Power Shifts in Rome

Trace the conflicts that changed Rome's government.

WH.2.3 "Trace the changes that culminated in the end of the Republic and the formation of the Roman Empire."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline causes of political or military conflict. Circle three turning points, then number them in the order they occurred to trace how power moved toward one ruler.

From Republic to Empire

1. Rome's victories around the Mediterranean brought wealth, enslaved workers, and new provinces. Yet the gains did not reach all citizens equally. Wealthy Romans expanded large farms, while many small farmers lost their land and moved to the city. Crowds of poor citizens needed work, and leaders competed for their support. In the second century BCE, the Gracchus brothers proposed reforms that included distributing public land to poorer citizens. Powerful opponents resisted, and both brothers died in political violence. Their deaths showed that disputes once settled through political debate could now turn deadly, weakening trust in the Republic's institutions.

2. As Rome's wars continued, commanders recruited men with few resources and promised rewards, often land, after service. Soldiers increasingly depended on generals to secure those rewards. Rival commanders could therefore use loyal armies in political struggles instead of accepting decisions made in Rome. In 49 BCE, Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon River with his army, defying the Senate's demand that he surrender his command. He defeated his rival Pompey's forces in a civil war and became dictator for life in 44 BCE. His rise showed how military power could overwhelm the Republic's limits on any one leader.

3. After senators assassinated Caesar in 44 BCE, they hoped to restore the Republic, but his death brought another struggle for power. Octavian, Caesar's adopted heir, joined Mark Antony and Lepidus in an alliance that defeated Caesar's killers. The allies then split; Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BCE. In 27 BCE, the Senate gave Octavian the title Augustus and broad powers. Elections and the Senate continued, but Augustus controlled the army and major decisions. The Republic's old offices remained, yet power rested mainly with one ruler. Rome had become an empire in its government as well as its reach.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Rome's expansion help create the land conflict that weakened the Republic?

2. Why did soldiers' dependence on their generals make it harder for the Senate to control political conflicts?

3. Why did Caesar's assassination fail to restore the Republic?

4. How did Rome's government change after Octavian's victory, even though elections and the Senate continued?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one paragraph of 70 to 100 words arguing which two changes in the passage did the most to weaken the Republic. Explain how those changes worked together and use at least three specific facts from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Power Shifts in Rome

HIGH SCHOOL · WH.2.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline causes of political or military conflict. Circle three turning points, then number them in the order they occurred to trace how power moved toward one ruler. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Rome's expansion help create the land conflict that weakened the Republic?	**Expansion brought wealth and enslaved workers. Wealthy Romans expanded large farms while many small farmers lost land, leading to contested reforms and political violence.**
2	Why did soldiers' dependence on their generals make it harder for the Senate to control political conflicts?	**Generals could secure promised rewards, so soldiers became loyal to them. Commanders could then use their armies in political struggles rather than accept decisions made in Rome.**
3	Why did Caesar's assassination fail to restore the Republic?	**His death led to another struggle for power. Octavian and his allies defeated Caesar's killers, and Octavian later defeated Antony and Cleopatra.**
4	How did Rome's government change after Octavian's victory, even though elections and the Senate continued?	**The Senate gave Octavian, now Augustus, broad powers. He controlled the army and major decisions, so power rested mainly with one ruler despite the survival of republican offices.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I think the loss of small farms and the growing loyalty of soldiers to generals did the most damage together. As wealthy Romans expanded large farms, poorer citizens faced hardship and leaders fought for their support. At the same time, commanders promised land to men who served in their armies, making soldiers depend on them for rewards. A general with a loyal army could use force when political disputes grew sharp. Caesar's defiance of the Senate in 49 BCE shows how that combination helped push Rome toward one-person rule.

Accept other pairs of changes if the paragraph explains how they interacted, supports the argument with at least three accurate facts from the passage, and stays within 70 to 100 words. For the marking job, accept any three historically ordered turning points that show power shifting toward one ruler.