

# AN ERA OF CHANGE

## GRACCHI BROTHERS

An era of great change occurred in Rome following the end of the Third Punic War (149-146 BCE) to about 30 BCE. It was an era of war, political strife, revolt, assassination, and much social conflict.

One of the major political and social class conflicts of the period occurred in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. For many years prior, the patricians had ruled Rome through the Senate. In 133 BCE, a conflict of power arose when two brothers, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, proposed granting land to those who did not have it. (They were the grandchildren of Scipio.) These two were members of the Senate and were of the Patrician class. However, they were responding to a loud cry from the plebeians for greater social and economic reform in Rome.

When Tiberius Gracchus was elected as Tribune, he proposed a law restricting the amount of land any single patrician could own. The land that was taken back would primarily be given to soldiers and their families. But the move was vetoed by the patrician-controlled Senate. Tiberius became so unpopular, mostly by rumors spread by the Senate that he wanted to become king, that he was killed by mob violence brought about with Senate support.

His brother, Gaius, would later take up Tiberius's cause. In 123 BCE, Gaius himself was elected as tribune of Rome and re-elected in 122 BCE (even though no one was to serve as tribune for two years in a row). He developed laws designed to help the poor, such as limiting the price that grain could rise. In time, the Roman Senate turned on him, killing Gaius and 3000 of his supporters.

What were the names of the two Gracchi brothers?

Tiberius

Gaius

What were they trying to do?

Reform Rome socially and economically, by helping the poor.

What were some of the ways they tried to improve the Republic?

Tiberius tried to restrict the amount of land any single patrician could own. He wanted to give land to soldiers. Gaius limited the price of grain could rise.

Who loved Tiberius? Why? <sup>probably</sup> The poor, especially the soldiers, since he did things to help them.

How did Tiberius die?

He was killed by the mob, whom had the support of the Senate.

What did the Senate have against Tiberius and Gaius? The Senate represented the rich, while the Gracchi supported the poor.

After watching and reading about the Gracchi brothers, what connections or comparisons can you make to our government today?

Some politicians try to make changes. Obama changed health care to help the poor have health care coverage. Many are angry about this change. This is usually a Democrat / Republican divide.

# MILITARY MEN IN CHARGE

## Gaius Marius

With the deaths of the Gracchi brothers, Rome was in political turmoil. In their places, two military leaders stepped forward and made themselves rulers of Rome. The first was a general named Marius,



Marius had ambitions to become a great man of Rome. He joined the army and became known as a good leader. Men from important Roman families took notice of him. He eventually represented the plebeians as the Plebeian tribune. As tribune, Marius gained some enemies with the upper class. He passed laws changing how the votes were counted in order to keep the wealthy from intimidating voters. Although the patricians didn't like Marius, the people did. Marius then went to Spain where he became very wealthy. Upon returning to Rome, Marius used his recently gained wealth to marry into a patrician family. With his newfound connections, Marius was elected consul for the first time. Over the next several years, Marius would be elected consul a total of seven times, more than anyone in the history of Rome. While Marius was consul, Italy was invaded by several Germanic tribes. Marius needed men to fight the huge army of barbarians. He hired men who did not own land and trained them to be professional soldiers. They agreed to join the army for 25 years. Marius paid the soldiers and provided them with weapons and armor. Becoming a "professional soldier" was a great opportunity for the average man in Rome. Marius soon had a large army ready to fight. Marius defeated the barbarian invaders with his new army. He also made several changes to the Roman army to make it stronger. He reorganized the army into cohorts. This made the army more flexible. He also had units that specialized in certain types of fighting and weapons. Other important changes included promoting soldiers to officers from within the ranks, improved weapons, three deep battle lines, and awarding retired soldiers with land. Marius also made the eagle the primary standard of the Roman army. Marius spent the last several years of his life in internal battles with patrician leaders. His main rival was a powerful leader named Sulla. At one point Marius had to flee Rome in order to escape being executed by Sulla. Marius did return, however, and had just regained his power in Rome when he died of a fever in 86 BCE.

Does this reading actually tell us <sup>if</sup> Marius is Patrician or Plebeian? No What from this reading implies his social class? He married into a Patrician family

What position does Marius hold for 7 years? Consul

How did Marius fill his army with soldiers? He hired men who did not own land, and paid them as professional soldiers for 25 years.

Although he was able to fill his army, how could this system eventually backfire on Rome? (hint, think about the money. The soldiers were paid by their generals.) They gave their loyalty to their generals since they paid them. They didn't own land so their loyalty to Rome wasn't strong so they follow their generals anywhere, even civilian.

Compare Rome's Military from this reading with The United States Military. The Roman and American militaries both have specialized units, both are professionalized, and both promote soldiers to officers. Both also are represented by the eagle. American retired soldiers are not granted land.

# Lucius Sulla

Powerful, rich consul who eventually became dictator. He was the head of one army during a power dispute. Gaius Marius was head of the other army. A dispute over military command escalated into a full-blown civil war. In 83 BCE, Sulla won the civil war, defeating soldiers and followers of Gaius Marius. He became dictator and ruled with an iron hand for four years before retiring. One of the things he did was declare that his enemies were to be hunted down and killed. When that was done, their lands were seized and given to Sulla's supporters. The slaves who had been bound to those lands were then freed. These people (not surprisingly) became strong supporters of Sulla. He ruled for four years before retiring, probably because of advanced age. In 78 BCE, he died. Among his followers were Pompey and Marcus Crassus, the richest man in Rome.



From this paragraph, do you think Sulla was a Patrician or Plebeian? Support your answer.

Sulla was probably a Patrician since he was an enemy of Marius, who was a Pleb. He also had the support of Marcus Crassus, the richest man in Rome.