

The Roman Republic: Structure

The Roman Republic was a representative government with several important groups and roles. **Read more about those groups and roles below. Then answer the questions on page 2.**

What were the two classes of citizens in the Roman Republic?

▶ The **patricians** were the elite of the Roman Republic. Individual patricians gained their status based on their families. Most patrician families owned large areas of land and were very wealthy.

▶ The **plebeians** were the ordinary people of the Roman Republic. Anyone who was not born into a patrician family was a plebeian. Most plebeians were poor. Even if a plebeian became wealthy, they could never become a patrician.

What were two of the main legislative groups in the Roman Republic?

▶ The **Century Assembly** was a legislative group in the Roman Republic. Technically, both patricians and plebeians could vote in the assembly. However, the votes of wealthier citizens counted more, so patricians dominated the Century Assembly.

The Century Assembly could declare war, elect some officials, and pass laws.

▶ The **Plebeian Council** was a legislative group in the Roman Republic. The council specifically represented the lower class in the Roman Republic. So, only plebeians could vote in the Plebeian Council.

The Plebeian Council could elect some officials and pass laws.

Who were some of the highest officials in the Roman Republic?

▶ **Consuls** were heads of state who represented the whole Roman Republic. The Century Assembly elected two consuls every year for one-year terms. Because the Century Assembly favored wealthy citizens, the consuls were usually patricians.

Consuls were powerful executive officials. They managed government meetings and assemblies. Consuls were also responsible for enforcing laws and representing Rome to other countries. Most importantly, consuls ruled as military leaders. They led the Roman army, hoping to win military glory during their year in power.

▶ **Tribunes** represented the plebeian class. So, only Plebeians could become tribunes. The Plebeian Council elected tribunes for one-year terms. Depending on the year, there were between two to ten tribunes.

Tribunes were powerful legislative officials. They could propose laws. They could **veto**, or forbid, action by other citizens or government officials, even other tribunes. Tribunes were also legally **sacrosanct**, meaning that any citizen who harmed them would be executed.

What role did the Senate play in the Roman Republic?

▶ **The Senate** was an elite council of former elected officials. Men became senators for life after serving in high government posts, such as consul. Because of their elite status, senators were usually patricians. There were usually around 300 senators.

The Senate advised consuls, conducted Rome's foreign policy, and managed the use of government money. The Senate could also issue decrees. **Decrees** were suggestions, not laws. But citizens and elected officials usually obeyed Senate decrees out of respect.

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Patricians

Who were the patricians? How wealthy were they?

Plebeians

Who were the plebeians? How wealthy were they?

The Century Assembly

What power did the Century Assembly have?

Who could vote in the Century Assembly?

The Plebeian Council

What power did the Plebeian Council have?

Who could vote in the Plebeian Council?

The Consuls

How could someone become a consul?

What powers did the consuls have?

The Tribunes

How could someone become a tribune?

What powers did the tribunes have?

The Senate

How could someone become a member of the Roman Senate?

What powers did the Roman Senate have?
