CHAPTER 6A ANCIENT ROME AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

The Roman Republic

BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you read about Hellenistic culture. In this section, you will read about the Roman republic.

AS YOU READ

Use the chart below to take notes on early Rome.

### TERMS AND NAMES

- **republic**: Government in which citizens have the right to select their own leader
- **patrician**: Aristocratic landowner
- **plebeian**: Farmer, artisan, or merchant; commoner
- **tribune**: Official who helped the plebeians protect their rights
- **consul**: Official who was like a king
- **senate**: Aristocratic branch of Rome’s government
- **dictator**: Roman leader who had absolute power to make laws and command the army for a brief period
- **legion**: Military unit of the ancient Roman army
- **Punic Wars**: Series of wars between Rome and Carthage
- **Hannibal**: Carthaginian general who invaded northern Italy

### EARLY ROME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>On river Midpoint of the Mediterranean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Origins of Rome (pages 155–156)

**Where was Rome founded?**

The city of Rome was founded by the Latin people on a river in the center of Italy. It was a good location, which gave them a chance to control all of Italy. It put them near to the midpoint of the Mediterranean Sea. Two other groups lived in what is now Italy: the Greeks in the south, and the *Etruscans* in the north. The Romans borrowed some ideas from both peoples.

1. What were the advantages of Rome’s location?

The Early Republic (pages 156–157)

**How was Rome governed?**

In 509 B.C., Romans overthrew the Etruscan king who had ruled over his people and over Rome. The Romans said Rome was now a republic. The people had the power to vote and choose leaders.
Two groups struggled for power in the new republic. One was the **patricians**. They were the *aristocratic* landowners who held most of the power. The other group was the **plebeians**. They were the common farmers, *artisans*, and merchants who made up most of the population. At first, the patricians had the most power. Over time, the plebeians got the right to form their own *assembly*. They could elect representatives called *tribunes*.

The basis for Roman law was the *Twelve Tables*. This set of rules said that all free citizens were protected by law.

The government had three parts, Two **consuls**, or officials, were elected each year. They led the government and the army.

The second part of the government was the **senate**. It usually had 300 members chosen from the upper classes. The senate passed laws.

The third, and most democratic, part of government was the assemblies. The assemblies included members from different parts of society, such as citizen-soldiers or plebeians. The assemblies could also make laws.

If there were a crisis, the republic could appoint a **dictator**. This was a leader with absolute power. The dictator made laws and commanded the army. But his power lasted for only six months.

Any citizen who owned property had to serve in the army. Roman soldiers were organized into military units called legions. The Roman **legion** was made up of some 5,000 heavily armed foot soldiers.

**Rome Spreads Its Power** (pages 158–159)

**How did Rome spread its power?**

In the fourth century B.C., Rome began to get larger. Within 150 years, it had captured almost all of Italy. Rome allowed some of the conquered peoples to enjoy the benefits of citizenship. With its good location, Rome saw a growth in trade. This brought it into conflict with Carthage, a trading city in North Africa.

From 264 to 146 B.C., Rome and Carthage fought three bitter wars called the **Punic Wars**. In the first, Rome won control of the island of Sicily. In the second, Hannibal, a brilliant Carthaginian general invaded northern Italy. He and his soldiers did much damage. But he was unable to take Rome. It took an equally brilliant Roman general, Scipio, to defeat him. By the time of the third war, Carthage was no longer a threat to Rome. Even so, Rome destroyed the city and made its people slaves. Carthage became a new Roman province.

**3.** What happened as a result of the wars with Carthage?