

# Was the Roman Republic a Democracy?

By Skyler Miller.

A democracy is a government where all the people share the same power. The Roman Republic was a massive empire and people have mixed opinions about it being a democracy or not. In 272 BCE, the Romans took over the Greek colonies in southern Italy and in 189 BCE they defeated the King of Greece, King Antiochus III and conquered all Greek land in Asia. Later, in 167 BCE, the Romans defeated the Greek king Perseus and took over all of northern Greece. Greek historian, Polybius, was captured and taken back to Rome where he befriended several high ranking Roman officials and began writing his tales describing how Rome became the dominant world power.

Polybius was a Greek historian who greatly admired the Romans. Polybius believed "The considerations would lead one to say that the chief power in the state was the people's, and that the constitution was a democracy." Therefore, Polybius is stating he has mixed opinions of it being a democracy. He's not sure if he believes Rome was democratic.

Fergus Millar is a British historian and professor of Ancient History at Oxford University. Millar states "The constitution of the Roman Republic made it a variety of democracy. Every adult male citizen, unless specifically disqualified, had a vote, and there was no formal exclusion of the poor." Basically, he's explaining how there are different aspects of Rome that could make it a democracy and some aspects that make it not. Millar strongly believes that the Roman Republic was a democracy.

Alan Ward is a historian and was a professor at the University of Connecticut. In Ward's writing, he states "There were very practical barriers to fair and equitable voting in the popular assemblies. For example, all voting had to be conducted in Rome. Once Roman territory had expanded, it was mostly the well-to-do rural voters and their clients who could afford the time and expense to come to Rome and vote." Basically, he's saying there were different barriers to make voting fair. Ward thinks it was definitely not a democracy.

In conclusion to everything stated above, I agree with Polybius because he makes a good point in which there are lots of arguments you can make about whether it is a Democracy or not.

