

# Republic to Empire: Government in Ancient Rome

What were the critical attributes of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire? How did the two systems impact citizens' lives?

## Overview

Students compare and contrast two systems of government in ancient Rome. They write about how each system impacted human lives and make connections to their own.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://education.nationalgeographic.org/activity/republic-empire-government-ancient-rome/>

## Program



## Directions

### 1. Have students brainstorm how the government impacts their daily lives.

Ask students to think about how the government impacts their daily lives and to write their ideas on a sheet of paper. As an example, guide them to think about their typical day: the alarm goes off (electricity regulation/power grid), they get a drink of water and eat breakfast (safe drinking water, food inspections), they may get on the bus (roads and public transportation paid for by public funds; bus powered by petroleum products that are regulated), and they go to school (teachers are certified/licensed by the state, buildings undergo government inspections). Have students spend five minutes writing additional ideas on their paper. Then have them share their ideas with a partner and then with the whole class. Next, explain to students that, just as the United States government impacts their lives today, the different forms of government in ancient Rome impacted the lives of individuals. In this activity, students will learn about and compare and contrast two forms of government in ancient Rome.

### 2. Introduce the critical attributes of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire.

Distribute a copy of the handout Critical Attributes of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire to each student and also project the handout on the board. Invite volunteers to take turns reading the information aloud. Pause to discuss difficult vocabulary, as needed.

### **3. Have pairs use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the characteristics of the two systems.**

Divide students into pairs and, using the handout, ask them to complete the Venn diagram with similarities and differences between the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire.

### **4. Have a whole-class discussion about how the different forms of government may have affected the population.**

Have a whole-class discussion, using the provided answer key to review students' completed Venn diagrams. Students' answers should include the similarities in the role of the wealthy in choosing the government and the differences in the highest power in each government. Next, ask students to brainstorm with their partner about how the different governments may have affected the population. Regroup as a whole class to discuss their ideas. If students need prompting, ask:

- *How were lower classes represented in the Republic and in the Empire?*
- *How do you think citizens felt about worshipping the emperor as a god?*

### **5. Have students write a reflection essay.**

Ask each student to take out a piece of paper and write a multiple-paragraph response to the following prompts:

- *What did you learn about the critical attributes of the Roman Republic and Roman Empire? Did anything you learn surprise you? Explain.*
- *How did each system impact citizens' lives? Are there any new connections you can make to how your government impacts your own life?*

## **Informal Assessment**

Collect students' writing and use the following 3-point rubric to assess their essays:

3 – The student's reflection essay includes all major critical attributes of the systems and how each system impacted human lives. He or she included at least three thoughts, opinions, and thoughtful connections to his or her own life.

2 – The student's reflection essay includes some of the major critical attributes of the systems and how each system impacted human lives. He or she included minimal connections to his or her own life, thoughts or opinions.

1 – The student's reflection essay includes few of the major critical attributes of the systems and how each system impacted human lives. He or she did not include any connections to his or her own life, thoughts or opinions.

## Extending the Learning

Ask each student to take on the role of either a Roman citizen living during the Republic or a Roman citizen living during the Empire. Have mixed pairs interview each other, asking and answering questions about the impact that one characteristic of the government has on each of their lives.

## Objectives

### Subjects & Disciplines

#### Language Arts

- Reading
- Writing (composition)

#### Social Studies

- World history

## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- compare and contrast characteristics of the Roman Empire and Roman Republic
- analyze the impact of the Roman Empire and Roman Republic on human lives
- make connections to the impact of government on students' own lives

## Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

## Teaching Methods

- Brainstorming
- Discussions
- Information organization
- Reading
- Writing

## Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
  - Learning and Innovation Skills
    - Communication and Collaboration
- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Analyzing
  - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
  - Answering Geographic Questions
  - Asking Geographic Questions

# National Standards, Principles, and Practices

## National Geography Standards

- **Standard 12:**

The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement

- **Standard 4:**

The physical and human characteristics of places

- **Standard 9:**

The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface

## National Standards for History

- **World History Era 3 (5-12) Standard 3:**

How major religions and large-scale empires arose in the Mediterranean basin, China, and India, 500 BCE-300 CE

- **World History Era 3 (5-12) Standard 5:**

Major global trends from 1000 BCE-300 CE

## Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

- **Reading Standards for Informational Text 6-12:**

Key Ideas and Details, RI.8.1

- **Reading Standards for Informational Text 6-12:**

Key Ideas and Details, RI.6.1

- **Reading Standards for Informational Text 6-12:**

Key Ideas and Details, RI.7.1

- **Writing Standards 6-12:**

Text Types and Purposes, W.6.1

- **Writing Standards 6-12:**

Production and Distribution of Writing, W.6.4

- **Writing Standards 6-12:**

Text Types and Purposes, W.7.1

- **Writing Standards 6-12:**

Production and Distribution of Writing, W.7.4

- **Writing Standards 6-12:**

Text Types and Purposes, W.8.1

- **Writing Standards 6-12:**

Production and Distribution of Writing, W.8.4

## Preparation

### What You'll Need

### Materials You Provide

- Pencils

- Pens
- Writing paper

### **Required Technology**

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom, Projector

### **Physical Space**

- Classroom

### **Grouping**

- Large-group instruction

### **Resources Provided: Handouts & Worksheets**

- Critical Attributes of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire
- Venn Diagram
- Critical Attributes Answer Key

## **Background & Vocabulary**

### **Background Information**

The Roman Republic is said to have lasted from 509 BCE to 27 BCE. The republic was a system based on representation for the people of Rome. At the head of the republic were two consuls. These consuls were usually military generals who were in charge of Rome's army. The Senate was composed of Roman citizens who were responsible for advising both judges and the Roman people. There were two key assemblies during this time: the tribal assembly and the centuriate assembly. The tribal assembly was composed of civilians who elected judges who did not vote on military matters. The centuriate assembly elected judges who did vote on military matters.

During the Republic, the Roman Army frequently engaged in war and conquest. Rome's trade with and conquest of other nations made it difficult for the middle and lower classes to get by, creating conflict between the classes.

This conflict set the stage for the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire. Amidst conflict, military leaders such as Julius Caesar were able to obtain power and influence previously contained in the government of the republic. On the heels of this new form of power, Augustus was crowned the first emperor of Rome in 31 BCE. The Roman Empire lasted from 27 BCE to the 5th century. CE Augustus set up a form of government known as a principate, which gave Augustus, as first citizen, control of the government, while retaining some aspects, such as the Senate, of the Republic. The Senate was largely composed of wealthy men. Augustus reinvigorated economic prosperity in Rome. Due in part to this prosperity, Augustus and the emperors following were worshipped as gods after their deaths. In the 5th century CE, after a succession of unstable

emperors yielded economic instability, the Visigoths invaded Rome and Roman rule finally fell.

## Prior Knowledge

[]

## Recommended Prior Activities

- None

## Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
<b>ancient Rome</b>	<i>noun</i>	civilization founded on the Mediterranean Sea, lasting from the 8th century BCE to about 476 CE.
<b>civilian</b>	<i>noun</i>	person who is not in the military.
<b>consul</b>	<i>noun</i>	one of two chief officials of the ancient Roman republic who were elected every year.
<b>emperor</b>	<i>noun</i>	ruler of an empire.
<b>government</b>	<i>noun</i>	system or order of a nation, state, or other political unit.
<b>patrician</b>	<i>noun</i>	a noble or person of high rank.
<b>plebeian</b>	<i>noun</i>	common or low-ranking person.
<b>Roman Empire</b>	<i>noun</i>	(27 BCE-476 CE) period in the history of ancient Rome when the state was ruled by an emperor.

## For Further Exploration

### Video

- [National Geographic Channel: Killing Jesus](#)

## Partner



© 1996–2016 National Geographic Society. All rights reserved.