

EARLY REPUBLIC

510 TO 275 B.C.

DEFEAT OF TARQUIN SUPERBUS TO UNIFICATION OF ITALY

ERA SUMMARY – EARLY REPUBLIC

The early years of the republic lasted from the overthrow of [Tarquin Superbus](#) to the conquest of southern Italy in 275 B.C. During this time, Rome fought wars against the [Gauls](#), [Etruscans](#), [Latins](#), and [Samnites](#), eventually bringing all of Italy, from northern Tuscany to the Grecian dominated southern coast, into an alliance with Rome. It is this period that produced many of Rome's most romantic legends and hero stories. During this time the Republican virtues of courage, patriotism, and piety were at their peak, and Rome was still largely unaffected by its exposure to eastern decadence and the corruptions of wealth. The most important historian of this era, is [Livy](#), and most of his writings pertaining to this period still exist.

Rome's Republican government was composed of a group of three hundred senators. Each year, two consuls were selected, usually from among the senators, to administer the state and lead the army in times of war. By selecting two consuls and limiting their service to a single year, the Romans hoped to avoid the emergence of a single powerful tyrant.

By the beginning of the Republican era Rome was already the foremost city in the Latin-speaking region around the Tiber river, but it had not yet established dominance over its neighbors: the Etruscans, Volscians, and Aequilians. [Coriolanus](#) and [Cincinnatus](#) were both heroes of early wars against these enemies during the first hundred years of the republic. The second century produced [Camillus](#), an even greater hero. In addition to conquering Rome's perennial enemy, Veii, he reorganized the army into its famous legions and was instrumental in rebuilding Rome after it was [sacked by the Gauls](#).



CORIOLANUS AT THE GATES OF ROME

The Gauls were a tribe of war-like barbarians from the north, who threatened Rome for over three centuries. Their first encounter at the disastrous *Battle of Allia*, which resulted in the sack of the city, was long remembered as the worst defeat in Roman history. The year 390 B.C. marked that last time that the city of Rome was invaded by barbarians for 800 years.

In addition to the on-going wars with its Italian neighbors, Rome needed to resolve several internal disturbances during the early years. From the beginning of the Republic there was continual strife between the *patrician* class, who held all of the political power, and the *plebeians*, who were far more numerous. The trouble between them was resolved after a peaceful “walk-out” by the plebeians during one of Rome’s war. The patricians, led by [Menenius](#), submitted to the idea of establishing a tribune to represent the interests of the plebeians. Eventually, there were six *tribunes*, elected from among the plebeians, who had the power to *veto* all legislations proposed by the patrician senate.

In 452 BC, ten Decemvirs were selected to write and promulgate the laws of Rome. Their leader was [Appius Claudius \(Crassus\)](#), but he abused his power and tried to enslave [Virginia](#), resulting in the overthrow of the Decemvirs. However, the laws of Rome were written on the twelve tablets did become the foundation of Roman jurisprudence.

By time the republic was 200 years old, its armies had acquired a reputation for bravery and discipline thanks to the notable deeds of such heroes as [Marcus Curtius](#), [Valerius Corvus](#), [Decius Mus](#), and [Manlius Torquatus](#). The latter were heroes of the Latin and [Samnite Wars](#), which dominated the period 340 to 290 B.C. [Caius Pontius](#) was a Samnite general who trapped the Roman army but did not use his victory wisely and was eventually defeated. [Fabius Rullianus](#) was the hero of the *Battle of Sentium*, which was a decisive victory for the Romans over the Samnites and brought the Samnite wars, which had lasted for nearly fifty years, to a close.

The last unsubdued region of Italy was the southern coast, called *Magna Graecia*, (Greater Greece) because it was populated with Greek colonies. In 280 B.C. the city of Tarentine brought in [Pyrrhus](#), the most famous general of the age, to oppose the Romans. Though he met with early success, his fortune turned for the worse at the *Battle of Beneventum* and the [Pyrrhic Wars in Italy](#) in Italy ended in victory for Rome.

As Rome dominated more and more of Italy, its own security was greatly enhanced, and it began a series of building projects including roads and aqueducts. [Appius Claudius Caecus](#), an important peacetime administrator, was responsible for much of this planning, and the famous Roman road, *Via Appia* (Appian Way), bears his name. In addition to roads, Appius Claudius initiated the building of Rome's first aqueduct, and several important public buildings. By the time Rome conquered all of Italy; it was at its height of civic rectitude, and public morality. Enemies who had attempted to gain the influence of various senators found all of their bribes returned. Enemies who encountered the army found a disciplined and relentless foe. The city of Rome was prosperous, but had not given in to the luxurious vices . . . yet.

CHARACTERS – EARLY REPUBLIC

EARLY HEROES

Menenius	~ 503 BC	Roman noble who negotiated with the plebeians after their walk-out during a war.
Coriolanus	500–450 BC	Hero, provoked to turn traitor. Convinced by his mother to spare Rome from destruction.
Cincinnatus	519–439 BC	Called to be dictator when Roman army was trapped. Saved them, and then returned to his farm.
Fabii	~ 480 BC	Fabian brothers build a camp on the Cremona to defend Rome from Veii. They were ambushed and slain.
Appius Claudius	d. 452 BC	Evil law giver who usurped power, then attempted to enslave Virginia.
Virginia	d. 451 BC	Heroine slain by her father to rescue her from slavery and dishonor.

GALLIC INVASION

Camillus	446–365 BC	Great military leader; conquered Veii, saved Rome from Gauls, organized legions.
Marcus Manlius	d. 384 BC	Defended the capitol from the Gauls.
Brennus	d. 390 BC	Leader of the Gauls who sacked Rome in 390 B.C.
Marcus Curtius	d. 362 BC	Rode horse into a large chasm in Roman market-place.
Valerius Corvus	370–270 BC	Defeated a gigantic Gaul in one-on-one combat; lived to be 100.

SAMNITE WARS

Decius Mus	d. 340 BC	Sacrificed self in war against the Latins.
Manlius Torquatus	d. 384 BC	Consul who slew his son for a minor disobedience.
Caius Pontius	~ 321 BC	Samnite general who captured the Romans at Caudium Pass.
Fabius Rullianus	d. 291 BC	Hero of the <i>Battle of Sentinum</i> , against the Gauls and Samnites.

PYRRHIC WARS

Appius Claudius	340–273 BC	Built first aqueduct, public buildings, and "Appian Way", the great Roman road to Capua.
Fabircius	~ 284 BC	Incorruptible Roman ambassador who negotiated with Pyrrhus. Emblem of Roman Republican virtue.
Pyrrhus	318–272 BC	Renowned general, won victories in Macedon, Italy, and Greece, but failed to follow up wins.

TIMELINE – EARLY REPUBLIC

- 510-496** Wars against Tarquin and his allies
- 508** Horatius repels the army of Lars Porsena at the *Battle of Sublican Bridge*.
- 496** **Final defeat of Tarquin at the *Battle of Lake Regillus*.**
- 494** Office of the tribune is established to protect plebian rights.
- 491** Coriolanus is sent into exile but returns with an army to threaten Rome.
- 458** During a War with the Aequii, Cincinnatus rescues a Roman army caught in a trap.
- 451** Decimvirs create ten tablets; Virginia is killed to keep her out of the hands of a tyrant.
- 443** Censorship established.
- 396** Romans under Camillus Conquer Veii, their great Etruscan foe.
- 390** ***Battle of Allia***—Gauls invade and sack Rome.
- 343-341** First Samnite War—Etruria and Campania annexed to Rome.
- 326-304** Second Samnite War—Roman humiliation at *Battle of Caudine Forks*.
- 312** Via Appia—famous Roman road started.
- 312** Aqueduct building project started.
- 298-290** Third Samnite War—Roman victory at the *Battle of Sentium*.
- 280-275** Pyrrhic Wars in Italy in southern Italy—**First encounter between Greek and Roman armies.**
- 269** First Roman coins minted.

RECOMMENDED READING – EARLY REPUBLIC

CORE READING ASSIGNMENTS *

Haaren - <i>Famous Men of Rome</i>	Coriolanus to Appius Claudius Caecus (6)
Guerber - Story of the Romans	A Roman Triumph to The Elephants Routed (19)
Macgregor - The Story of Rome	The Tribunes to Pyrrhus is Defeated (25)

SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Dalkeith - Stories from Roman History	Of Caius Marcius Coriolanus (1)
Church - Stories from Ancient Rome	A Bloodless Revolution to A Master of Strategy (6)
Harding - City of the Seven Hills	Secession of The Plebeians to The War with Pyrrhus (11)
Weston – Plutarch's Lives	Coriolanus (1)
Tappan - Story of the Roman People	How the Plebeians Won Rights to Romans of the Early Republic (3)
Morris - Historical Tales - Roman	The Revolt of the People to The Caudine Forks (9)
Church - Stories From Livy	Coriolanus to Passes of Caudium (11)

ALSO RECOMMENDED

Gould - Children's Plutarch - Romans	The Second Founder of Rome to How a Woman Saved Rome (3)
Tappan - Old World Hero Stories	Cincinnatus (1)
Gilman - The Story of Rome	The Roman Runnymede to Rome Overcomes Neighbors (4)
Kaufman - Young Folks Plutarch	Caius Marcius Coriolanus to Camillus (2)

* Level I and II Study Questions are based on **Core Reading Assignments**.