Power in Rome

How the Roman Republic shaped ideas about self-government

7.C.6.2.B "Describe the government of the Roman Republic and its contribution to the development of representative self-government, including separation of powers, liberty, the rule of law, and the concept of civic duty."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline ways Romans shared or checked government power, circle protections for citizens, and put a star beside one example of civic duty to trace ideas that shaped representative self-government.

Who Held Power in the Roman Republic?

1. Picture a Roman citizen walking to a public meeting in the second century BCE. Rome had no king. It was a republic in which some citizens voted for officials to act on their behalf. Citizen assemblies elected two consuls to lead the government and command armies. Each consul could block the other's actions, and their terms lasted one year. The Senate, made up mainly of wealthy, experienced men, advised leaders and influenced spending and foreign policy. Assemblies also voted on laws, so no single office controlled every decision.

2. Power was also limited by written law. Around 450 BCE, Romans posted the Twelve Tables so citizens could know important legal rules. Officials were expected to apply laws rather than decide every case by personal whim. Citizens had certain protections, including the right to appeal some official punishments to a citizen assembly. These limits helped shape later ideas about the rule of law and liberty. Yet Roman liberty was unequal: women could not vote, enslaved people had no political rights, and noncitizens lacked citizens' voting rights.

3. A republic also needed people to take part. Male citizens could vote in assemblies, and many served in the army; some held public office. These acts were forms of civic duty, or responsibility to the community. Still, wealthy Romans often had more influence than poorer citizens, and the Senate was not elected by all the people. Later governments drew on Roman examples, such as elected officials, shared authority, and written laws, while expanding political rights beyond those available in Rome. Representative self-government depends on both public participation and limits on power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the two consuls and citizen assemblies keep one person from controlling the government?

2. How did posting the Twelve Tables support the rule of law instead of rule by an official's whim?

3. What protection supported a citizen's liberty, and what limit shows that Roman liberty was unequal?

4. How did voting serve as a civic duty and support representative self-government in Rome?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Design a student council inspired by the Roman Republic. In four or five sentences, explain who makes decisions and who can check them, name a written rule that protects a student's liberty, and describe one civic duty students would perform.

ANSWER KEY

Power in Rome

GRADE 7 · 7.C.6.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline ways Romans shared or checked government power, circle protections for citizens, and put a star beside one example of civic duty to trace ideas that shaped representative self-government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the two consuls and citizen assemblies keep one person from controlling the government?	**Each consul could block the other, and their terms lasted only one year. Citizen assemblies elected officials and voted on laws.**
2	How did posting the Twelve Tables support the rule of law instead of rule by an official's whim?	**Posting the laws let citizens know the rules, which officials were expected to apply rather than making decisions by personal whim.**
3	What protection supported a citizen's liberty, and what limit shows that Roman liberty was unequal?	**Citizens could appeal some official punishments to an assembly. Women could not vote, enslaved people had no political rights, and noncitizens lacked citizens' voting rights.**
4	How did voting serve as a civic duty and support representative self-government in Rome?	**Male citizens took part by voting in assemblies to choose officials who acted on their behalf.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Students elect two council leaders to plan events, but either leader can stop a plan until both discuss it again. The full council votes before a plan becomes a rule. A written rule gives every student time to speak at a meeting, even when others disagree. Students have a civic duty to vote in council elections and listen to the candidates.

Accept other passage-based examples of shared power, legal protections, or civic duty. For the open task, look for a clear check on power, a written protection for students, and a specific way students participate.