Name: _____ Date: _____

SG #21 Roman Society and the Crises of the Republic

The Roman Republic. After 509 B.C., when the monarchy ended, Roman society was divided between patricians and plebeians. Patrician families held power over every aspect of society. However, the plebeians challenged the patricians in the Conflict of the Orders, which lasted until the 200s B.C.

In the late 500s and the early 400s B.C., debts forced many plebeians to become slaves. In 494 B.C. plebeians refused to fight foreign invaders until the patricians abolished debt slavery. Soon, the plebeians created the *concilium plebis,* or "Plebeian Council" and elected **tribunes**, or officials, to protect their rights. Around 450 B.C., the plebeians forced the patricians to have the laws written down in the Law of the Twelve Tables. Together, the patricians and plebeians created a new political structure, or **constitution**.

The government consisted of three parts: the **Senate**, senior officials who acted as advisors, controlled public finances, and handled all foreign relations; various popular assemblies, where citizens voted on laws and elected officials; and the magistrates, or public officials who enacted the laws and governed. Eventually, all state offices were open to plebeians as well as patricians.

After the monarchy ended, two elected **consuls** took the place of the king. The **censors**, who kept information on the entire population, were next in importance. They also chose Senate candidates and oversaw public morality, while controlling government contracts. In the 300s B.C. Romans began to elect **praetors**, or judges, as well.

Republican Society. The Conflict of the Orders altered Roman society. After 445 B.C. a new class, the *nobilitas*, or nobility, emerged, combining patrician and wealthy plebeian families. The patronage system reinforced elite control, while it protected the primary unit of society, the family.

The head of the Roman family, the **paterfamilias**, was the oldest living male. He controlled his wife, his sons, their wives and children, his unmarried daughters, and the slaves. A family with no sons would often adopt a teenage boy to serve as heir.

To the Romans the most valuable virtues were simplicity, religious devotion, and obedience. Romans believed in spirits and that each family's prosperity depended on ancestral spirits, or *Lares*. The Romans' relationship with their gods was based on ritual, and they performed ceremonies to maintain the gods' good favor.

Consequences of the Conquests. As Rome conquered a vast empire, its system and society became strained. Beginning in 135 B.C., a series of slave revolts in southern Italy and Sicily added to social strains. Foreign philosophies and religions found their way into Rome as the empire conquered more territories, and people began to question traditional Roman ideals and values and resent the selfishness of their ruling elite.

The Roman Revolution. During the 100s and early first century B.C., a revolution began in Roman political and social institutions because of growing tensions between the plebeians and the ruling elite. In 133 B.C. politicians Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus tried to redistribute public land to small farmers, and the Roman elite had them killed in the Forum. In 107 B.C. a general named Marius abolished the property requirements for military service, opening the army to poor people who owed their loyalty to Marius instead of Rome. Rome's Italian allies rebelled in 90 B.C., in what was called the Social War. After this war was over, General Lucius Cornelius Sulla fought Marius and his supporters in a civil war. Sulla emerged victorious and became dictator. Although he eventually retired voluntarily, Sulla's example of dictatorship helped set the stage for Julius Caesar.

In 60 B.C., three powerful men, Gaius Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Licinius Crassus, ruled as the First Triumvirate. After Crassus's death, Caesar defeated Pompey in a civil war and took control of the state. In 44 B.C., the Senate declared Caesar dictator for life. The following year a group of senators murdered Caesar in an attempt to save the Republic. However, another civil war soon broke out between Caesar's heir, Octavian, and Marc Antony. Finally, in 31 B.C., Octavian beat Antony and his ally, Cleopatra of Egypt, at the battle of Actium. Octavian alone now controlled Rome. The Republic was dead.

Answer the questions below **in your own words** and in complete sentence. Highlight your evidence.

1. What were the three parts of the Roman republican government?

_____
_____
_____

2. When the monarchy ended, who took the place of the king?

_____
_____
_____

3. What was the long power struggle between classes of Roman society?

_____
_____
_____

4. What was the primary unit of Roman society?

_____
_____
_____

5. What did reformers Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus try to achieve, and what was the outcome?

_____
_____
_____

6. How did Sulla set the stage for Julius Caesar?

_____
_____
_____