

J. The Importance of Rome

1. The world we live in begins mainly with ancient Greece, but it was in Rome that a “republic” with unique protections for individual rights was first created.
2. This served as an inspiration to the Founding Fathers of the United States.

K. Legendary Origins: Remus and Romulus

1. The Romans believed that their city had been founded by a pair of brothers called Remus and Romulus.
2. The legend says that the two boys were the children of the Roman god Mars and a priestess of the goddess Vesta.
3. When the king discovered that the priestess had had children (which was illegal), he ordered her and the children killed, but a servant took the boys and placed them on the river Tiber in a basket.
4. They floated downstream, to be discovered by a she-wolf who suckled them, and then they were discovered and raised by a shepherd.
5. When the boys returned to Rome as men, they competed to see who would be king. Romulus killed his brother, and became the city's first legendary king.

L. The Early Roman Republic

1. Following the kingship of Romulus, Rome was ruled by a dynasty of kings, until the Romans deposed their last king **c.509 BC**.
2. Rome then became a government called a “republic.” (The word “republic” comes from the Latin “Res Publica”—a public affair.)
3. It was ruled by the aristocracy, called “patricians.” (Only members of the patrician families could participate in the government.)
4. The commoners, known as “plebeians,” had no control over the government.
5. The patricians elected two officials to enforce the laws, known as “consuls.”
6. There were two consuls, and they both had to agree when enforcing a law, so this limited their power.

M. The First Secession of the Plebeians and the Creation of the Tribune

1. As in Athens, the commoners were often treated unfairly. They experienced debt slavery just as in Athens.
2. In a rebellion, the plebeians left the city in a time of war and began to construct another city. This is called a “secession.”
3. The patricians realized that they could not defend Rome by themselves against its enemies. They were forced to free all the debt slaves and to give the plebeians protection from the power of the consuls.

4. The patricians agreed to allow the plebeians to be protected by two government officials, called “tribunes” who were like police officers and lawyers for plebeians.
5. Tribunes could stop a consul from arresting or harming a plebeian.
6. The plebeians still could not make any laws, but they were protected *from the government* by the tribunes.
7. This was a new idea. Nobody in history had ever created a government where part of the government acts against other parts of the government in order to protect the rights of citizens.

N. A Written Constitution for Rome

1. The plebeians wanted written laws, but the patricians did not like the idea of having another limit placed on their power.
2. As before, they plebeians marched away from Rome. They *seceded*.
3. This Second Secession of the Plebeians forced the patricians to create a set of written law called the “Laws of the Twelve Tables.”
4. The laws were placed on display in the Roman Forum (the central marketplace of Rome.)

O. More Good Laws!

1. After the Laws of the Twelve Tables were created, the plebeians wanted to change them.
2. One reason was that it was illegal for plebeians to marry patricians.
3. The Lex Canuleia (“lex” means “law”) changed that fact, making it legal for plebeians to marry patricians.
4. The plebeians also were made almost equal to the patricians by the “Licinian Laws” which were proposed by a plebeian consul named Gaius Licinius, which made it so that one of the consuls had to be a plebeian.
5. Unfortunately, if there was one thing the Romans were better at than making good laws, it was conquering!