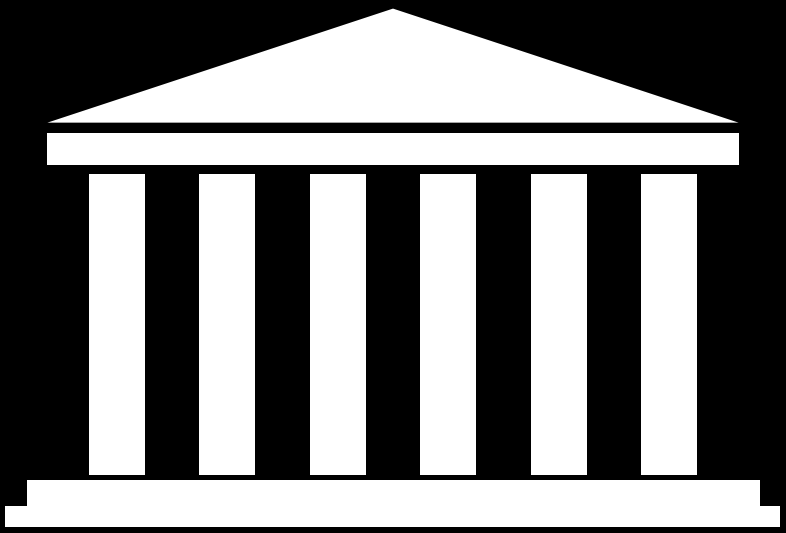


The Way of the Republic

Why Temples, Capitols and Good Laws Keep a People Free

ANTHONY PERLAS · PERLAS FOUNDATION

TITLE PAGE

The Way of the Republic

Why Temples, Capitols and Good Laws Keep a People Free.

A book for young readers and their families, written in plain words so a fourth grader can read it and a grown-up can still learn from it.

By Anthony Perlas. Published by the Perlas Foundation and Nightlife Report, Los Angeles, 2026.

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All illustrations in this book are original drawings made for it. Historical quotations are from ancient works that are in the public domain; translations are summarized in our own words unless marked. See the Notes at the back for every source.

The 21 precepts in Part Four are an original values code. They borrow only a simple idea of structure found in many old handbooks of good conduct: a short rule, a reason, and an example.

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BEFORE WE BEGIN

A Letter to the Reader

Hello, young citizen.

Walk through any old city and look up. You will see columns, steps, domes and arches. Some of those buildings are thousands of years old. Why did people work so hard to build them? Why did they make them so big, so strong, and so beautiful?

This book gives an answer. Big public buildings are not just stone. They are promises made of stone. A courthouse says: here, the same rules apply to everyone. A temple said, to the people of ancient Rome: here, we remember our oaths. A library says: here, we keep what we have learned so nobody has to start over.

When those buildings are cared for, people tend to feel safe and to work together. When they are smashed, ignored or left empty, something else rushes in to fill the space: fear, bullying, and the rule of whoever is loudest or roughest. History shows this again and again.

So this book is about buildings, but it is really about you. You are a builder too. Every time you tell the truth, keep a promise, help a neighbor or make something good, you add a stone to the city we all share.

Let us begin in Rome, on a small hill, almost 2,500 years ago.



PART ONE

Houses of the Law

Why buildings matter, and what happens when they fall.

CHAPTER 1

The Hill of the Capitol

Rome was built on seven hills. The most important one was not the biggest. It was the Capitoline Hill, small and steep, with cliffs on two sides.

On top of it the Romans built their greatest temple. It was dedicated in 509 BC, the same year, they said, that Rome threw out its last king and became a Republic. The temple honored three gods together: Jupiter, the king of the gods; Juno, his wife and protector of the city; and Minerva, goddess of wisdom and skill. Romans called them the Capitoline Triad.

Think about the timing. The people had just decided that no single person should rule them forever. And the very first big thing they finished as a free people was a house for the god of oaths and law. That was a message: from now on, Rome would be held together by promises and rules, not by one man.

The temple burned down several times over the centuries. Each time, Romans rebuilt it, bigger and finer. They did not let it stay a ruin. Rebuilding it was a way of saying: our promises still stand.

Today the word "Capitol" comes from that hill. When Americans named the building where their Congress meets in Washington, D.C., they borrowed the word on purpose. They wanted people to remember the Roman Republic.

CHAPTER 2

The Forum: A Town Square for Everyone

Below the Capitoline Hill lay the Forum. It began as a swampy valley. Romans drained it with a great sewer, the Cloaca Maxima, and turned it into the busiest square in the world.

In the Forum, people did almost everything a city needs. They bought and sold. They listened to speeches from a stage called the Rostra. They voted. They held trials. They read the laws, which were posted where anyone could see them.

Why did that matter? Because a law that is hidden can be twisted. A law that is posted in the square belongs to everyone. A farmer and a senator could both walk up and read it.

A good public square still works this way. Town halls, libraries, parks and courthouses are places where people who are different from each other can meet as equals. The building makes room for fairness.

CHAPTER 3

The Twelve Tables

Around 450 BC, ordinary Romans, called plebeians, got tired of unwritten rules that only powerful families seemed to know. They pushed for the laws to be written down.

A team of ten men wrote them on twelve tablets, probably bronze, and set them up in the Forum. These were the Twelve Tables. Roman children later memorized them, the way you might memorize a poem.

The Tables covered everyday life: how to settle a debt, what to do if a neighbor's tree hangs over your yard, how a trial works, and what happens if someone hurts another person. Some of the punishments seem harsh to us now. But the big idea was new and powerful: the rules are the same for everyone, and everyone can read them.

The original tablets were lost, probably when invaders burned Rome around 390 BC. We know parts of them only because later writers, like Cicero, quoted them. That is another lesson about buildings and memory: when the house of the law is destroyed, the law itself can be lost.

CHAPTER 4

Water for All: The Aqueducts

Romans built aqueducts, long stone channels that carried fresh water from hills far away into the city. The first, the Aqua Appia, was built in 312 BC. By the time of the emperors, Rome had eleven.

A writer named Frontinus was put in charge of Rome's water around AD 97. He wrote a book about it. He was proud: he said these great works were far more useful than the pyramids of Egypt, which did nothing for anyone.

Aqueducts fed public fountains, baths and toilets. Rich or poor, you could drink. That is what a public work does. It takes the skill of many people and turns it into something that serves everyone.

When the aqueducts were cut during wars in the 500s AD, Rome shrank from about a million people to a small town. The water stopped, and the city emptied. Buildings are not just decoration. Sometimes they are the difference between a city and a ruin.

CHAPTER 5

Basilicas: Halls of Justice

A Roman basilica was not a church at first. It was a long hall with rows of columns, used for courts and business. The Basilica Julia and the Basilica Aemilia stood on the Forum.

Inside, judges heard cases. Lawyers argued. Merchants made deals in the shade. It was a roof over fairness, a place where disagreements could be settled with words and evidence instead of fists.

Later, many Christian churches copied the basilica shape. So did many courthouses, train stations and city halls you can visit today. When you see a long hall with columns, you are looking at an idea Rome gave the world: there should be a public place where problems get solved peacefully.

CHAPTER 6

The Parthenon and the Greeks

Before Rome, there was Athens. In the 400s BC, the Athenians built the Parthenon on a high rock called the Acropolis. It honored Athena, goddess of wisdom. Romans later called her Minerva.

Athens was trying something new too. It was an early democracy, where free men voted directly on laws. The Parthenon was a way of saying: our city is wise, skilled and proud.

The builders were clever. The columns lean in very slightly, and the floor curves upward a tiny bit in the middle. From far away, these tricks make the building look perfectly straight and strong. It took math, patience and teamwork.

The Parthenon has survived fires, wars and even an explosion in 1687, when gunpowder stored inside it blew up. Much of it still stands. People from every country visit it to see what a city can build when it believes in itself.

CHAPTER 7

When the Buildings Fall

History has many stories of what happens when the houses of law and learning are left to fall.

When the Western Roman Empire weakened in the 400s AD, roads were not repaired, aqueducts broke, and the Forum filled with dirt. Over centuries, it became a cow pasture. People even called it the Campo Vaccino, the cow field.

Without working courts, people had to protect themselves however they could. Strong local bosses often took control. Trade slowed. Reading and writing became rare in many places. Historians argue about how bad it was in each region, but almost all agree that losing shared public works made ordinary life harder and less safe.

The good news: buildings and laws can be rebuilt. During the Renaissance, people dug up Roman ruins, studied them, and were inspired to build again. In the 1500s, the artist Michelangelo redesigned the top of the Capitoline Hill into the beautiful square that stands there today.

The lesson is simple. A city is like a garden. If nobody tends it, weeds take over. If people care for it together, it blooms.



The safety of the people shall be the highest law.

— Cicero, On the Laws 3.8 (Salus populi suprema lex esto)

QUESTIONS FOR READERS AND FAMILIES

Think and Discuss

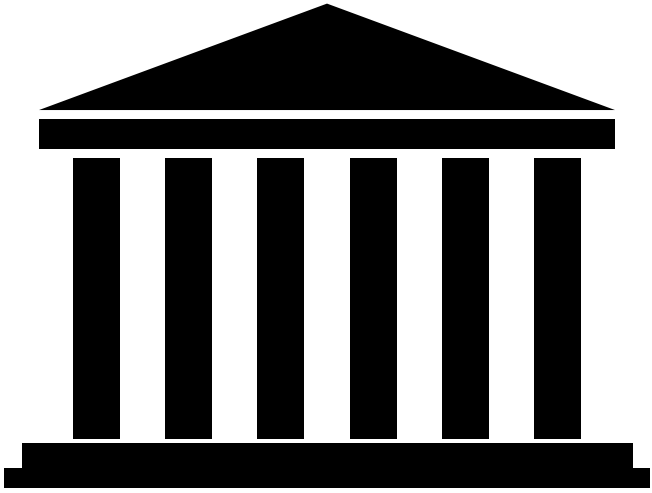
Why do you think Romans built their greatest temple the same year they became a Republic?

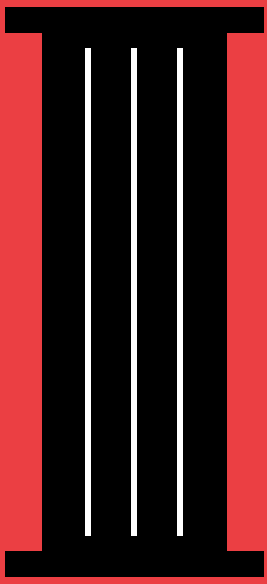
What public building in your town would you most miss if it were gone? Why?

Why does it matter that laws are posted where everyone can read them?

DRAW AND COLOR

Trace this shape, then draw your own version of it below.





PART TWO

How Romans and Greeks Thought About Being Good

Virtues: the inner buildings that hold up the outer ones.

CHAPTER 8

The Roman Virtues

Romans believed a city is only as strong as the character of its people. They had special words for good qualities. Here are five of the most important.

Virtus means courage and excellence. It comes from the word for a grown man, but Romans used it for anyone who did hard, right things bravely.

Pietas means duty and loyalty: to your family, your country and the gods. The hero Aeneas, in Virgil's poem the Aeneid, is called "pious Aeneas" because he carried his old father out of burning Troy on his back.

Fides means faithfulness, keeping your word. Romans had a temple to Fides right next to Jupiter's on the Capitoline Hill. Treaties were sometimes kept there.

Gravitas means seriousness, being steady and thoughtful instead of silly at the wrong time. Dignitas means a good name earned by good acts.

You do not need to be Roman to have these. They are like muscles. Each time you use one, it grows.

CHAPTER 9

Cicero and the Book of Duties

Marcus Tullius Cicero lived from 106 to 43 BC. He was a lawyer, a speaker and a leader of the Republic. Near the end of his life, he wrote a book for his son called On Duties, in Latin De Officiis.

Cicero said there are four parts of being good. Wisdom: finding out what is true. Justice: giving each person what they are owed and not harming anyone without cause. Courage: being strong in hard times. Self-control: keeping order and balance in what you say and do.

He also said that what is right and what is truly useful never really fight each other. If something seems useful but is wrong, like cheating, it is not truly useful, because it ruins trust, and trust is what everything else is built on.

Cicero defended the Republic with words when others used weapons. He lost his life for it. But his books survived, and two thousand years later, people who wrote new constitutions read him closely.

CHAPTER 10

Aristotle and the Middle Path

Aristotle was a Greek thinker who lived from 384 to 322 BC. He taught that a virtue is usually a middle point between two mistakes.

Courage sits between being a coward and being reckless. Generosity sits between being stingy and wasting everything. Friendliness sits between being grumpy and being a flatterer who says whatever people want to hear.

He also said we become good by doing good things, over and over, like learning a musical instrument. You become brave by doing brave things. You become fair by doing fair things.

Aristotle believed humans are made to live in communities, which he called the polis, the city. A person alone cannot become fully good. We need friends, families, laws and shared places to grow.

CHAPTER 11

The Stoics: Calm in the Storm

The Stoics were a school of thinkers who began in Athens and became very popular in Rome. Their name comes from the Stoa, a covered porch where they taught.

Their key idea: some things are up to us and some are not. Our choices, our effort and our honesty are up to us. The weather, other people's words and the past are not. So put your energy into what you control, and stay calm about the rest.

Epictetus was born enslaved and became a famous teacher. Seneca was a wealthy advisor. Marcus Aurelius was an emperor who wrote private notes to himself, now called the Meditations. Very different lives, same lesson.

Marcus wrote to himself, in his own words, that each morning he might meet rude or selfish people, but they could not truly harm his character, and that people are made to work together like hands and feet. Even an emperor had to practice patience.



You have power over your mind, not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength.

— A plain-language summary of Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, Book 6

CHAPTER 12

Law Above Everyone

Romans and Greeks did not always live up to their ideals. They kept slaves. Women could not vote. Wars were cruel. We should be honest about that. Studying history means seeing the good and the bad.

But they left us an idea worth keeping: that law should stand above any single person. In the Republic, leaders called consuls were elected for only one year, and there were always two of them, so neither could become a king.

The Greek historian Polybius admired this. He said Rome's strength came from a mixed system: the consuls, the Senate and the people's assemblies each checked the others.

The writers of the United States Constitution studied Polybius and Cicero. Checks and balances, term limits and written law all have Roman and Greek roots. The lesson is not to obey one strong leader. It is to build a system where no one is above the rules.

QUESTIONS FOR READERS AND FAMILIES

Think and Discuss

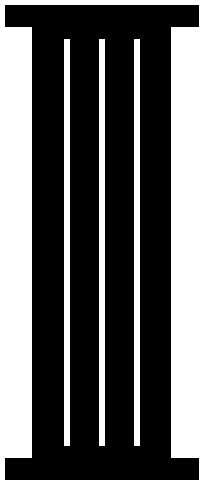
Which Roman virtue do you think is hardest? Which is easiest for you?

Pick one of Aristotle's middle paths. Describe the two mistakes on each side.

What is one thing today that was up to you, and one thing that was not?

DRAW AND COLOR

Trace this shape, then draw your own version of it below.





PART THREE

Jupiter, Keeper of Promises

What Romans believed about the king of their gods.

CHAPTER 13

Who Was Jupiter?

To the ancient Romans, Jupiter was the king of the gods, ruler of the sky, thunder and lightning. His Greek counterpart was Zeus. His symbol was the eagle, and he was often shown holding a thunderbolt.

Romans called him Jupiter Optimus Maximus: Jupiter, Best and Greatest. His Capitoline temple was the center of Roman religion and public life.

But here is what matters most for our story. To Romans, Jupiter was above all the god of oaths, treaties and law. When Romans made a solemn promise, they called on Jupiter as their witness. Breaking that promise was thought to bring his anger.

This is Roman belief, studied as history. People today have many faiths. But you can see why the Romans put their god of promises at the very top of their highest hill. A free people depends on trust.

CHAPTER 14

Oaths, Triumphs and the Calendar

When a Roman general won a great victory, he could be granted a triumph: a parade through the city ending at Jupiter's temple. There he gave thanks and laid down his laurel wreath. The message was: the glory belongs to Rome and its gods, not to me.

A tradition reported by later writers says a servant stood behind the general in the chariot whispering that he was only human. Whether or not every detail is true, Romans liked the lesson: success should make you humble.

Each year the new consuls began their term with sacrifices to Jupiter on the Capitol. The ides of each month, the middle day, were sacred to him.

Juno protected women, families and the city. Minerva gave skill to craftsmen, doctors and teachers. Together the Triad stood for power with duty, family and wisdom.

CHAPTER 15

Minerva and the Builders

Minerva, called Athena by the Greeks, was the goddess of wisdom, strategy and craft. She was the special friend of weavers, carpenters, potters, engineers and teachers.

In March, Romans held a festival for her called the Quinquatria. Craftspeople and students honored her, and school often took a break.

The Roman architect Vitruvius wrote that every good building needs three things: firmness, usefulness and beauty. In Latin, firmitas, utilitas, venustas. That is Minerva's spirit: skill that serves people.

Myths also tell of Prometheus, a Titan the Greeks said gave fire to humans and taught them crafts. Stories like his celebrate human curiosity, invention and courage.



Firmness, usefulness, beauty.

— Vitruvius, On Architecture 1.3.2

QUESTIONS FOR READERS AND FAMILIES

Think and Discuss

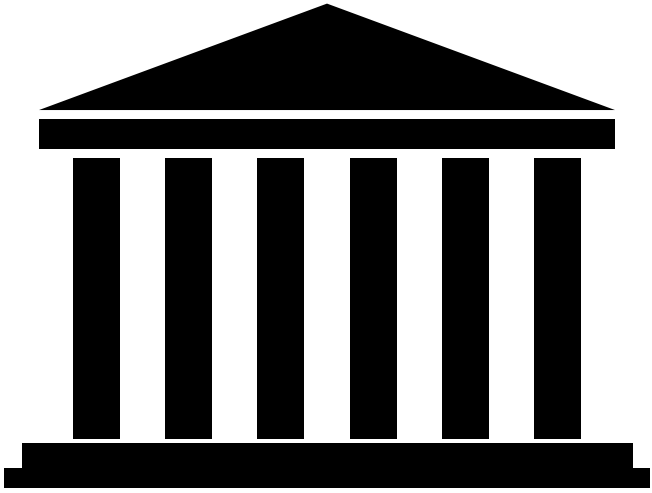
Why did Romans connect their highest god with promises and oaths?

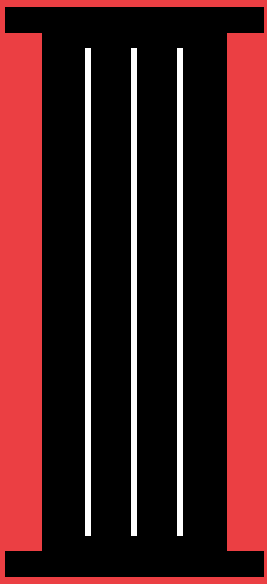
What lesson does the triumph whisper teach about winning?

Vitruvius said firmness, usefulness, beauty. Find a building that has all three.

DRAW AND COLOR

Trace this shape, then draw your own version of it below.





PART FOUR

The 21 Precepts of the Republic

A values code for 2026. Each one: a short rule, a reason, an example.

PRECEPT

I

Keep your word.

PRECEPT 1 OF 21

I. Keep your word.

Why it matters. A promise is a small building made of trust. Every kept promise adds a stone; every broken one pulls one out.

An example. Maya promised to feed her neighbor's cat for a week. On day five a party invite came. She went to feed the cat first, then went to the party late. Her neighbor now trusts her with bigger things.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

II

Tell the truth, even when it costs you.

PRECEPT 2 OF 21

II. Tell the truth, even when it costs you.

Why it matters. Lies are like cracks in a wall. They spread. Truth makes things stand.

An example. Leo broke a window with a ball. He knocked on the door and said so. The owner was upset, but helped him work out how to pay it back by raking leaves.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

III

Care for your body.

PRECEPT 3 OF 21

III. Care for your body.

Why it matters. Your body is the first house you live in. Rest, move, eat well and listen to a trusted adult or doctor when you are sick.

An example. Ava set a bedtime she could keep on school nights. Her mornings went from rushed to calm.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

IV

Honor your parents and elders.

PRECEPT 4 OF 21

IV. Honor your parents and elders.

Why it matters. They carried you before you could carry yourself. Listen, help and say thank you.

An example. Sam asked his grandmother about her childhood and wrote her stories in a notebook for the family.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT



Learn something every day.

PRECEPT 5 OF 21

V. Learn something every day.

Why it matters. A mind is a library. Fill its shelves.

An example. Nia read ten pages each night. By summer she had read twelve books.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

VI

Build things.

PRECEPT 6 OF 21

VI. Build things.

Why it matters. Building teaches patience, math and pride in good work. A city is just many people building.

An example. Omar and his friends built a birdhouse for the school garden. Three families of birds used it.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

VII

Take care of shared places.

PRECEPT 7 OF 21

VII. Take care of shared places.

Why it matters. Parks, schools, libraries and streets belong to all of us. Leave them better than you found them.

An example. After a game, Mia's team picked up every bottle on the field, even ones that were not theirs.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

VIII

Follow fair rules, and fix unfair ones the right way.

PRECEPT 8 OF 21

VIII. Follow fair rules, and fix unfair ones the right way.

Why it matters. Rules let people live together. If a rule is unfair, speak up, write, vote and persuade. Do not tear things down.

An example. Students thought lunch was too short. They wrote a polite letter with a plan. The principal added ten minutes.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

IX

Do not steal.

PRECEPT 9 OF 21

IX. Do not steal.

Why it matters. Taking what is not yours breaks the trust that lets everyone own anything.

An example. Jay found a wallet. He turned it in at the front office. The owner came back with a thank-you card.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT



Do not harm others.

PRECEPT 10 OF 21

X. Do not harm others.

Why it matters. Hurting people with fists or words only makes the city weaker. Strength is for protecting.

An example. When a younger kid fell, Ben, the fastest runner, stopped his race to help him up.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

XI

Be fair.

PRECEPT 11 OF 21

XI. Be fair.

Why it matters. Treat others by the same rules you want for yourself.

An example. When Lily picked teams, she mixed friends and new kids so the game was even and fun.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

XII

Be kind to people who are different from you.

PRECEPT 12 OF 21

XII. Be kind to people who are different from you.

Why it matters. A strong Republic has room for many kinds of people. Every person has worth.

An example. A new student spoke little English. Carlos taught him the playground games with hand signals, and he taught Carlos a song.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

XIII

Stay calm.

PRECEPT 13 OF 21

XIII. Stay calm.

Why it matters. Anger is fire. Fire cooks food, but it can also burn the house down. Breathe before you act.

An example. Zoe counted to ten before answering a mean text. Then she decided not to answer at all.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

XIV

Choose good friends.

PRECEPT 14 OF 21

XIV. Choose good friends.

Why it matters. You slowly become like the people you spend time with. Pick ones who make you better.

An example. Eli noticed one group always dared him to break rules. He started spending recess with the chess club instead.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

XV

Keep a safe distance from people who mean harm.

PRECEPT 15 OF 21

XV. Keep a safe distance from people who mean harm.

Why it matters. You do not need to fight everyone. Walking away and telling a trusted adult is smart, not weak.

An example. When an older teen kept bothering kids at the bus stop, Rosa moved to stand near the crossing guard and told her mom.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

XVI

Work hard and finish what you start.

PRECEPT 16 OF 21

XVI. Work hard and finish what you start.

Why it matters. Half-built buildings help no one. Finishing is a skill.

An example. Kai's model volcano cracked the night before the fair. He fixed it instead of quitting, and it erupted perfectly.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

XVII

Save and be wise with what you have.

PRECEPT 17 OF 21

XVII. Save and be wise with what you have.

Why it matters. The Romans stored grain for hard years. Plan ahead.

An example. Ana saved part of her birthday money each year. She bought her own bike at age eleven.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

XVIII

Respect other people's beliefs.

PRECEPT 18 OF 21

XVIII. Respect other people's beliefs.

Why it matters. You may disagree, but you can still be polite and fair.

An example. Two friends of different faiths asked each other about their holidays and celebrated both.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

XIX

Be grateful.

PRECEPT 19 OF 21

XIX. Be grateful.

Why it matters. Gratitude turns what we have into enough.

An example. Each night at dinner, the Reyes family names one good thing from the day.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

XX

Be brave for what is right.

PRECEPT 20 OF 21

XX. Be brave for what is right.

Why it matters. Courage is not having no fear. It is doing right while afraid.

An example. Drew told a teacher when he saw a classmate being picked on, even though he worried about being teased.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

PRECEPT

XXI

Leave something good for those who come after.

PRECEPT 21 OF 21

XXI. Leave something good for those who come after.

Why it matters. Romans planted trees whose shade they would never sit in. Build for the future.

An example. A class planted an oak tree and buried a letter for the students of 2050.

Try it this week. Write down one time you practiced this precept, and what happened.

QUESTIONS FOR READERS AND FAMILIES

Think and Discuss

Which precept do you already practice well?

Which precept will you work on this month?

Write a 22nd precept of your own, with a reason and an example.

DRAW AND COLOR

Trace this shape, then draw your own version of it below.





PART FIVE

Field Guide for Young Citizens

Practical skills for school, streets and screens.

CHAPTER 16

Handling Bullying

Bullying is when someone hurts, scares or leaves out another person on purpose, again and again. It can happen in person or online.

Step one: stay calm and stand tall. Bullies often want a big reaction.

Step two: use a short, firm sentence. "Stop. I don't like that." Then walk away toward other people or an adult.

Step three: tell a trusted adult. That is not tattling. Tattling tries to get someone in trouble; reporting tries to keep someone safe.

Step four: save proof if it is online. Take a screenshot and do not reply.

If you see someone else being bullied, be an upstander: stand near them, invite them to walk with you, and get help. Remember Precept X: strength is for protecting.

CHAPTER 17

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is when friends push you to do something you know is wrong or unsafe. It is one of the oldest tests in the world.

Try the three-step check. Is it safe? Is it kind? Would I be okay if my family saw it?

If the answer is no, use an exit line. "No thanks, I'm good." "My mom would ground me forever." "I have to go." You do not owe a long speech.

Suggest something better. Real friends will often come with you.

The Stoics would remind you: other people's opinions are not up to you. Your choice is.

CHAPTER 18

Keeping Calm and Keeping Distance

Not everyone you meet will be kind. Part of growing up is learning to notice warning signs and keep yourself safe without picking fights.

Warning signs: someone pressures you to keep secrets from your parents, asks you to go somewhere alone, gets angry quickly, or makes you feel scared.

What to do: keep space between you, stay in public places, go where trusted adults are, and tell someone. You can always leave.

This is not about judging any group of people. Kind and unkind people come in every shape, color and background. Judge actions, not appearances.

Calm breathing helps: breathe in for four counts, hold for four, out for four, hold for four. Soldiers, athletes and pilots use this trick.

CHAPTER 19

Telling the Truth Online

The internet is the biggest public square in history. Like the Roman Forum, it is full of speeches, deals and rumors.

Before you share something, ask: Who made this? How do they know? Can I find it in two other trusted places?

Never share private information like your address, school or passwords.

Be the same honest person online as in person. Romans said your dignitas, your good name, is built by your acts. Online, your acts last a long time.

CHAPTER 20

How to Build Something

Every great building started as an idea and a sketch. Here is the builder's method, Vitruvius style.

1. Ask what is needed. Who will use it?
2. Sketch it. Draw it from the front, side and top.
3. Gather materials and helpers.
4. Build a small model first.
5. Test it. Is it firm? Useful? Beautiful?
6. Fix what breaks. Every builder fails first.
7. Share it and care for it.

Projects to try: a cardboard temple, a popsicle-stick bridge that holds a book, a garden bed, a little free library box for your street.

QUESTIONS FOR READERS AND FAMILIES

Think and Discuss

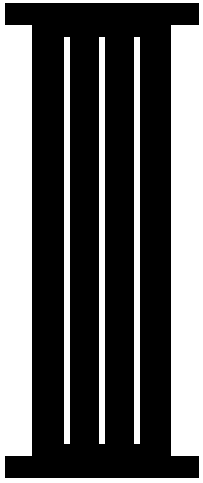
What is the difference between tattling and reporting?

Practice an exit line for peer pressure with a friend or family member.

Design a small project you could build to help your street or school.

DRAW AND COLOR

Trace this shape, then draw your own version of it below.





PART SIX

Building a Better City

The Republic is not a place. It is a habit.

CHAPTER 21

Your City, Your Temple

Look around your own neighborhood. What are its public buildings? A school, a library, a fire station, a park, a city hall, places of worship?

Each one is a promise. The library promises that knowledge is for everyone. The fire station promises help when you need it. The courthouse promises fairness.

You can help keep those promises. Return library books on time. Thank a firefighter. Pick up trash in the park. Learn how your city council works and go to a meeting with a parent.

Romans believed their buildings honored the gods and held the city together. Whatever you believe, you can see the truth inside that idea: what we build together, and care for together, holds us together.

CHAPTER 22

A Closing Promise

The Roman Republic lasted almost five hundred years. Its ideas have lasted more than two thousand. They lasted because people kept writing them down, building them into stone, and teaching them to children.

Now it is your turn. You do not have to be an emperor or a senator. You only have to keep your word, tell the truth, be fair, stay calm, help others and build something good.

If you do, you will be a living column holding up the roof of your city.

Here is a promise you can say out loud, if you wish:

"I will keep my word. I will tell the truth. I will protect, not harm. I will care for what we share. I will build."

Welcome to the Republic, citizen.



Not for ourselves alone are we born.

— Cicero, On Duties 1.22, quoting Plato (Non nobis solum nati sumus)

QUESTIONS FOR READERS AND FAMILIES

Think and Discuss

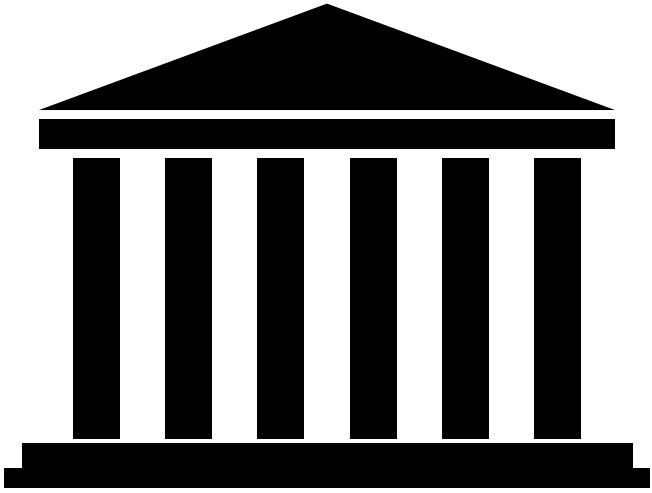
What does it mean to be a "living column"?

What could your class build together to leave for students in 2050?

Say the citizen's promise. Which line means the most to you?

DRAW AND COLOR

Trace this shape, then draw your own version of it below.



Glossary

Aqueduct: a channel that carries water over long distances.

Basilica: a Roman hall for courts and business.

Capitol: from the Capitoline Hill; today a building where lawmakers meet.

Consul: one of two Roman leaders elected for one year.

Dignitas: a good name earned by good acts.

Fides: faithfulness; keeping your word.

Forum: the main public square of a Roman city.

Gravitas: seriousness and steadiness.

Pietas: duty to family, country and the gods.

Polis: Greek word for a city and its community.

Republic: a government where people choose leaders and the law is above everyone.

Stoic: a follower of a philosophy of calm and self-control.

Triad: a group of three; the Capitoline Triad was Jupiter, Juno and Minerva.

Virtus: courage and excellence.

Notes and Sources

1. Livy, History of Rome (Ab Urbe Condita) 1.38, 1.55–56, 2.8: the Capitoline temple and its dedication in 509 BC.

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3. The Twelve Tables: fragments collected in Crawford, ed., Roman Statutes (1996); Cicero, On the Laws 2.59 on children memorizing them.

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5. Procopius, Gothic War 1.19: the cutting of aqueducts in AD 537.

6. Vitruvius, De Architectura 1.3.2: firmitas, utilitas, venustas.

7. Cicero, De Officiis (On Duties) 1.15–17, 1.22, 3.11.

8. Cicero, De Legibus (On the Laws) 3.8: salus populi suprema lex esto.

9. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 2.1–2.7; Politics 1.2.

10. Epictetus, Enchiridion 1; Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 2.1, 6.

11. Polybius, Histories Book 6: the mixed constitution.

12. Virgil, Aeneid 2.707–725: Aeneas carries Anchises.

13. On Fides's temple on the Capitol: Cicero, De Natura Deorum 2.61.

14. Ovid, Fasti 3.809–848: the Quinquatria of Minerva.

15. On the triumph: Tertullian, Apology 33 ("remember you are a man").

16. Parthenon refinements and the 1687 explosion: Hurwit, The Athenian Acropolis (1999).

17. Campo Vaccino and Michelangelo's Campidoglio: Claridge, Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide (2010).

18. Hesiod, Theogony 535–616, and Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound: Prometheus and fire.

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