

Ancient Rome: SENATE

A new system of **government** began when the **Roman Republic** overthrew the king and took power in 509 BCE. The **Senate** became the most powerful governing body instead of one **monarch**. It was typically made up of important and wealthy men from powerful Roman families.

POWER

The Senate's role in Rome changed over time. They advised the **king** in early Rome. They became more powerful during the **Roman Republic**. They could only make "**decrees**" that were usually obeyed by Romans, even though they were not **laws**. The Senate controlled the spending of state **money**, making it very powerful. During the **Roman Empire** the Senate had less power and the **emperor** held the true power. He sat between the two **consuls** and could speak whenever he wanted.



ELIGIBILITY

Senators in Rome were not elected, but **appointed**. An elected official, the **censor**, appointed new senators throughout much of the Roman Republic. The emperor later controlled who became **senators**. Only men from the **patrician** class could become senators in early Rome. This later changed to include the common class, or **plebeians**. Senators were men who had previously been elected officials, or **magistrates**. They were required to have over one million **sesterces** in wealth during the rule of Emperor **Augustus**. If they came into misfortune and lost their wealth, they were expected to **resign**.

NUMBER

There were only 300 senators throughout most of the Roman Republic. This number increased to 600 and then 900 under Julius Caesar. Roman senators were appointed for life, but could be removed for **corruption** or certain crimes.

REQUIREMENTS

Senators were expected to be of high **moral** character and **wealthy** because they were not paid for their jobs. They were expected to spend their wealth on helping the Roman state. Senators were not allowed to be bankers, participate in foreign trade, or have committed a crime.

PRIVILEGES

Senators did not get paid, but it was still considered a life-long goal of many Romans to become senators. It was a position of prestige and respect. Only senators were allowed to wear a **purple** striped toga and special shoes. They had special seating at public events and could become high ranking **judges**. Senators were not allowed to leave Italy unless they had special permission from the senate.



DECREES

Senators met to **debate** current matters. They issued **decrees**, or advice, to the current **consuls**. Each senator present spoke about the subject in order of **seniority**, prior to issuing a decree.

VOTING

After every senator had a chance to speak on an issue, a **vote** was taken. Votes had to be taken by nightfall. Sometimes senators talked for a long time, known as a **filibuster**. They did this to try and delay the vote on an issue. If they talked long enough, a vote could not be taken. Senators were occasionally able to move the side of the speaker or the chamber to the side they supported. The side with the most senators won the vote.

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE (80 BCE)

Senate (300+)	Managed foreign policy and controlled policy; Proposed, but could not pass laws; Advised consuls.
Consuls (2)	Managed the army and government; Each could veto the other; Generally served a one-year term.
Praetors (8)	Judges; also administered the law; could become a provincial governor after leaving office
Aediles (16)	In charge of specific aspects of government, such as buildings, food supply, or games
Quaestors (20)	Managed government finances and administration
Tribunes (10)	Represented the plebians
Ordinary People	Townfolk, farmers, soldiers, freed slaves
Slaves	Considered possessions with no rights; included farm workers, mine workers, gladiators, and servants

Name _____

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DEFINE: Create a definition for each term, as used in the article.

1. Decree	
2. Filibuster	
3. Plebeians	
4. Consuls	
5. Praetors	
6. Patricians	

MULTIPLE CHOICE: Choose the best answer.

7. Which of the following Roman would be **most** eligible to be a senator?
- A. A patrician with 1,000 sesterces in wealth.
 - B. A patrician with over a million sesterces, but never served in an elected position.
 - C. A plebeian who had over a million sesterces in wealth.
 - D. A patrician who had over a million sesterces and previously served in an elected position.
8. How did the senate's role change in Rome over time?
- A. The senate advised the king in early Rome, but made laws during the Roman Empire.
 - B. The senate gained more power during the Roman Empire.
 - C. The senate had less power during the Roman Empire because the emperor had the true power.
 - D. The senate made laws during the Roman Empire, but could not during early Rome
9. How many senators were there throughout **most** of the Roman Republic?
- A. 100
 - B. 600
 - C. 300
 - D. 900
10. Which would **NOT** cause a Roman senator to lose his job, according to the article?
- A. He experienced misfortune and lost his wealth.
 - B. He was convicted of corruption.
 - C. He was convicted of certain crimes.
 - D. He was not paid for his work.
11. Which of the following was **NOT** a special privilege of a Roman senator?
- A. He was well-paid by the government.
 - B. He could wear a purple toga.
 - C. He had special seating at public events.
 - D. He could become a high ranking judge.
12. How did Romans decide who would speak in the senate?
- A. The oldest members were allowed to speak first.
 - B. They pulled names from a box.
 - C. Whoever wanted to spoke first.
 - D. They spoke by regions.
13. What was the **main** purpose of a filibuster?
- A. To anger members of the senate.
 - B. To delay a vote on an issue.
 - C. To persuade senators to vote.
 - D. To eliminate someone from the senate

