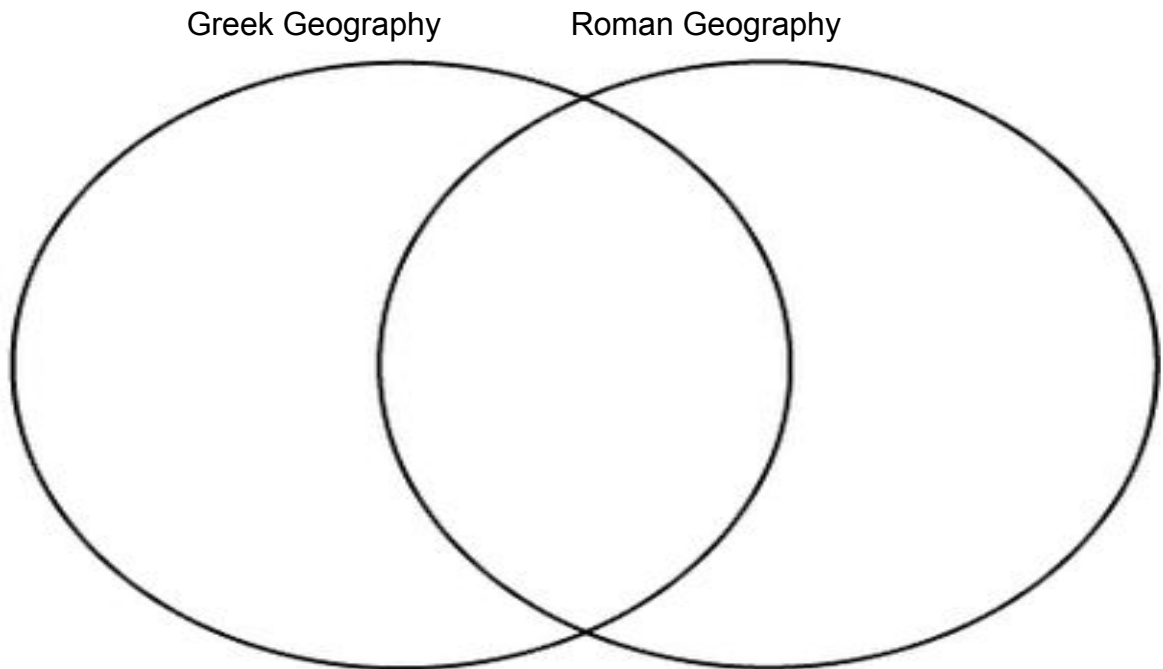
### **Dictionary**

**Peninsula** (*noun*): a body of land jutting into and nearly surrounded by water.

**Deities** (*noun*): gods/goddesses

**Republic** (*noun*): a form of government in which power is held by citizens who vote on their leaders

1. What is the main idea of this passage?
  - Ⓐ The Greeks and Romans share a common history.
  - Ⓑ The Romans developed their identity by learning from those around them.
  - Ⓒ Italy is a harder place to live than Greece.
  - Ⓓ Romans learned to overthrow their kings from the ideas of the Greeks.
2. Why did Romans develop a military/navy?
  - Ⓐ To conquer the Greeks and Gauls to the north
  - Ⓑ To teach young men the skills they need to survive
  - Ⓒ To lead pilgrims to the Holy Lands east of Greece
  - Ⓓ To defend against raiding tribes in Italy
3. Complete the Venn Diagram below with at least 3 facts in each space based on your prior knowledge and the passage:



4. How did the geography of the Italian Peninsula allow a large civilization such as Rome to develop and grow?
5. According to the passage, what was the main difference in how the Greeks and Romans conquered other peoples?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# **The Roman Republic**

adapted from Vickie Chao

<sup>1</sup> For centuries, Italy's Rome has been an important city, playing a pivotal role both culturally and politically. According to the legend, a pair of twin brothers built Rome from scratch in 753 B.C. In a quarrel, Romulus killed Remus. After that, he named the city after himself and became the first ruler of Rome. While this story is fascinating, its authenticity is very much in doubt.

<sup>2</sup> Historians have long established the fact that Rome had existed since 900 B.C. By about 600 B.C., a group of people called the Etruscans (pronounced "*ih-TRUS-kunz*") took power in Rome. They ruled it for nearly a century. Though the Etruscans left behind many imprints, we know very little about them. In fact, we cannot even say for sure where they came from. Some scholars believed that the Etruscans were native people of Italy. Others believed that they were immigrants from Asia Minor (today's Turkey). Regardless of their origin, we know for certain that the Etruscans spoke a language different from that in Rome. We also know for certain that their authoritarian style of governing was very unpopular. In around 510 B.C. or 509 B.C., the Romans revolted. They expelled the last Etruscan king, Tarquinius Superbus (pronounced "*tahr-KWIN-ee-us soo-PUR-bus*", also known as Tarquin the Proud).

<sup>3</sup> With the Etruscans gone, the Romans decided that they would never want to go back to the days of monarchy. To avoid giving too much power to a single person, they came up with the idea of the republic.

<sup>4</sup> In this new form of government, all citizens who had the right to vote could participate in the selection of their leaders. Once a year, they elected two **consuls**. The individuals who won the office acted on the advice given by the senate. They were responsible for enforcing the laws and policies of the Roman Republic. Because the consuls would later become senators after their one-year term in office, they almost always did what the senate wanted them to do. As the two men met and discussed state affairs, they attempted to reach unanimous decisions. In the event of a disagreement over serious matters, Roman law allowed the senate to appoint a **dictator**. This person would act as a king, but his power was only good for six months.

<sup>5</sup> In the early days of the Roman Republic, all the senators were the nobles, or the **patricians**. This arrangement did not sit well with the commoners, or the **plebeians**. As the distrust worsened, the plebeians went on strikes. In 494 B.C., they set up their own assembly. They declared that the assembly's tribunes (elected once a year) had the power to reject any decision made by Roman officials or even the senate. In 450 B.C., the patricians agreed to one of the plebeians' main demands and established the Law of the Twelve Tables. These laws hung openly in marketplaces for everyone to see. It was applied equally to all citizens. Encouraged by the victory, the plebeians continued to fight for their rights. In 367 B.C., they overturned a law that barred them from being consuls. In 287 B.C., they expanded the assembly's legislative power from making laws for the plebeians only to making laws for all Roman citizens!

<sup>6</sup> As the government structure continued to take shape, the Roman armies went on to conquer new territories for the Republic. The added land did not bring joy. Instead, it brought forth a big problem. Some suggested the land be given to the plebeians. Others refused. The dispute paralyzed the entire nation. Soon, civil wars erupted. Just when the

Roman Republic was heading toward total destruction, a general named Julius Caesar rose to power.

<sup>7</sup> Julius Caesar was a military genius who fought and won numerous wars. In 49 B.C., he led his troops back to Rome and fought against the senate's policies. He won. The senate made him a dictator the following year. Under Roman law, a dictator could rule for only six months. But the senate made an exception, allowing him to be dictator for life. As Caesar's power continued to grow, some senators began to feel uneasy. They felt Caesar had gone too far and had become too powerful. They decided to get rid of him. On March 15, 44 B.C., they assassinated him.

<sup>8</sup> The death of Caesar pushed Rome into turmoil again. The chaos lasted for more than ten years. In the end, Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, managed to quash all the opposing forces and won the civil war. The senate awarded him the title of Augustus (meaning "highly respected") in 27 B.C. It also gave him the absolute power to rule Rome, effectively making him a king. From that point forward, ancient Rome was once again under the control of monarchy. Though Augustus never coined the term "Roman Empire," historians all agree that he was the first emperor of this newly united kingdom. Thus, 27 B.C. became both the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire

1. How long was Rome considered a Republic?
  - a. 483 years
  - b. 467 years
  - c. 510 years
  - d. 287 years
  
2. According to the reading is the end of the Roman Republic?
  - a. The death of Julius Caesar
  - b. The Romans expelling the Etruscan King
  - c. Augustus had complete control of Rome
  - d. Augustus assassinated Julius Casesar
  
3. Why did the plebeians establish their own assembly in 494 B.C.?
  - a. Because they wanted to have freedom of speech
  - b. Because they wanted to get more land
  - c. Because they wanted to have equal rights as the patricians
  - d. Because they were bored
  
4. Why would the Roman senate want a dictator?
  - a. To take out opponents of Rome
  - b. To guarantee a victory in battle
  - c. To settle a dispute between the two consuls that dragged on too long
  - d. Romans never wanted a dictator in charge of their government
  
5. What is the main idea of the 7<sup>th</sup> paragraph?

- a. Caesar was a genius
- b. Caesar and his army won several battle
- c. Caesar's was assassinated by the senate
- d. Caesar's power continued to increase until his murder