

Ancient Rome

The city of Rome grew from a small village to a mighty empire. Roman legends tells that it was founded in 753 B.C. by **Romulus and Remus** – twin sons of the god Mars and a Latin princess. The twins were said to have been abandoned by their mother by the **Tiber River**. They were found and raised by a she-wolf. It was here that they built the city of Rome

In real life Rome grew because of its location. The area is built on seven rolling hills at the curve of the Tiber River, almost at the center of the Italian peninsula. The surrounding area has excellent, fertile soil.

The earliest settlers on the Italian peninsula came during prehistoric times. From 1000 – 500 B.C. three groups lived in the region, the **Latins, Greeks and Etruscans**.

The Latins were farmers and nomadic herders who settled on both sides of the river in a region called Latinum. The Latins became the first Romans.

The Greeks were settlers that between 750-600 B.C. established about 50 colonies on the coasts of southern Italy and Sicily. All of Italy, including Rome, was culturally diffused by the Greeks.

The Etruscans were the natives of Northern Italy. They were skilled metalworkers and engineers who assisted in the development of the Roman Empire. They created an alphabet that was later adopted by the Romans. They also create the arch, used frequently in Roman architecture.

The Romans took their polytheistic religion from both the Greeks and the Etruscans. Roman gods took the same personalities and legends of the Greek gods. The Romans however, gave them different names.

Parallel Greco-Roman Deities

| Greek | Association | Roman |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Zeus | Ruler-father, sovereign controller | Jupiter |
| Hera | Marriage, queen of the gods | Juno |
| Hermes | Athletics, poetry, travelers | Mercury |
| Aphrodite | Love | Venus |
| Ares | War | Mars |
| Apollo | Medicine, fine art, wisdom | Apollo |
| Artemis | The hunter, protector of women | Diana |
| Poseidon | Earth and Sea mover | Neptune |
| Dionysus | Fertility, dance, song, drams, wine | Bacchus |

The traditional date for the founding of Rome is 509 B.C. The Romans did not want a king or a leader with too much power. Therefore they set up a new government called a **republic**. In a republic, officials are chosen by the people. At first, all government officials were **patricians**, or in the landholding upper class. The Patricians of the Senate created the laws of Rome and elected two **consuls** (administrators/army commanders). To limit their power, consuls were elected annually and serviced for only one term. As the city of Rome grew, other officials were selected to serve under the consuls and a **bureaucracy** (a large system of government) emerged.

Not all Romans participated in the Patrician government. Women, slaves and foreigners were excluded. The **plebeians** (farmers, merchants and traders) were second class citizens and had very little power. They paid taxes, did military service, but had no voice in government. In 450 B.C., the plebeians demanded written laws. Then they won the right to elect their own officials. The Patricians gave them rules, the **Laws of the Twelve Tablets**. These laws were placed in the forum (public square). They became the basis for the Roman legal system. The Plebeians Assembly of Tribes gained the right to have **tribunes** (representatives) address their concerns in the Senate. Some Plebeians were even appointed to administrative positions. In 366 B.C. Plebeians could be chosen consuls. Finally, in 287 B.C. the Plebeian Assembly of Tribes earned the right to make the laws for the republic.

By 270 B.C. the Romans had conquered all of Italy. They went on to conquer Carthage, Macedonia, Greece, and parts of Asia Minor. They were able to do so partly because they had a strong, well-disciplined army. The Romans also treated their enemies well. Conquered people were allowed to keep their own government and customs. In return they had to pay taxes to Rome and supply soldiers for the Roman army. Some conquered people even became Roman citizens.

The Roman army copies the battle tactics of the Greeks and Macedonians, using a phalanx, but they split their legions into smaller, highly mobile forces of 100 men which were known as centuries. The leader of 100 men was a **centurion**. Part of the Roman's success was the management of conquered peoples. They created military colonies (permanent occupation forces) within the conquered territories. They conscripted (drafted) conquered soldiers into their legions.





In 264 B.C. Rome came into conflict with another great Mediterranean power, the Phoenician city of Carthage in North Africa. Rome and Carthage fought three (3) wars known as the Punic Wars; the winner would control the Western Mediterranean.

The First Punic War (264B.C. to 241 B.C.)

Rome took the grain producing island of Sicily, becoming a sea power in the process, but Rome also lost nearly one-fifth of its citizens in the war. In 238 B.C., the Romans took the islands of Sardinia and Corsica and threatened Carthage's colonial settlements in Spain.

The Second Punic War (218 B.C. to 201 B.C.)

Carthage's great general, Hannibal, launched an invasion from Spain, crossing the Pyrenees Mountains and then the Alps and swooped down on Rome from the north. To help Hannibal carry his supplies he used elephants but many of them died as they could not adjust to the snow and cold temperatures in the mountains. The Romans suffered heavy losses and lost control of the Gauls in the north. For the next six years, Hannibal won battles on the Italian Peninsula, but was unable to conquer Rome itself. In 210 B.C., the Roman general Scipio cut Hannibal's supply lines in Spain, and in 204 B.C., Scipio crossed the Mediterranean and invaded the city of Carthage. Hannibal had to return home to defend Carthage. The Romans decisively defeated Carthage in 202 B.C.



Hannibal's attack during the Second Punic War

Over the next fifty years, Carthage rebuilt its economy, but did not break the peace of 202 B.C. However, Rome saw Carthage's recovery as a threat to its power and allies in the Mediterranean.

The Third Punic War (149 B.C. to 146 B.C.)

Rome attacked Carthage to protect its North African ally, Numidia. Rome destroyed the city of Carthage, ruined its land, and sold the Carthaginians into slavery.



The Roman Empire at its peak is shown in yellow
 Note that all of the names are in Latin

By 200 B.C. Rome's new strength was rising in the central Mediterranean. By the 2nd century B.C. it was growing into a major power. Rome conquered Macedonia and made it an imperial province in 148 B.C. Rome's rulers allowed Greek poleis (plural of polis or city), autonomy (home rule) and preserved and protected the more important city-states such as Athens, as centers of learning. The Roman's admiration of Greek civilization led them to take for their own much of the Greek culture – art, architecture, technology, education, and religion.

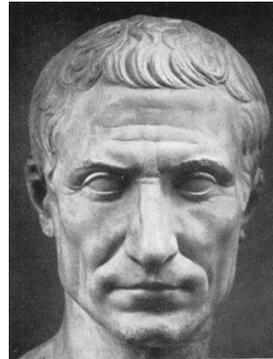
The constant warfare and unrest among conquered lands took an economic toll on the Roman republic. Some individuals became very wealthy by using slave labor to work latifundias (large farms) to supply the city and the Roman legions. The average Roman citizen did not share in the wealth but had to pay increasing amounts of taxes to support the imperial conquests.



Roman Coin

The political unrest at the end of the 2nd century turned into civil war in the 1st century B.C. Between 130 B.C. and 100 B.C. reformers such as tribunes Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus offered hopes for land reforms, but mob violence tragically ended their efforts. Consul Gaius Marius (104-100 BC) began to pay army volunteers from the poorer classes, creating a professional army. Marius was overthrown by aristocratic General Lucius Sulla in a civil war in 88 B.C. Sulla became a dictator and purged the plebeians from the leadership, restoring rule by the Patricians. In 70 B.C., consuls Gnaeus Pompey, Marcus Crassus joined with Senator Julius Caesar to form a triumvirate (a three people oligarchy) and restored stability to Rome.

The civil wars in Rome caused many outlying provinces to rebel against Roman rule. To stop these rebellions Caesar and Crassus took two armies to put down these rebellions. Crassus died in battle in Persia in 53 B.C. **Julius Caesar** was successful in defeating the Gauls in the Gallic Wars and spread his Roman control farther into northern Europe. The Roman Empire now stretched as far as Britain.



Julius Caesar

Pompey and the Senate feared that Caesar's legions were too powerful and would overthrow the government in Rome. In 49 B.C. Pompey and the Senate ordered Caesar to leave his army and return to Rome. Caesar marched his legions on Rome and began another civil war (49-45 B.C.) He pursued Pompey's forces through the Eastern Mediterranean and into North Africa. In Egypt, Caesar made Cleopatra his mistress and then queen. Finally, Caesar ended up in Spain. Caesar's armies defeated those of Pompey and Caesar went back to Rome where the Senate made him dictator-for-life.

Caesar changed the tax structure, reordered the land holding system, expanded Roman citizenship to all of Italy and many provinces, and reformed the calendar. Caesar was popular and as his power grew, so did the fear that he would change Rome into a monarchy. In 44 B.C. Brutus Cassius, the leader of Caesar's enemies in the Senate assassinated him. Another civil war followed. Caesar's followers, Marc Anthony, Marcus Lepidus and his nephew Octavian, defeated his enemies and formed another triumvirate.

In the next twelve years the three-way dictatorship disintegrated. Lepidus was removed from power, Octavian and Anthony quarreled. Anthony fled to Egypt and allied himself with Cleopatra. Octavian defeated them in a great naval battle (Actium, 31 B.C.) and became the sole ruler of Rome.

Octavian established himself as **princeps** (first citizen) and chief army commander but turned the Republic into a monarchy. In 27 B.C. he took the title **Imperator Caesar Augustus** (exalted emperor). The Emperor Augustus continued Julius Caesar's reforms, and oversaw a golden age, the **Pax Romana**. Augustus secured the borders of the empire, consolidated it with roads and a postal system, expanded commerce, Roman art, and architecture. Augustus ruled from 27 B.C. until 14 A.D.).

It was during the rule of Imperator Caesar Augustus that Christianity came into being.

Augustus' successors, **Tiberius** (ruled 14-37 AD), **Caligula** (ruled 37-41 AD) and **Claudius** (ruled 41-54 AD) were sometimes cruel, but continued the imperial development. The last of Augustus' relatives, **Nero** (ruled 54-68 AD), began the persecution of the Christians. Nero's successor, **Vespasian** (69-79 AD), restored law and order. It was Vespasian that had the **Colosseum** built in Rome.



Other significant Roman Emperors were:

Trajan (98-117 AD) who pushed the Empire northeastward and created a series of aqueducts

Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD) expanded the Empire in Europe and reformed taxes.

Diocletian (284-305 AD) transformed the Empire into a true monarchy, created a royal court and a civil service, employed forced labor, raised taxes, and divided the Empire into eastern and western regions.

Constantine the Great (306-337 AD) reorganized the Empire and provinces, created an occupational caste system to stabilize the economy, moved the capital to **Byzantium** (Constantinople), and legalized Christianity.

The Decline of the Roman Empire began when Pax Romana began to disintegrate in the 3rd century A.D. The Roman Senate lost all of its power and the military deposed and installed a constant series of mediocre emperors. Rome was in internal chaos. Government officials became greedy and corrupt. Women did gain more freedom but most of the people, including the emperors ignored the social and economic problems. They used free food, races, and gladiator fights to control the people.

In addition to the domestic problems the Empire was constantly invaded by Teutonic invaders from Northern Europe and Spain (known as the Germanic tribes – Goths, Visigoths, Vandals, Saxons, Alemanni and the Franks. These “barbarian attacks” disrupted commerce and supply lines. Shortages of food were seen in the cities within the Empire and prices rose, taxes increased but many people were not working. The economic system was in chaos.

Historians use the year 476 A.D. to mark the fall of Rome. In fact the Empire had been declining for many years. The Germanic invasions weakened the Empire. Romans forgot the values that made Rome great. The government made the people unhappy. The Roman army grew weak. Corruption and high taxes caused many to accept Germanic customs, ideas and languages which were rapidly replacing Roman culture.

The Fall of Rome

| Military Causes | Economic Causes | Political Causes | Social Causes |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Visigoths and other Germanic tribes invade the Empire | Heavy taxes necessary to support the government | Government become too strict | Population declines because of disease and war |
| Roman army lacks training and discipline | Farmers leave their lands | People stop supporting the government | People become selfish and lazy |
| Romans forced to hire foreign soldiers to defend borders | Middle Class disappears | Many corrupt officials | |
| | Romans use too much slave labor | The divided Empire becomes weak | |

Contributions of the Roman Empire

The Romans became blenders and adapters of many cultures over the centuries that they ruled their vast Empire. Roman law, created from the Twelve Tablets (450 B.C.) was precise in logic and organization. However, Roman law was not a law of equality. It was applied differently to different classifications of citizens and non-citizens. Roman law did create a consistent basis for the laws of the Empire

The rule of Law and Justice

1. Applied to all people under Roman rule
2. Created stability and unity in the Roman Empire
3. There were five basic principles
 - (a) People were equal under the law
 - (b) The accused can face accusers and defend against the charge
 - (c) Decisions must be based on fairness
 - (d) A person is presumed innocent until proven guilty
 - (e) Guilt must be clearly established

The blending of Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman cultures is called **Greco-Roman civilization**.

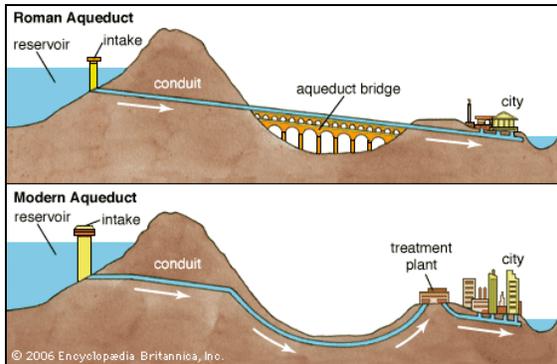
The Romans used Greek statues in their homes and public buildings. Builders used Greek columns however Roman buildings were mighty and grand rather than simple and elegant. For leisure, the Romans built magnificent public baths.



The Roman Baths in Bath, England

Many Romans spoke **Greek** and used Greek writing styles. The greatest Roman poets such as Virgil and Ovid, and the historians Horace and Livy used the Roman language of **Latin** for their literature. Latin became the common tongue of the Empire, and helped unify a vast region. Latin also became the official language of the Christian Church and continued to be the intellectual language of Europe for more than 1,000 years.

Roman infrastructure was made up of road networks, bridges, aqueduct systems, buildings that had columns, arches and domes that became magnificent palaces, temples, and forums.



The Romans did little scientific investigation. They did, however, put science to practical use. They used geography to make maps and medical knowledge to improve public health. They created Roman numerals that were used throughout the empire.

Roman Numerals

| | | | | | |
|---------------|----|------|-----|------|-------|
| I V X L C D M | | | | | |
| I | 1 | XX | 20 | CC | 200 |
| II | 2 | XXX | 30 | CCC | 300 |
| III | 3 | XL | 40 | CD | 400 |
| IV | 4 | L | 50 | D | 500 |
| V | 5 | LX | 60 | DC | 600 |
| VI | 6 | LXX | 70 | DCC | 700 |
| VII | 7 | LXXX | 80 | DCCC | 800 |
| VIII | 8 | XC | 90 | CM | 900 |
| IX | 9 | C | 100 | M | 1,000 |
| X | 10 | | | | |

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The power of the Roman legions and navy created a vast, protected region in which trade and the exchange of ideas flourished. Food and raw materials for artisans came from the provinces to Rome. Traders took manufactured articles to the world beyond the Empire. Roman commerce flowed over Roman roads to all points of the Empire and beyond, via the Silk Road and other caravan routes to Persia, China, and elsewhere in Asia.

Key words and Definitions of the Roman Republic

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Republic | Translated means “public affairs” A form of government where the power rests with citizens who have the right to vote in order to select their leaders |
| Patricians | Roman aristocratic landowners who held most of the power. They inherited their power and social status |
| Plebeians | The common farmers, artisans, and merchants who made up the majority of the Roman population. Citizens of Rome who had the power to vote but at first could not hold important government positions |
| Tribunes | An assembly of elected representatives of Plebeians. Created to protect their rights and unfair acts put into law by Patrician officials |
| Twelve Tables | Written laws made in 451 B.C. by ten Plebeian officials. These laws were hung in the forum. They were the basis for Roman law. All free citizens, Patricians and Plebeians had the right of protections of the law. |
| Consuls | The two Roman officials who commanded the army and directed the government. Their term was for only one year and they could not be elected again for ten years. One consul could always overrule (veto) the other’s decisions. |
| Senate | The aristocratic branch of Rome’s government that had both legislative and administrative functions. It had 300 members, chosen by the upper class. Membership was for life. Later in the Empire, Plebeians were elected. |
| Tribal Assembly | Organized by the Plebeians, elected the tribunes and made laws for the common people. Later it won the right to make laws for the republic. |
| Triumvirate | A group of Three Rulers |
| Legion | Made up of 5,000 heavily armed foot soldiers (infantry) that were supported by cavalry (horse soldiers). Legions were divided into smaller groups of 100 men, each of which was called a century and lead by a centurion |
| Gladiator | A professional fighter who fought to death in public contests |
| Aristocracy | Government by nobles |
| Democracy | Government by the people |
| Dictator | A leader who had absolute power to make laws and command the army. |
| Monarchy | Government by a king |