The Roman Republic and the Beginning of Empire

**The Founding of Rome, 753 B.C.:** According to legend, Romulus founded Rome near the Tiber River. The early Romans were ruled by Etruscan kings. In 509 B.C., the Romans overthrew the Etruscan rule and founded a republic which based its decisions on the will of the people instead of a king.

1. How was early Rome ruled? What change occurred with the overthrow of the Etruscans?

**The Roman Republic:** The new republic consisted of the powerful patricians, or nobles, and the plebeians, or common people. In time, the plebeians won the right to elect representatives called tribunes. They also had their own assembly. The Twelve Tables, the law code written in 451 B.C. protected the rights of all citizens.

2. What two groups made up Roman society? How important were the Twelve Tables?

**Three Branches of Government:**
- **Executive Branch**—Two consuls were elected for one year. They were chief executives of the government and commanders-in-chief of the military.
- **Legislative Branch**—A senate of 300 was chosen from the aristocracy.
- **Judicial Branch**—Eight judges, or praetors, were chosen for one year.

3. Identify the titles of the three branches of government. What role did the consul serve in the republic?

**End of the Republic, 46 B.C.:** During a civil war, Julius Caesar, a Roman general, won great popularity among the people. He ended the war and was named dictator for life. He was an absolute ruler, expanded the senate, enforced laws against crime, and created jobs for the poor. He was assassinated by senators who feared his growing power.

4. Why was Julius Caesar an important ruler in Rome?

**The Roman Empire, 27 B.C.:** Caesar’s great nephew, Augustus, became Rome’s first emperor. Augustus had absolute power but retained the senate, consuls, and tribunes. Under his rule, Rome expanded and enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity.

5. How was Augustus similar to his uncle, Julius Caesar?

**Imperial Rule:** During his 40-year rule, Augustus established the political structure that was to be the basis of Roman imperial government for the next four centuries. He directly controlled most of the provinces of the Roman world through his subordinates, and he nationalized the army to make it loyal to the state and emperor alone. He invested heavily in reshaping the city of Rome with massive building projects advertising his rule, while poets sang the praises of him and the new Rome. He spared no effort promoting his family as a future imperial dynasty.

6. What steps did Augustus take to control the provinces and promote his rule in Rome?