

# CONTENTS

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## THE REPUBLIC

The Republic Synopsis.....	6
Reading Guide.....	9
<b>Book 1</b>	
Lesson I: The Republic, Book 1.1-13.....	12
Lesson II: The Republic, Book 1.14-37.....	16
Lesson III: The Republic, Book 1.38-50.....	22
Lesson IV: The Republic, Book 1.51-71 .....	28
<b>Book 2</b>	
Lesson V: The Republic, Book 2.1-20.....	36
Lesson VI: The Republic, Book 2.21-36 .....	40
Lesson VII: The Republic, Book 2.37-70 .....	44
<b>Book 3</b>	
Lesson VIII: The Republic, Book 3.1-28 .....	50
Lesson IX: The Republic, Book 3.29-48.....	54
<b>Books 4 &amp; 5</b>	
Lesson X: The Republic, Books 4 and 5 .....	58
<b>Book 6</b>	
Lesson XI: The Republic, Book 6.....	62

## THE LAWS

The Laws Synopsis .....	70
<b>Book 1</b>	
Lesson XII: The Laws, Book 1.1-35.....	74
Lesson XIII: The Laws, Book 1.35-57 .....	81
<b>Book 2</b>	
Lesson XIV: The Laws, Book 2.1-22.....	88
Lesson XV: The Laws, Book 2.23-69.....	93
<b>Book 3</b>	
Lesson XVI: The Laws, Book 3.1-32.....	100
Lesson XVII: The Laws, Book 3.33-49.....	106

# LESSON I: The Republic, Book 1.1-13

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## TEACHING NOTES

**Homework Questions:** 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15

**Quiz Questions:** 4, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14

**Discussion Focus Questions:** 1

## SYNOPSIS

### Book 1.1-13 Preface

fr. Obligations of the individual to the state

fr. Importance of both experience and theoretical education

2-12 Anti-Epicureanism: refuting arguments against political engagement

13 Cicero's experience and learning as qualifications for writing

## I. THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Which do you think is more important preparation for writing political philosophy, experience or education?

## II. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. What overcomes all enticements of pleasure and ease?

1.1

Nature has given men a need for virtue and a desire to defend the common safety.

2. What is virtue and what is it not?

1.2

Virtue is not some kind of knowledge to be possessed without using it. It consists entirely in its use.

*Note: This is a peripatetic view.*

3. What is the most important use of virtue?

1.2

The most important use of virtue is the governance of states and the accomplishment in deeds rather than words of the things about which philosophers talk.

4. Why is law superior to philosophy?

1.3

The law compels everyone to do what philosophy can persuade only a few people to do.

5. Why are statesmen superior to philosophers?

1.3

Just as cities are superior to villages, men who lead cities should be considered far wiser than philosophers who have no experience of public life.

6. What causes men to be eager to make human life better and safer?

1.3

nature itself

7. List the arguments made against taking part in public life in sections 4-6, and Cicero's refutation of each.  
1.4-6

*Note: Epicurus recommended avoiding politics, but many Romans were both Epicureans and politicians.*

- The labor it takes to defend the commonwealth: It is a minor burden for an alert and vigorous man.
- The danger to one's life (supported by examples of political/military disasters such as Miltiades or Themistocles): To fear death is disgraceful. Death is inevitable, and it is far more miserable to be worn away by nature and old age than to lay down one's life for one's country.
- The danger of exile, including Cicero's exile as an example: Those who make these arguments also went overseas during the civil wars.

8. What does Cicero list as false claims about why the country gives birth to its citizens?  
1.8

to serve our convenience or provide a safe refuge for our relaxation and a quiet place for rest

9. What claim does Cicero assert a country makes on its citizens?  
1.8

She has a claim on the largest and best part of our minds, talents, loyalty, and judgment for her own use, and leaves us for our private use only so much as is beyond her requirements.

10. List the arguments made against taking part in public life in sections 9-10, and Cicero's refutation of each.  
1.9-10

- Those who take part in public life are worthless men; to be paired with them is low, and to fight against them is dangerous.
- Good and brave men should not allow themselves to be subject to wicked men or allow wicked men to ravage the commonwealth while they are capable of helping it.
- A wise man will take no part in public affairs unless a crisis compels him.  
It is impossible to bring aid to the state in a crisis if you are not already in a position to do so.

11. Why does Cicero believe that philosophers should not neglect knowledge of public administration?

1.11

They ought to prepare in advance for whatever they might need.

12. What does Cicero state is his goal in writing *De Re Publica*?

1.12

His goal is to provide a discussion of the state and to advocate involvement in it.

13. Why does Cicero believe that classical philosophers who did not hold office perform an important public function?

1.12

They did much research and writing about government.

14. What human virtue does Cicero believe most closely approaches the divine?

1.12

founding new states or preserving existing ones

15. Why does Cicero believe he should be considered an authority on his topic?

1.13

Some earlier figures were skilled in argument but performed no public actions, while others were admirable in deeds but poor in exposition. Cicero has achieved something memorable in his public career and has a capacity for explaining the principles of civic life.