



Founders' Influence:  
SS.7.CG.1.1  
**Ancient and Religious Influences**  
**READING #2**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**SS.7.CG.1.1 Benchmark Clarification 2:** Students will explain the influence of ancient Rome on America's constitutional republic (e.g., civic participation, republicanism, representative government, rule of law, separation of powers).

Ancient Rome was a civilization founded in 753 B.C., originally controlled by a **tyrant** king before it became a republic. A **republic** is a form of government in which power is held by the people, who in turn elect representatives to make laws for them.

Ancient Rome transitioned into the Roman Republic around 509 B.C. and existed until 27 B.C. The Roman Republic divided the government into three separate and distinct branches called **separation of powers**, with the ability to **check and balance**, or limit the powers of the other branches. The three branches of government were the **senate**, the **legislative assemblies**, and the **executive magistrates**. It was the senate that provided the governing structure and who decided that a tyrannical king was not the best form of government for Rome. Instead, it favored **republicanism** and a republican system of government.

Ancient Rome had many similar features to Ancient Greece; one of which was the creation of a **constitution**. The Roman constitution was made up of 12 written laws and ancient traditions. This written law code helped ensure society was based on **rule of law**, or that laws would be applied fairly. Another feature that Ancient Rome and Ancient Greece shared was thoughts about citizenship and civic participation. **Civic duty**, or moral obligations to society, was very important to the ancient Romans. It was not unusual for citizens to be asked to serve as judges and hear a legal case.

There was a **class system** of citizens in the Roman Republic that could vote, the patricians and plebeians. The patricians were the elite and wealthy class that inherited their status based on the family they were born in. The plebeians were the working class, made up of merchants, shopkeepers, and landowners.

**checks and balances** - a principle of the federal government, according to the U.S. Constitution, that allows each branch of government to limit the power of the other branches

**civic duty** - a requirement, something a person has to do

**class system** - a system that categorizes people based on family status, wealth, education, property or occupation

**constitution** - the basic principles and laws of a nation or state that determine the powers and duties of the government and guarantee certain rights to the people in it; usually a written document

**executive magistrates** – officials elected by the people of ancient Rome

**legislative assemblies** – legislative body in ancient Rome that passed new laws and made judicial decisions

**republic** - a form of government in which the people elect representatives to make laws for them

**republicanism** - support for a republican system of government.

**rule of law** - the idea that those who govern must follow the laws; no one is above the law

**senate** – a non-elected body that was appointed to advise the magistrates in guiding the Roman Republic

**separation of powers** - the structure of the federal government, according to the U.S. Constitution, that sets up three branches with their own distinct powers and responsibilities

**tyrant** - a single ruler that possess and abuses absolute government power