**Reading for Analysis and Understanding**

* The following primary source excerpts concern political culture in the Roman Republic.
* Read and T4 each excerpt. List any “roadblock” vocabulary.
* In your groups, discuss vocabulary issues and prepare brief responses to the questions that follow.
* A group secretary needs to keep track of involvement in and contributions to the conversation.

**From Pomponius’ *Manual*, cited in Justinian’s *Digest* I. ii. 2, 16-28**

After the kings were expelled, two *consuls* were established, and it was provided by statute that they should exercise supreme authority. They were so-called from the fact that they above all others “consulted” the interest of the commonwealth. Lest, however, they should lay claim in all respects to the power that had been wielded by the kings, a statute was passed which provided that there should be an appeal from their decisions, and that they should not be able to inflict capital punishment on a Roman citizen without the order of the people. All that was left them was the power of summary coercion and of ordering persons to be imprisoned in the name of the state. . . . Then, as the people increased in numbers and frequent wars arose, including some of considerable severity waged against Rome by bordering tribes, it was sometimes resolved, when the case required it, that a magistrate should be appointed endowed with exceptional powers. Accordingly, *dictators* were instituted from whom there was no appeal, and who even had conferred upon them the right of inflicting capital punishment. But it was not held right that such a magistrate, wielding as he did supreme power, should be retained in office for more than six months. . . .

About the same time, the *plebeians* . . . created *tribunes* for themselves on the Sacred Mount, who were to be plebeian magistrates. They were called tribunes because at one time the whole body of citizens was divided into three parts, and one tribune was elected from each part, or because they were elected by the votes of the tribes. . . . And whereas, as has been mentioned, the consuls were not permitted by law to hold a court for trying a Roman citizen in a capital case without the approval of the people, for this reason *quaestors* were appointed by the people to preside in capital cases. . . . [T]hey are in fact mentioned in the statute of the Twelve Tables.

Next, . . . a contest arose between the plebeians and the *patricians*, the former desiring that the consuls should be chosen out of their own body as well as from the patricians, to which the latter refused to consent. Whereupon it was resolved that military tribunes with consular power should be created , to be chosen partly from the plebeians and partly from the patricians. . . . Again, as the consuls were called away by wars on the border and there was no one left to administer justice in the city, the result was that in addition to them a praetor was elected, who was called the *praetor urbanus* because he administered justice in the city. . . . [I]n consequence of the excessive crowding of foreigners into the city, another praetor was created in addition, called the *praetor peregrinus*, because his chief duty was to administer justice to *peregrine* (foreigners).

Roadblock Vocabulary:

**From Valerius Maximus*, Memorable Deeds and Sayings* II. ii. 7**

Tribunes of the plebs were not allowed to enter the senate house; however, seating themselves in front of the door, they scrutinized the senate’s decisions with most diligent attention, and vetoed any of which they disapproved.

**From Plutarch, *Roman Questions* Ixxxi; From *LCL***

Why does the tribune not wear a *toga praetexta*, although the other magistrates wear it?

Is it because he is not a magistrate at all? For tribunes [do not] cease from their functions when a dictator is chosen, but although he transfers every other office to himself, the tribunes alone remain, as not being officials but as holding some other position. . . . For [a tribune’s] authority and power consist in blocking the power of a magistrate and in the abrogation of excessive authority.

Since the tribune derives its origin from the people, the popular element in it is strong; and of much importance is the fact that the tribune does not pride himself above the rest of the people, but conforms in appearance, dress, and manner of life to ordinary citizens.

Roadblock Vocabulary:

**From Livy, *History of Rome* II. i. I, 7-10**

Henceforward my theme will be the affairs, civil and military, of a free people, for such the Romans had now become; it will concern annual magistrates, and the authority of laws exalted above that of men. . . .

Moreover, you may reckon the beginning of liberty as stemming from the limitation of the consuls’ authority to one year rather than from any diminution of power which the kings had possessed. . . . [W]hile the people were still eager for their newly acquired freedom, lest they might later be swayed by the entreaties or presents of princes, he made them swear an oath that they would permit no man to be king in Rome.

Roadblock Vocabulary:

**From Pomponius’ *Manual*, cited in Justinian’s *Digest* I. ii. 2, 16-28**

1. Why did the Romans create the office of Consul?
2. Consuls, dictators, tribunes, quaestors, praetors… What does all this say about Roman politics?
3. Under what circumstances were dictators appointed to power? Who do you think appointed them?
4. Why was it essential that a dictator serve a term of only six months?
5. Does the plebeian-patrician rivalry remind you of anything else in history?
6. Why have a special praetor for foreigners?

**From Valerius Maximus*, Memorable Deeds and Sayings* II. ii. 7** and

**From Plutarch, *Roman Questions* Ixxxi; From *LCL***

1. Why do you suppose tribunes of the plebs were not allowed to enter the senate house?
2. Discuss the why of all offices usurped by a dictator, “the tribunes alone remain.”
3. How is the tribune’s refusal to wear a *toga praetexta* a democratic, egalitarian gesture?

**From Livy, *History of Rome* II. i. I, 7-10**

1. To what is Livy referring when he suggests that the Romans had now become a free people?
2. What does Livy’s expression “the authority of laws exalted above that of men” suggest about Roman political power?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the principle of annuality that Livy discusses in the first sentence of the second paragraph?
4. *Rex* is the Latin word for king. When Julius Caesar called on the Senate to proclaim him dictator for life, senators whispered epithets of *rex,* and a large faction of senators resolved to assassinate him. Based upon the readings provided in today’s reading activity, why did senators like Brutus assume they would be remembered as heroes? Why did they (especially Brutus) go down in history as villains?