

Reading Questions: Machiavelli, *Discourses*

1. What tendency or way of thinking does Machiavelli want to get people out of?
2. Why did the introduction of the tribunes of the plebs perfect the Roman constitution?
3. What does Machiavelli think results from the conflicts between the plebs and patricians?
Does this mean we should welcome such conflicts?
4. What is Machiavelli's opinion of Julius Caesar? Why does he have this opinion?
5. On what grounds does Machiavelli praise the religion of the Romans? How does it compare to Christianity?
6. Does Machiavelli approve of the Roman institution of the dictatorship? Why or why not?
7. What does Machiavelli think of the populace as compared to princes? Who does he think is more fit to rule?
8. How does Machiavelli depict the relationship between the efforts of human beings and fortune? What attitude should we maintain given what he says about fortune?
9. What causes institutions to endure the longest according to Machiavelli? Do you agree?
10. When and why is it necessary to kill the 'Sons of Brutus'? Is doing so just?
11. Do principalities or republics enjoy the better and longer life according to Machiavelli? Why?
12. On what basis do citizens in a republic assess candidates for office and what is the effect of this on how people behave? Does this sound plausible to you?
13. Does Machiavelli think human beings are similar or different across time? What are the implications of this belief?
14. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli discusses the foundation and consolidation of princely rule. In the *Discourses*, he is concerned with republican government. In your view, how do these two texts fit together? Identify what you consider to be the two most important themes that unite these works.
15. Both Augustine and Machiavelli rely on historical analysis to advance their arguments. How does each thinker understand the decline of Rome?