

Government and Society

Roman Government

- During the 400s BC, the plebeians were unhappy that they did not have any say with the government.
- The city's leaders knew that they had to compromise or the plebeians might rise up and overthrow the government.
- So the patricians created positions in the government for the plebeians. A tripartite government, a government with three parts, was established to keep any one group from getting too much power.

Government of the Roman Republic

Magistrates

- Consuls led the government and army, judged court cases
- Served for one year
- Had power over all citizens, including other officials

Senate

- Advised the consuls
- Served for life
- Gained control of financial affairs

Assemblies and Tribunes

- Represented the common people, approved or rejected laws, declared war, elected magistrates
- Roman citizens could take part in assemblies all their adult lives, tribunes served for one year
- Could veto the decisions of consuls and other magistrates



Roman Government

- The first part of the government was made up of elected officials called **magistrates**.
- The most powerful magistrates were called **consuls**. Two consuls were elected each year to run the city and lead the army. The consuls got advice from the **Roman Senate**.
- The Senate was a council of wealthy, powerful citizens who held seats for life. Magistrates who finished their one-year terms earned a seat on the Senate, so the Senate gained more power as time passed.

Roman Government

- The third part of government had two parts.
- The first branch was made up of assemblies. The assemblies elected the magistrates who ran the city of Rome.
- The second branch was a group of officials called tribunes. The tribunes had the power to **veto**, or prohibit, actions by the government. Veto means “to forbid” in **Latin**, the ancient Roman language.

Checks and Balances

- **Checks and balances** existed to even out power.
- Some officials had the power to block actions by other officials. Action could be stalled if people could not work together.
- But when an agreement was reached, Rome worked strongly and efficiently.



Linking to Today

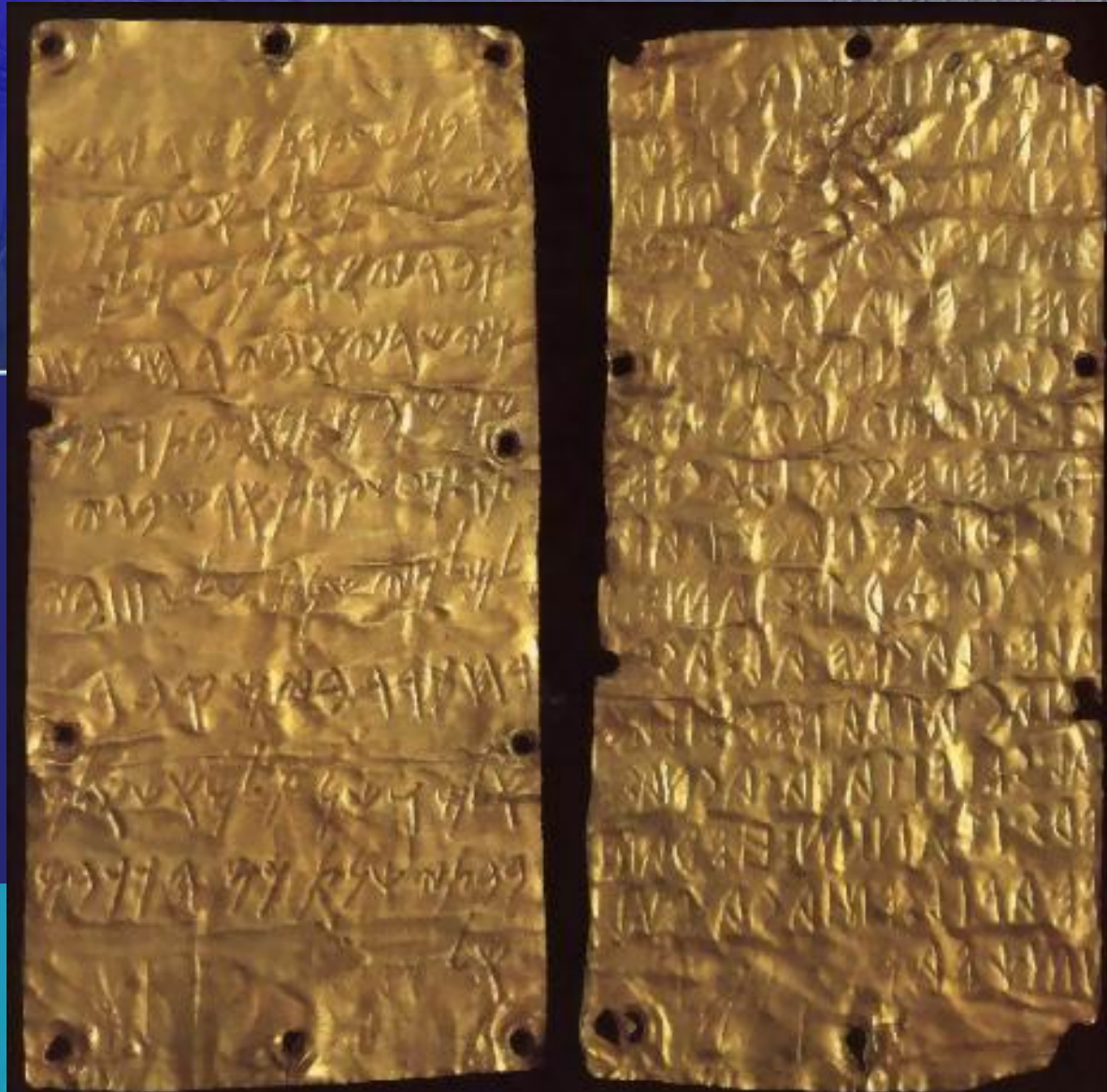
The government of the Roman Republic was one of its greatest strengths. When the founders of the United States sat down to plan our government, they copied many elements of the Roman system. Like the Romans, we elect our leaders. Our government also has three branches—the president, Congress, and the federal court system. The powers of these branches are set forth in our Constitution, just like the Roman officials' powers were. Our government also has a system of checks and balances to prevent any one branch from becoming too strong. For example, Congress can refuse to give the president money to pay for programs. Like the Romans, Americans have a civic duty to participate in the government to help keep it as strong as it can be.

Written Laws Keep Order

- At first Rome's laws were not written down. People thought that it was not fair to be charged by laws they did not know existed.
- In 450 BC Rome's first legal code was written on twelve bronze tablets and displayed in the **forum**, Rome's public meeting place. Although the Romans continued to make laws, the Law of the Twelve Tables remained as the basis of Roman law..

The Law of the Twelve Tables

The Law of the Twelve Tables governed many parts of Roman life. Some laws were written to protect the rights of all Romans. Others only protected the patricians. The laws listed here should give you an idea of the kinds of laws the tables included.

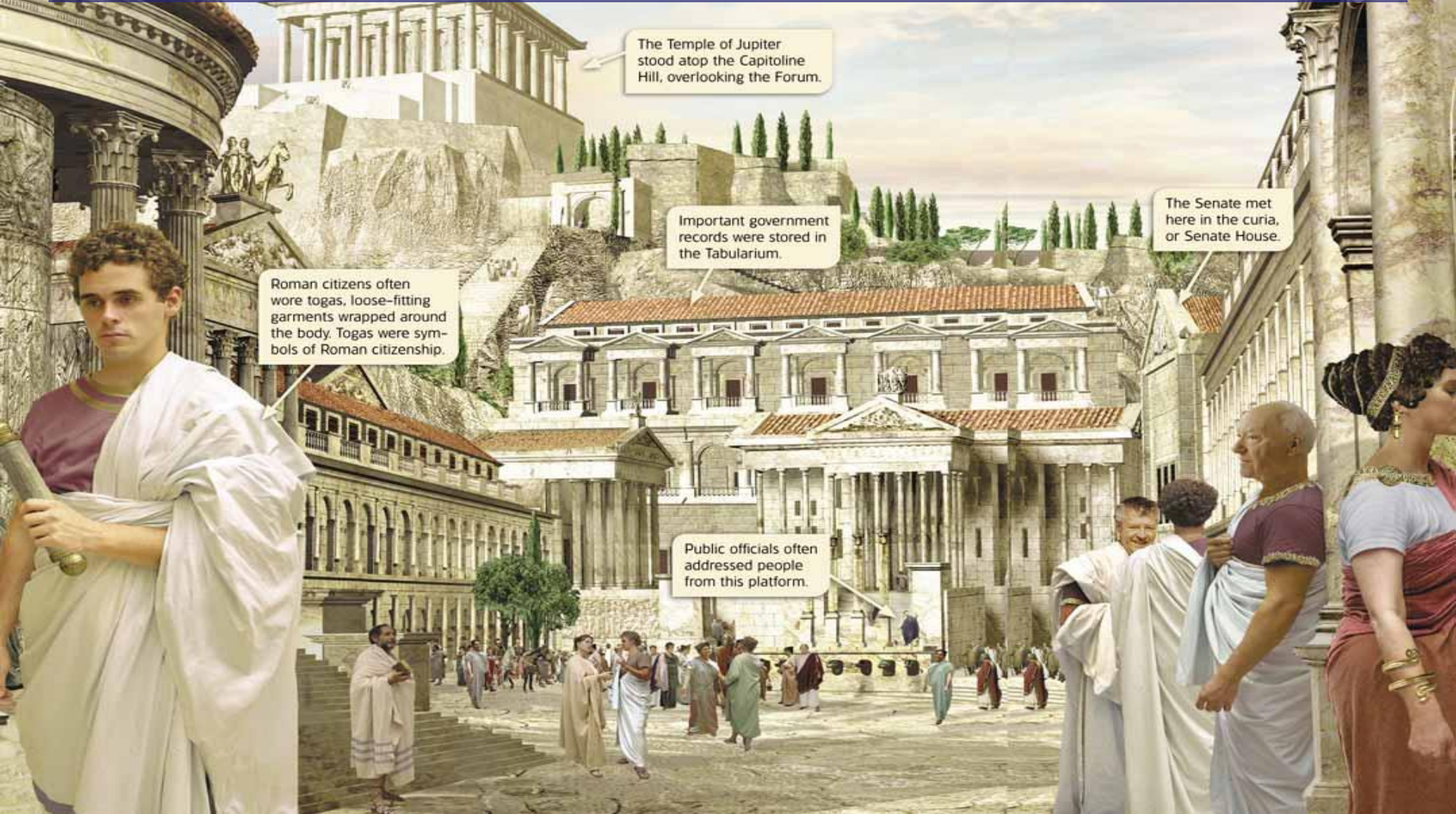


The Roman Forum

- The forum was the heart of Rome.
- All the important government buildings and religious temples were there.
- It was also the main meeting place for Roman citizens.
- It was used for public speeches, and for shopping and entertainment.

The Roman Forum

The Forum was the center of life in ancient Rome. The city's most important temples and government buildings were located there, and Romans met there to talk about the issues of the day. The word *forum* means "public place."



The Temple of Jupiter stood atop the Capitoline Hill, overlooking the Forum.

Important government records were stored in the Tabularium.

The Senate met here in the curia, or Senate House.

Roman citizens often wore togas, loose-fitting garments wrapped around the body. Togas were symbols of Roman citizenship.

Public officials often addressed people from this platform.