

The Ancient Roman World
Unit Two: The Roman Republic

Chapter Nine: Two Revolutionary Brothers
The Gracchis and the Decline of the Republic

Guided Reading Activity – SQ3R pp. 59 - 65

QUESTIONS:

1. Who were the Gracchi brothers and how did they compare to each other?
2. What problems faced the Roman Republic due to its rapid growth?
3. How did public officials handle the situation?
4. What changes (reforms) did Tiberius propose?
5. Why was Tiberius' land reform a "win for everyone"?
6. What important reforms did Gaius push through?
7. Why did the Senate hate and fear Tiberius and Gaius?
8. How did the Gracchus brothers differ from most of Rome's elected officials?
9. Why was Rome willing to grant citizenship to its Italian allies?

KEY TERMS:

oration, unruly, eligible, corrupt

GRAPHIC ORGANIZER:

Complete the REFORMS OF GAIUS AND TIBERIUS GRACCHUS worksheet

Read the article, REFORMS OF THE GRACCHI BROTHERS, and answer the questions.

Reforms of the Gracchi Brothers

Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus were the sons of Sempronius Gracchus and Cornelia, the daughter of Scipio Africanus. When Tiberius was serving as quaestor in Spain, the Numantines (Numantia was in Spain) insisted on negotiating with the son of the man who had treated the Iberians (Spainiards) better than other Romans, who often went back on their promises. Plutarch credited Tiberius Gracchus with saving the lives of 20,000 Roman citizens in the agreement, though the senate rejected it and sent the commander Mancinus in chains back to Numantia, which having plundered the Roman camp nonetheless gave back the financial ledgers Tiberius requested. In traveling through Etruria (western side of Italy north of Rome) to Numantia, Tiberius Gracchus noticed how citizen farmers had been replaced by foreign slaves.

So as tribune in 133 BC Tiberius Gracchus proposed a land reform bill that was supported by the consul Mucius Scaevola and Publius Crassus, the richest Roman. The Licinian law of 367 BC, prohibiting anyone from owning more than 330 acres, was being ignored. Though those owning more than this were actually criminals, Tiberius' proposal would compensate them with no rent on the public lands they would now own in perpetuity (forever) up to this legal limit, and sons could retain another 165 acres each; the rest would be distributed to the poor by a commission of himself, his brother, and his father-in-law. Tiberius argued that the soldiers and their families were homeless and deserved to share in the increased Roman wealth. Nonetheless the wealthy landowners opposed the bill and persuaded tribune Marcus Octavius to veto it. So Tiberius introduced a more severe bill ordering the illegal owners to vacate the land with no compensation, and he offered to pay Octavius with his own money for the extensive lands he would lose; but Octavius refused, and a meeting with the senate was in vain. Frustrated, Tiberius proposed that Octavius be removed from the tribuneship; the tribes voted unanimously for this, and Octavius was dragged away. The land reform law was passed, though the senate resisted providing its expenses.

Going against tradition again, Tiberius was the first tribune in two centuries to be re-elected and proposed that the money left to the Roman people in the will of Attalus III (who lived in Pergamum, now Turkey) be used to help citizens stock and cultivate these farms; he also reduced the period of military service that had been from age 17 to 46, gave the people the right to appeal jury verdicts, and added to the senators serving on juries an equal number of knights. However, as 31 rural tribes dominated the four urban tribes and because many of his supporters were busy with the harvest, these proposals of Tiberius were not going to pass. In the turmoil rumors spread that the rich had hired assassins to kill Tiberius and that a gesture he had made toward his head recognizing this was interpreted by his opponents as his asking for a crown. Led by Scipio Nasica, the senators and their followers, armed with clubs, staves, and broken benches, attacked Tiberius Gracchus, killing him and 300 others and throwing their bodies into the Tiber. Some of the supporters of Tiberius were banished, and others including the rhetorician (one skilled in debate) Diophanes were executed. This was the first major outbreak of civil violence in Rome since the expulsion of the kings nearly four centuries before.

Scipio Aemilianus got the land commission replaced by the consuls, who did little, and supporting Italians' right to citizenship, he angered urban Romans and was found mysteriously dead one morning. Young Gaius Gracchus went to Sardinia as quaestor and used his oratorical (public talking) skill touring cities and pleading for clothing to relieve the army. In 125 BC consul Fulvius Flaccus proposed citizenship for most of the Italian allies, but the senate sent him off to help Massilia (Marseilles) fight the Gauls. The bill was defeated, and the revolt by the Latin colony of Fregellae was crushed. Gaius Gracchus was elected tribune in 123 BC and proposed numerous reforms protecting citizens from banishment by magistrates without trial, dividing public lands among the poor, supplying soldiers with clothing at state expense, extending the franchise to Italians, founding colonies at Tarentum and Capua, constructing roads, and providing grain for the poor at a low price. Facing the people when he spoke, **instead of the senate**, all these laws were passed, and Gaius was allowed to select the new jurors, now all from the equestrian order. These wealthy merchant "knights" also benefited by Rome's selling of tax collection privileges in the provinces to the highest capitalist bidders.

Gaius Gracchus successfully urged the election of Fannius as consul and was re-elected as tribune without campaigning. After visiting Africa, where a new colony was being set up on the site of destroyed Carthage, Gaius returned to Rome to find that Fannius was expelling all those not born in Rome. Gracchus denounced (rejected) this policy and promised support to those who stayed, though he did nothing when one of his friends was dragged away to prison. New Gracchian reforms were

undercut by demagogic (demagogue is one who lies to gain support of the public) proposals of consul Livius Drusus that were never implemented. According to Plutarch, Gaius was denied a third tribuneship when the election results were falsified after he had the seats for watching gladiators at the forum torn down so that magistrates would not sell them to spectators.

The party of the consul Opimius planned to revoke the Gracchi laws, and both factions (i.e., Gracchus and Opimius political groups) gathered at the capitol. A servant of Opimius, who made an insulting gesture, was stabbed to death by a crowd with long iron writing implements. This gave Opimius the excuse to have the senate declare an emergency, as he asked the senators to arm themselves and the knights to bring two armed servants with them the next morning. Negotiation by envoy with the party of Gaius and Fulvius on the Aventine hill failed, and Opimius advanced on them with Cretan (from Crete, southern Greece) archers shooting. Gaius fled to the temple of Diana; but as rewards had been offered for his and Fulvius' heads, they both were killed. Three thousand of their supporters were also executed, and their property was confiscated. Opimius was the first consul to make himself dictator; he was prosecuted by the people's tribunal for putting people to death without a trial but acquitted, though later Opimius was convicted of bribery in the Jugurthine War (in Numidia, North Africa). The same year Gaius Gracchus died (121 BC), it was said that 120,000 Gauls were killed by the Roman army near the Rhone, and the new province of Transalpine Gaul or Narbonensis was added to the empire. According to Appian, the knights on juries became addicted to bribes, and the rich bought the land allotments of the poor or found pretexts for taking them by force; land distribution was discontinued; rent was collected, and though some of it was distributed to the poor, after many lawsuits much unemployment resulted.

QUESTIONS

1. What were the names of the Gracchus brothers?
2. Why was Scipio Africanus so famous in Rome?
3. Numantia was in which country in today's world?
4. What did Tiberius see that made him upset with the way things went in Rome at the time?
5. What specific plan did he develop? Who was Tiberius trying to help with his plan?
6. Tiberius was the first tribune in 200 years to achieve what?
7. Who opposed Tiberius?
8. How did Tiberius propose to pay for his plan?
11. – 14. List 4 other things he achieved.
15. Why did Tiberius' proposals not pass?
16. What happened to Tiberius?
17. What did Gaius Gracchus do to help the army?
18. What reforms did Gaius propose?
19. Which consul met with Gaius on the Aventine Hill to discuss the differences?
20. What happened to Gaius?