Who Holds Power?

Read, mark, and evaluate government in the Roman Republic.

MWH.C.1.1.D "Evaluate the contributions of the Roman civilization to law and government by describing the Roman Republic's development of the principle of separation of powers, the concept of civic duty, written laws, and the rule of law."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail about written laws and one about the rule of law. Circle two details about divided power, then number two details about civic duty or its limits.

Rules and Responsibilities in Rome

1. Imagine a farmer in the Roman Republic arguing that a neighbor has taken a strip of land. If rules exist only in a magistrate's memory, the farmer may not know what claims are allowed. Around 451 to 450 BCE, Romans set down the Twelve Tables, laws displayed publicly in Rome. Their rules addressed matters such as property, debt, and family relations. Public writing made legal rules easier to know and cite, although harsh penalties and unequal treatment remained. The rule of law meant that officials, too, were expected to act under laws rather than simply follow personal wishes.

2. When a public decision affected many Romans, no single office was supposed to control every step. Citizens elected two consuls each year to lead the government and armies, and each consul could block the other's actions. Citizen assemblies elected officials and voted on laws. The Senate, a council dominated by wealthy men, advised officials and wielded major influence over money and foreign affairs. These bodies did not form modern, fully separate branches, but their different roles and checks helped distribute power. In emergencies, Romans could appoint a dictator for a limited term, showing that this arrangement could also be suspended.

3. Public office was not the only way to serve the republic. Male citizens could vote, serve in the army, or take public office. Romans praised such work as a civic duty, a responsibility to the community. Yet participation was unequal. Women could not vote or hold public office, and enslaved people had no political rights. Wealthy families often held the most influence, even among citizens. Rome's written rules and divided authority helped later thinkers imagine governments constrained by law, but Rome did not give everyone equal power. Its example offers both useful ideas and warnings about who gets included.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could posting the Twelve Tables help the farmer in the passage, and why might the result still be unfair?

2. How did citizen assemblies and consuls have different roles in government? Explain how those roles divided power.

3. How did the two consuls check each other's power, and what emergency practice could weaken the usual division of power?

4. How did civic duty support the republic, and what limits kept participation unequal?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A new city is rebuilding after a flood. In four or five sentences, propose a government plan that uses written laws, the rule of law, shared powers, and civic duty. Explain one way your plan would avoid an exclusion seen in Rome.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.C.1.1.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail about written laws and one about the rule of law. Circle two details about divided power, then number two details about civic duty or its limits. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could posting the Twelve Tables help the farmer in the passage, and why might the result still be unfair?	**The farmer could learn and cite a public rule about property, but Roman laws could still impose harsh penalties or unequal treatment.**
2	How did citizen assemblies and consuls have different roles in government? Explain how those roles divided power.	**Assemblies voted on laws and elected officials, while consuls led the government and armies. Neither held all of those powers alone.**
3	How did the two consuls check each other's power, and what emergency practice could weaken the usual division of power?	**Either consul could block the other's actions. In emergencies, Romans could appoint a dictator for a limited term.**
4	How did civic duty support the republic, and what limits kept participation unequal?	**Male citizens could vote, serve in the army, or hold office. Women could not vote or hold office, enslaved people had no political rights, and wealthy families held greater influence.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The city will post its rebuilding rules in public places and online so residents can check them. An elected council will write the rules, while two elected coordinators will carry them out and review each other's spending. A court can stop coordinators who break the rules, so officials must obey the law. Residents will serve on volunteer cleanup teams and vote on the rebuilding budget. All adult residents, including women, can vote and seek office, unlike women in the Roman Republic.

Accept other passage-supported evaluations that distinguish Rome's governing ideals from its unequal participation. For the open task, look for a specific role for each of the four principles and a concrete response to a Roman exclusion.