



Roman Senate and Roman People
The Consent of the Governed

Introduction	
<p>The Senate maintained a prominent place in Roman society, and served as an advisory council for kings, consuls, and emperors. In this lesson, students will learn about the role of the Roman Senate in governing the Roman people. In particular, the lesson will focus on the necessity of the government to be based on the consent of the governed in order to maintain a democratic order. To properly contextualize this relationship, students will virtually visit two locations: the Curia Julia, home of the Roman Senate, and the Imperial Fora, the public square in ancient Rome.</p>	
<p>Standards Connections:</p> <p>Describe the political and social institutions of the Roman Republic and analyze why Rome was transformed from republic to empire.</p>	<p>Compelling Question:</p> <p>What is the importance of gaining the consent of the governed?</p>
<p>Lesson Objectives:</p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in a class discussion about social class and governance in Roman society, the gender inequities that existed within Roman society, and the similarities between Roman political structures and the political structures of the United States. • Engage in a close reading of the Roman Constitution • Analyze the relationship between the government and the governed in a democracy. 	
Materials	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roman Forum, Rome Reborn Virtual Reality Application • Oculus Go Headset • Access to YouTube • Source A: Polybius; and Source Graphic Organizer 	
Learning Plan	
<p>Activities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show students a five-minute introduction video on the political structure of Roman society (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3B5pGiWptb4). After viewing, lead a whole-class discussion asking students to questions about the relationship between social class and governance in Roman society, the gender inequities that existed within Roman society, and the similarities between Roman political structures and the political structures of the United States. 2. Next, provide students with Source A, an excerpt from the Roman historian Polybius. In this brief excerpt, Polybius explains the structure of the Roman government. Ask students to engage in a close reading (https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/close-reading-protocol) of the Source and complete a graphic organizer of the powers and checks on powers found in the Roman Constitution between the Roman Senate and the people. 3. Then, direct students to visit the Curia Julia in the Rome Reborn: The Roman Forum application and click on “Curia Julia Exterior” button to listen to Professor Bernard Frischer describe the history of the building. Then, ask 	

students to click the “Curia Julia Interior” button and continue to listen to Professor Frischer explain the operation of the Senate.

4. After their visit to the Curia Julia, have students switch to the **Rome Reborn: Flight Over Rome** application and direct students to the “Government” tab and have them click on “The Imperial Fora” to listen to Professor Frischer describe the geographic and political functions of the fora.
5. Ask students to return to their worksheet and add any details based on their virtual visit to the Curia Julia and the Imperial Fora.
6. At the end of class, ask students to use the information from their worksheet and provide a brief answer to the following question: How did Roman citizens ensure that those that govern them attained the consent from the people?

Assessment Suggestions

Based on students’ understandings of the political and social structure of Roman society, ask students to develop 12 laws that they would suggest as a Roman Senator advising the consul.

Extensions

Continue to discuss with students the notion of the “consent of the governed.” Ask students to consider in large or small groups questions such as:

- Who in Roman society was granting consent? Does that matter?
- Is the “consent of the people” even really possible in a large democracy such as Rome or the United States?
- Can government be effective if it only exercised power with the consent of the people?
- What other spaces in their lives ought to be governed through the “consent of the governed”?

12 The consuls, previous to leading out their legions, exercise authority in Rome over all public affairs, since all the other magistrates except the tribunes are under them and bound to obey them, and it is they who introduce embassies to the **senate**. Besides this it is they who consult the **senate** on matters of urgency, they who carry out in detail the provisions of its decrees. Again as concerns all affairs of state administered by the **people** it is their duty to take these under their charge, to summon assemblies, to introduce measures, and to preside over the execution of the popular decrees. As for preparation for war and the general conduct of operations in the field, here their power is almost uncontrolled; for they are empowered to make what demands they choose on the allies, to appoint military tribunes, to levy soldiers and select those who are fittest for service. They also have the right of inflicting, when on active service, punishment on anyone under their command; and they are authorized to spend any sum they decide upon from the public funds, being accompanied by a quaestor who faithfully executes their instructions. So that if one looks at this part of the administration alone, one may reasonably pronounce the constitution to be a pure monarchy or kingship. I may remark that any changes in these matters or in others of which I am about to speak that may be made in present or future times do not in any way affect the truth of the views I here state.

13 To pass to the **senate**. In the first place it has the control of the treasury, all revenue and expenditure being regulated by it. For with the exception of payments made to the consuls, the quaestors are not allowed to disburse for any particular object without a decree of the **senate**. And even the item of expenditure which is far heavier and more important than any other < the outlay every five years by the censors on public works, whether constructions or repairs < is under the control of the **senate**, which makes a grant to the censors for the purpose. Similarly crimes committed in Italy which require a public investigation, such as treason, conspiracy, poisoning, and assassination, are under the jurisdiction of the **senate**. Also if any private person or community in Italy is in need of arbitration or indeed claims damages or requires succour or protection, the **senate** attends to all such matters. It also occupies itself with the dispatch of all embassies sent to countries outside of Italy for the purpose either of settling differences, or of offering friendly advice, or indeed of imposing demands, or of receiving submission, or of declaring war; and in like manner with respect to embassies arriving in Rome it decides what reception and what answer should be given to them. All these matters are in the hands of the **senate**, nor have the **people** anything whatever to do with them. So that again to one residing in Rome during the absence of the consuls the constitution appears to be entirely aristocratic; and this is the conviction of many Greek states and many of the kings, as the **senate** manages all business connected with them.

14 After this we are naturally inclined to ask what part in the constitution is left for the **people**, considering that the **senate** controls all the particular matters I mentioned, and, what is most important, manages all matters of revenue and expenditure, and considering that the consuls again have uncontrolled authority as regards armaments and operations in the field. But nevertheless there is a part and a very important part left for the **people**. For it is the **people** which alone has the right to confer honours and inflict punishment, the only bonds by which kingdoms and states and in a word human society in general are held together. For where the distinction between these is overlooked or is observed but ill applied, no affairs can be properly administered. How indeed is this possible when good and evil men are held in equal estimation? It is by the **people**, then, in many cases the offences punishable by a fine are tried when the accused have held the highest office; and they are the only court which may try on capital charges... Again it is the **people** who bestow office on the deserving, the noblest regard of virtue in a state; the **people** have the power of approving or rejecting laws, and what is most important of all, they deliberate on the question of war and peace. Further in the case of alliances, terms of peace, and treaties, it is the **people** who ratify all these or the reverse. Thus here again one might plausibly say that the **people's** share in the government is the greatest, and that the constitution is a democratic one.

16 The senate again, which possesses such great power, is obliged in the first place to pay attention to the commons in public affairs and respect the wishes of the **people**, and it cannot carry out inquiries into the most grave and important offences against the state, punishable with death, and their correction, unless the *senatus consultum* is confirmed by the **people**. The same is the case in matters which directly affect the senate itself. For if anyone introduces a law meant to deprive the senate of some of its traditional authority, or to abolish the precedence and other distinctions of the senators or even to curtail them of their private fortunes, it is the **people** alone which has the power of passing or rejecting any such measure. And what is most important is that if a single one of the tribunes interposes, the senate is unable to decide finally about any matter, and cannot even meet and hold sittings; and here it is to be observed that the tribunes are always obliged to act as the **people** decree and to pay every attention to their wishes. Therefore for all these reasons the senate is afraid of the masses and must pay due attention to the popular will.

17 Similarly, again, the **people** must be submissive to the senate and respect its members both in public and in private. Through the whole of Italy a vast number of contracts, which it would not be easy to enumerate, are given out by the

censors for the construction and repair of public buildings, and besides this there are many things which are farmed, such as navigable rivers, harbours, gardens, mines, lands, in fact everything that forms part of the Roman dominion...There are in fact many ways in which the senate can either benefit or indicate those who manage public property, as all these matters are referred to it. What is even most important is that the judges in most civil trials, whether public or private, are appointed from its members, where the action involves large interests. So that all citizens being at the mercy of the senate, and looking forward with alarm to the uncertainty of litigation, are very shy of obstructing or resisting its decisions. Similarly everyone is reluctant to oppose the projects of the consuls as all are generally and individually under their authority when in the field.

18 Such being the power that each part has of hampering the others or co-operating with them, their union is adequate to all emergencies, so that it is impossible to find a better political system than this...For when one part having grown out of proportion to the others aims at supremacy and tends to become too predominant, it is evident that, as for the reasons above given none of the three is absolute, but the purpose of the one can be counterworked and thwarted by the others, none of them will excessively outgrow the others or treat them with contempt. All in fact remains *in statu quo*, on the one hand, because any aggressive impulse is sure to be checked and from the outset each estate stands in dread of being interfered with by the others. . . .

	Powers	Checks on Powers
Senate		
People		

How did Roman citizens ensure that those that govern them attained the consent from the people?