***Reasons Plebeians Believed they should have more Freedoms***

 **Poverty and Distress of the Plebeians**.—Wars had left the plebeians in a very dependent and awful condition. The wealthy patricians, for the most part, lived in the city of Rome; and their property was protected by the city walls. But the homes of the plebeians were normally in the country. For that reason, when they were serving in the army, their little farms were destroyed by the enemy, their families were driven away or killed, and their property such as homes and livestock (cows, goats and other farm animals) were destroyed. In this way, while serving their country, their houses and fields were taken away from them, and so were reduced to a condition of poverty and great distress.

**The Unjust Law of Debt**.—The biggest problem and complaint of the plebeians was the harsh law of debt. Having lost their property by the misfortunes of war, they had to borrow money of the rich patricians; and they were put further into debt. Being in debt in the early days of Rome was especially bad. If he could not pay his debt, he was likely to be arrested, thrown into a dungeon, and made the slave of the person who loaned him money. The law of debt was not only harsh in itself, but its effect was to keep the poor in a continual state of poverty, from which they could not easily escape.

**The Unequal Division of the Public Land**.—Another cause which kept the plebeians in a state of poverty was the unjust sharing of the public land which had been acquired/gained in war. This land belonged to all the people, and might have been used to relieve the problems of the poor such as poverty. But the government was controlled by the patricians, and they used this land for their own gain and benefit. The Patricians were allowed to “occupy”, the public land at a small price. And as long as the land remained public, it could not be sold by the occupants; but the longer the rich patricians held this land, the more the rich would look upon it as their own property and land. They would soon ignore the fact that it belonged to the whole Roman people and call it their own. So that meant the common people were deprived of their fair share of the land which they had helped to conquer.

**The Plebeians Wanted…**

* To know the laws of Rome
* More money and land
* The law of unjust debt removed
* Representation in the Republic. People to look out for their rights not just the patricians.

**Things to think about for discussion**

* What are some ways the Plebeians were held back from economic advancement (making money).
* What were some of the unfair laws directed toward the Plebeians
* Why did they want to gain economic and political power
* Why do the plebeians deserve to have more rights and freedoms

**Things to Remember…**

* Plebeians made up 90% of the population
* Plebeians made up the majority of the army; patricians were the high ranking soldiers who didn’t fight.
* Plebeians were the farmers that helped feed the majority of Rome