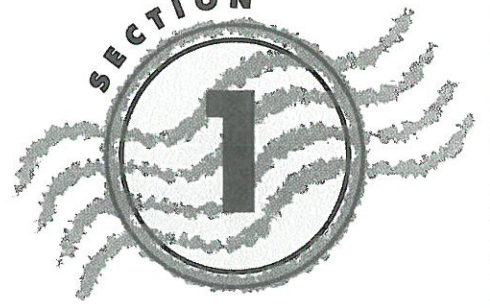


# The Roman Republic

SECTION  
1



**BEFORE  
YOU  
READ**

## Reach Into Your Background

Remember when you started the school year? What did it feel like to be in a new class, perhaps in a new school, and

to begin new subjects? Was it exciting? Was it scary? What is it like to face a new world, with new challenges and new responsibilities?

## Questions to Explore

1. Why did the early Romans form a republic?
2. Why did the Roman Republic collapse?

## Key Terms

republic	consul
patrician	veto
plebeian	dictator

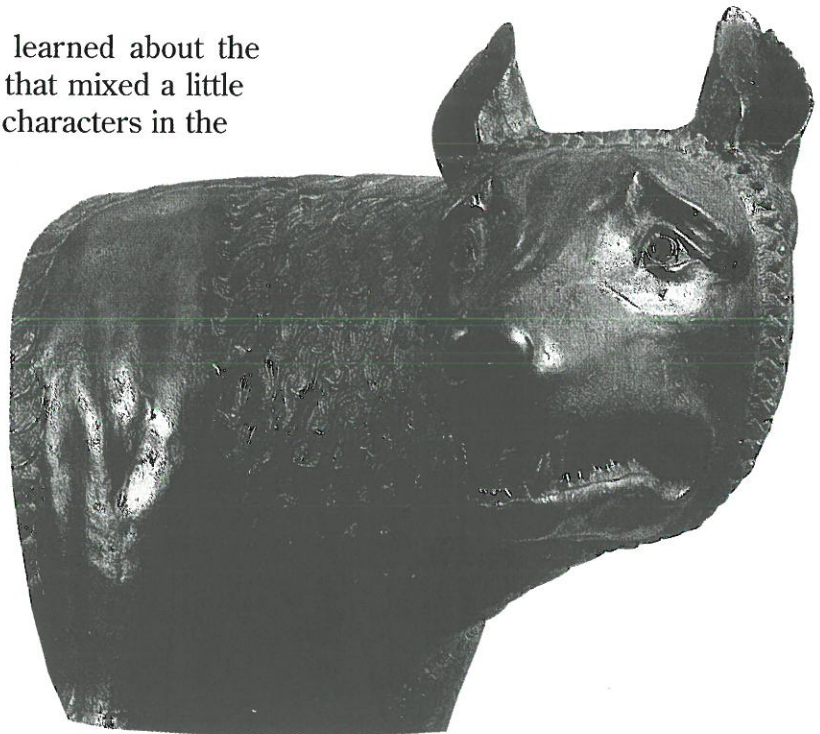
## Key People and Places

Romulus and Remus	
Etruscans	
Julius Caesar	Italy
Octavian	Carthage
Tiber River	Gaul
Rome	

**A**mericans learn about the founding of their nation as young people. They read about the 13 British colonies, the battles of Lexington and Concord, and the leadership of George Washington. They learn about the final victory of the new nation, the United States of America.

In ancient times, young Romans also learned about the founding of their state. But it was a story that mixed a little fact with a great deal of legend. The main characters in the story were twin brothers, Romulus and Remus. They were the children of a princess and Mars, the Roman god of war. A jealous king feared that the twins would someday seize power from him. He ordered them to be drowned. However, the gods protected the infants. A female wolf rescued them. Then a shepherd found the twins and raised them as his own. The twins grew up, killed the king, and went off to build their own city. At a place where seven hills rise above the Tiber River, they founded the city of Rome.

▼ This bronze statue honors the wolf that rescued and cared for Romulus and Remus in the legend of Rome's founding.





## READ ACTIVELY



**Predict** From the story of Romulus and Remus, what do you think the Roman people valued?

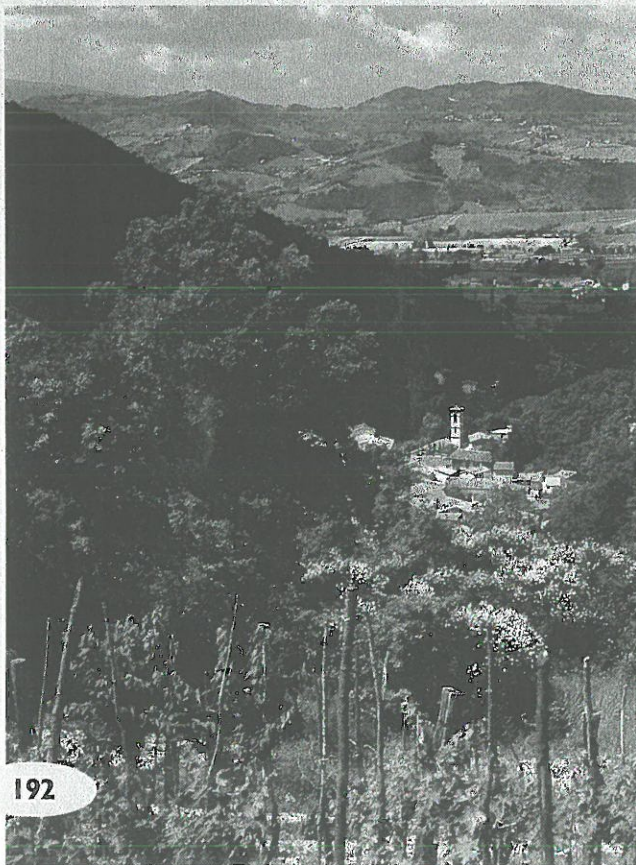
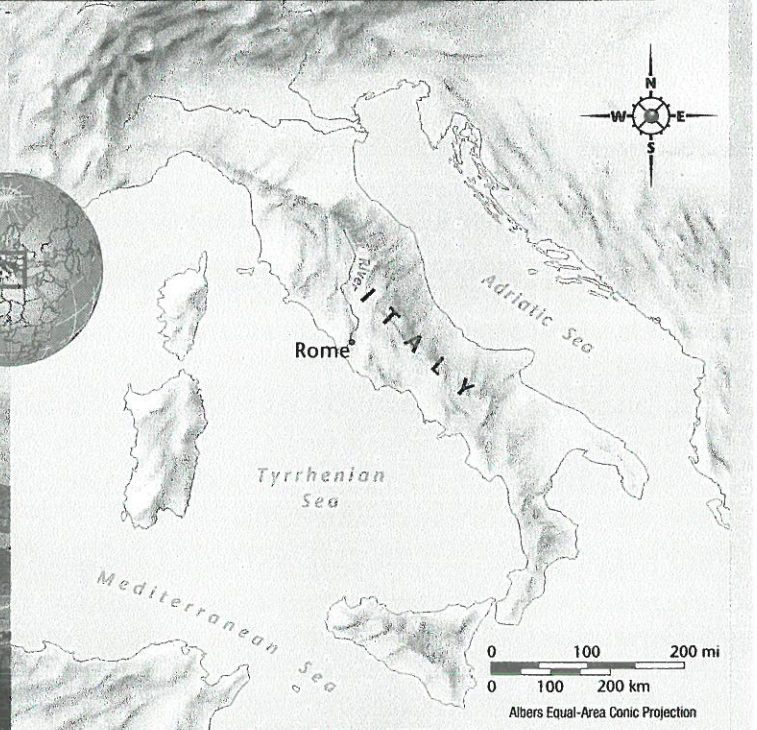
## Rome's Geographic Setting

We can learn much from the story of Rome's founding—even if it is mostly legend. We learn that the Romans valued loyalty and justice. People who broke the law would be severely punished, just as the king was punished. We also learn that the Romans believed that the favor of the gods was important.

The first settlers on Rome's seven hills were not thinking about building a great empire. They chose that site because it seemed to be a good place to live. The hills made it easy to defend. The soil was fertile. There was a river. But as centuries passed, the people of Rome discovered that the location of their city gave them other advantages. Rome was at the center of the long, narrow peninsula we now call Italy. Italy was at the center of the Mediterranean Sea. And the Mediterranean Sea was at the center of the known Western world.

### Ancient Italy About 600 B.C.

**Map Study** Look at the map. Notice that Roman civilization arose on the Italian peninsula in southern Europe. The fertile soil of Italy's countryside (below) supported the olive trees and grape vines that fed a growing population. **Location** Which of Italy's coasts is Rome closest to?





## Rome's Beginnings

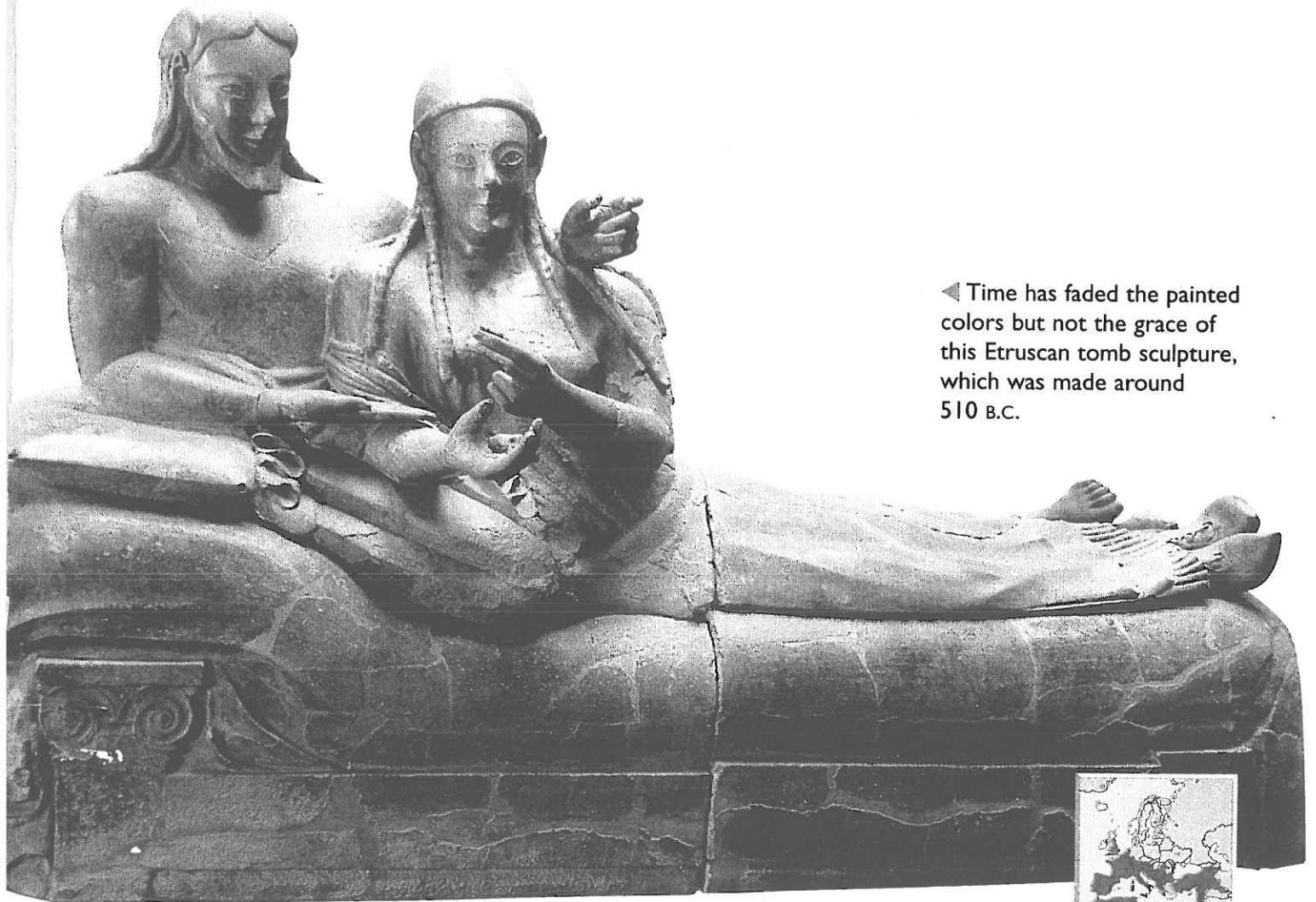
We know very little about the people who actually founded Rome. However, we do know that their first settlements date from about the 900s B.C. Rome grew slowly, as the Romans fought their neighbors for land.

About 600 B.C., a mysterious people, the Etruscans (ee TRUHS kuhnz), took power in Rome. They spoke a language totally unlike any other in Italy. Although we have many examples of their writing, we can read very little of it. Where had they come from? Even today, no one is sure. For a time, Etruscans ruled as kings of Rome. However, in 509 B.C., the Romans revolted and drove the Etruscans from power.

Although the Romans defeated the Etruscans, the victors adopted Etruscan ideas. For example, many of the Roman gods were originally Etruscan. The Romans also borrowed the Greek alphabet that the Etruscans used. The Roman garment called the toga came from the Etruscans.



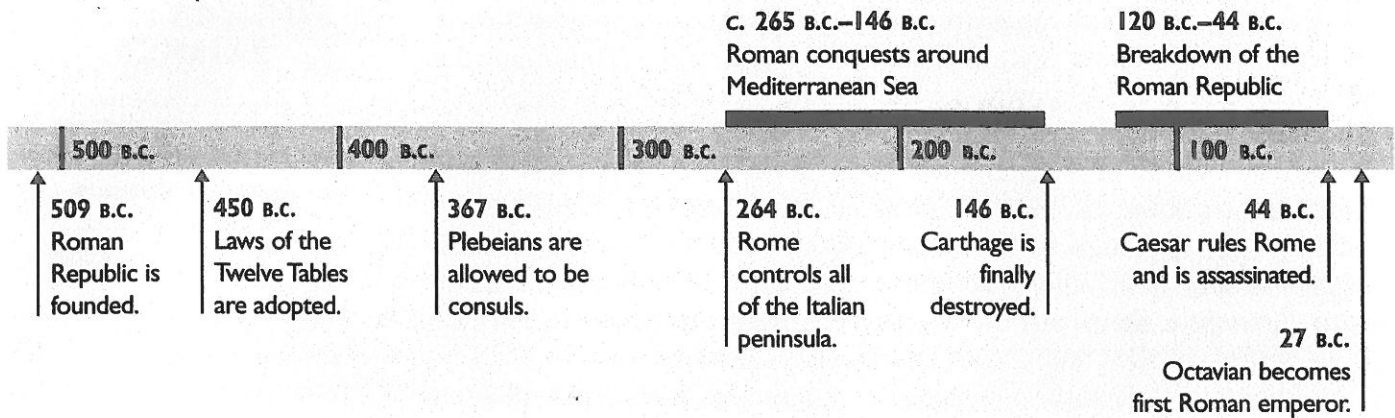
**The Roman Arch** Roman architects made great use of the curved structure called the arch. Arches span openings in buildings. An arch can hold great weight above it. The Romans probably learned about arches from the Etruscans. Beginning in the 300s B.C., Romans used arches for water channels, bridges, and later for monuments.



◀ Time has faded the painted colors but not the grace of this Etruscan tomb sculpture, which was made around 510 B.C.



# The Roman Republic



▲ The Roman Republic lasted for almost 500 years. By what year did Rome control all of the Italian peninsula?

## Rome Becomes a Republic

After driving the last Etruscan king from the throne, the Romans vowed never again to put so much trust in kings. They created a new form of government, a republic. In a **republic**, citizens who have the right to vote select their leaders. The leaders rule in the name of the people.

In the Roman Republic, the most powerful part of the government was a group called the senate. At first, the senate was made up only of 300 upper-class men called **patricians**. Ordinary citizens were known as **plebeians**. In the early republic, plebeians could not hold office or be senators. The government was led by two men called **consuls**. Before 367 B.C., plebeians could not be consuls. The senate advised the consuls on foreign affairs, laws, and finances, among other things.

Consuls almost always did what the senate wanted. Consuls ruled for one year only. Power was divided equally between them. Both had to agree before the government could take any action. If only one consul said "Veto" ("I forbid it"), the matter was dropped. Today, we use the word **veto** to mean the rejection of a bill by the President.

The Romans knew that their government might not work if the two consuls disagreed in an emergency. For this reason, Roman law held that a dictator could be appointed to handle an emergency. A **dictator** was an official who had all the powers of a king but could hold office for only six months.

**Patricians Versus Plebeians** Through wars of conquest, the Roman Republic extended its control across Italy. Within about 250 years, Rome had conquered almost all of Italy. This caused growing troubles between patricians and plebeians.

Patricians and plebeians had different attitudes. Patricians thought of themselves as leaders. They fought hard to keep control over the government. Plebeians believed they had a right to be respected and treated fairly. Plebeians did not trust the actions of the patrician senate.

**READ ACTIVELY**

**Ask Questions** What would you like to know about the differences between patricians and plebeians?



They felt the senate was often unfair to the plebeians. Therefore, plebeians formed their own groups to protect their interests.

Many patricians grew wealthy because of Rome's conquests. They took riches from defeated people. Then, they bought land from small farmers and created huge farms for themselves. Plebeians did not work on these farms. Rather, the work was done by slaves brought back from conquests. Many plebeian farmers found themselves without work. The cities, especially Rome, were filled with jobless plebeians.

Eventually, angry plebeians refused to fight in the Roman army. Then the patricians gave in to one of their main demands. This was a written code of laws called the Laws of the Twelve Tables. The Twelve Tables applied equally to all citizens. They were hung in marketplaces so everyone could know what the laws were. Despite this victory, the plebeians never managed to gain power equal to the patricians.

**Master of the Mediterranean** While patricians and plebeians fought for power in Rome, Roman armies were conquering new territories. Roman armies invaded the North African empire of the city of Carthage. After a series of bloody wars, they destroyed the empire of Carthage. They also seized control of Spain. Other Roman armies conquered Greece. Then, the Romans turned their attention to the warlike tribes of Gaul, which is now France.

▼ Carthage had a formidable weapon—the elephant. War elephants easily smashed through enemy lines. They also terrified enemy soldiers. Little wonder, then, that the powerful Roman army took so long to conquer Carthage.

## The End of the Republic

Even though it ruled a large area, by 120 B.C. Rome was in trouble. Some leaders tried to break up estates and give land to the plebeians. The patricians fought back, and plebeian leaders were murdered.

In the next 75 years, a number of the most successful generals gathered private armies around them and fought for power. Consuls no longer respected each other's veto power. Rome dissolved into civil war, with private armies roaming the streets and murdering their enemies. As Rome seemed about to break up, Julius Caesar arose as a strong leader.



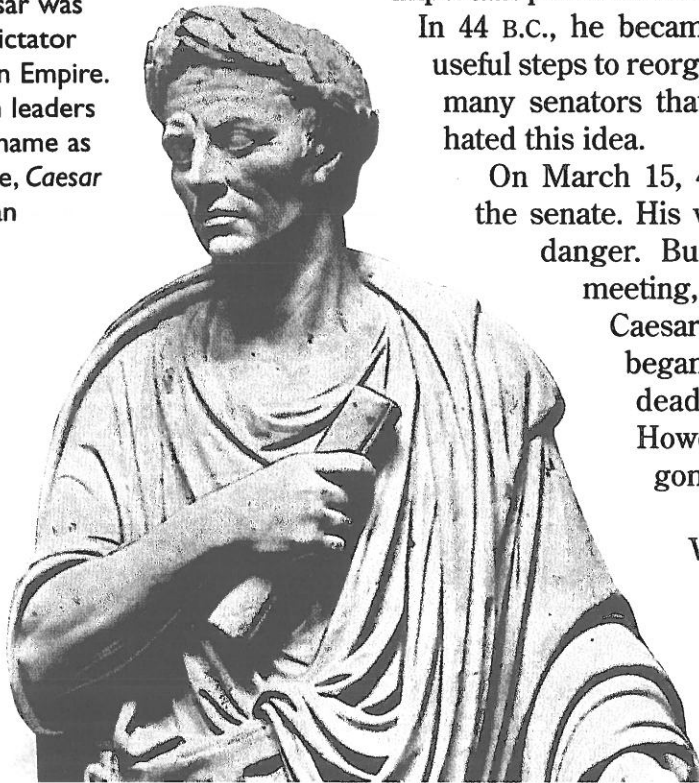


## READ ACTIVELY



**Predict** Why do you think many Romans feared Julius Caesar?

► Julius Caesar was a powerful dictator of the Roman Empire. Later Roman leaders adopted his name as a title. In time, *Caesar* came to mean “emperor.”



**The Rise of Julius Caesar** Caesar was a smart leader, eager for power. From 58 B.C. to 51 B.C., he led his army in conquering Gaul. He killed, enslaved, and uprooted millions of Gauls. He captured huge amounts of gold. His strong leadership won him the loyalty of his troops. They would follow him anywhere—even back to Rome to seize power. In 49 B.C., Caesar returned to Italy. War broke out between Caesar and the senate. Caesar won the war and became dictator of the Roman world in 48 B.C.

**The Death of a Dictator** For four years, Caesar took over important public offices. In 45 B.C., he became the only consul. In 44 B.C., he became dictator for life. Caesar took many useful steps to reorganize the government. But it seemed to many senators that Rome once again had a king. They hated this idea.

On March 15, 44 B.C., Caesar attended a meeting of the senate. His wife had urged him not to go, fearing danger. But Caesar insisted on going. At the meeting, a group of senators gathered around Caesar. Suddenly, they pulled out knives and began stabbing him. He fell to the ground, dead. Caesar had been a great leader. However, many Romans felt that he had gone too far, too fast, in gathering power.

Civil war followed Caesar's death. When war ended 13 years later, Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, held power. In 27 B.C., the senate awarded Octavian the title Augustus, which means “highly respected.” He was the first emperor of Rome.

## SECTION 1 REVIEW

- 1. Define** (a) republic, (b) patrician, (c) plebeian, (d) consul, (e) veto, (f) dictator.
- 2. Identify** (a) Romulus and Remus, (b) Etruscans, (c) Julius Caesar, (d) Octavian, (e) Tiber River, (f) Rome, (g) Italy, (h) Carthage, (i) Gaul.

- 3.** Why did the Romans want the republic to have two leaders rather than one?
- 4.** What factors enabled Julius Caesar to come to power?

### Critical Thinking

- 5. Drawing Conclusions** Why would the Roman senate be likely to lead the opposition to Caesar's growing power?

### Activity

- 6. Writing to Learn** You are sitting in the senate on March 15, 44 B.C., when Julius Caesar enters the chamber. Write a journal entry noting what happened next, including the reasons for the action.