

THE RISE OF ROME

Alexander the Great had planned to march west to Italy after he finished with Persia. He died before this plan was carried out. Instead, armies from Italy marched east and took over much of the land Alexander had ruled.

Italy had been settled by people from the north, from Asia Minor, and from Greece. The northerners were called Latins. They learned much from other peoples. They worshiped the Greek gods, though they gave these gods new names. They modeled their writing and government after the Greeks. The people of Asia Minor taught them to build good roads. All these things helped the people of Italy.

As in other parts of the world, the Italian peninsula was dotted with many city-states. The city of Rome was more powerful than any other. Because it was built on seven hills, it was protected from its enemies. It used this safety to become a center of trade for most of Italy. By 270 B.C.E., Rome had taken control of most of the other city-states. It made these cities pay taxes to Rome and supply soldiers for Rome's army. In return, Rome protected them from attack by other nations.

Rome began to look for more lands to control. War broke out between Rome and Carthage in northern Africa. Carthage had been a Phoenician colony and had become strong. This war lasted off and on for sixty-two years. They are called the Punic Wars. Finally Rome destroyed Carthage and was on its way to becoming more powerful. During the seventy-five years that followed, Rome fought and defeated Macedonia, Spain, and Greece. Roman rule went as far as Asia Minor and Egypt. The Hebrew nation of Palestine also became part of the Roman Empire.



Ruins of Carthage

When Rome captured an area, it was made a province. This meant that Rome governed it and received tax money and soldiers from that area. Many Romans in government used this tax money for their own good and became very wealthy. These wealthy people then bought large farms and used slaves to do the work. In this way, they became even wealthier. As more and more slaves were used for work, the poor people could not find jobs. This soon led to troubles for Rome.

ROME BECOMES GREAT

One of Rome's many accomplishments was a new kind of government. The people of Rome formed a republic. As in Greece, the wealthy people had the most to say about government. They elected the men who formed the Senate. These lawmakers, called senators, were elected for life. The senators also chose two consuls to rule Rome for a year at a time.

At first, the poor people had little say in the government of Rome. Finally, a plan was worked out to include the common people. They could choose two tribunes to represent them. If the tribunes felt a law was bad for the common people, they could turn it down, no matter what the Senate said. The tribunes also had the laws written down so everyone knew just what they were.

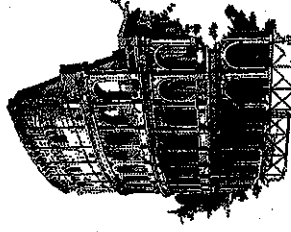
Most tribunes tried hard to help the people. Sometimes, though, when a tribune tried too hard, members of the Senate would have him murdered. One famous tribune killed himself when he heard the plans for his murder.

Roman schools were an improvement over those of other nations. They helped to carry on the knowledge of the Greeks. They also encouraged new ideas. These schools trained boys to become lawyers, bookkeepers, and government workers. Boys stayed in school until they were sixteen. Even girls went to school until the age of thirteen. Education helped Rome become great. Romans and all the people they conquered spoke the Latin language. Many modern languages, such as French, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese, are strongly related to Latin. For many hundreds of years, Latin was the language used by writers all over Europe.

HANNIBAL

Hannibal was a general from Carthage. During the Punic Wars, Hannibal decided to take a small force and invade Italy. The army crossed the towering mountains of the Alps with elephants! They wiped out a Roman force and won other victories but could not take Rome.

Rome became great for other reasons as well. Roman law spread over all the world the Romans knew. The Roman calendar was better than older calendars and remained in use for over a thousand years. Rome followed the example of Persia and made roads connecting all parts of the empire. Some of these roads are still used even though they are 2,000 years old. Many Roman buildings still stand, too. Roman aqueducts for carrying water from the mountains to the cities are still bringing water to thirsty people in Rome today.



The Roman Colosseum

CRITICAL THINKING

The Romans borrowed from other cultures. They also came up with their ideas. How did they blend the best and use it to make their nation strong?

tribune—an officer of ancient Rome who was elected by the common people to protect their interests

Latin—the language of ancient Rome

invade—to enter another nation's territory by force

aqueduct—a bridge-like structure that carries water from one area to another

ROME'S DECLINE

Rome started to have troubles while it was still growing. Romans began to use more and more slaves to do their work. Because of this, many unemployed people became angry about the lack of jobs. The government of Rome set up a large welfare system. It provided food for the hungry. To keep these people from thinking about their problems, the government set up free public entertainment. This entertainment was most likely to be a chariot race or an afternoon of fights in the arena.

The arena fighters were called gladiators. Often they were strong slaves trained to fight. A gladiator had a good reason for wanting to win—if he lost, he might well be killed. Gladiators fought each other or wild animals.

During this time, Rome was growing. Under the great general Julius Caesar, its armies had won Gaul and marched and sailed as far as Britain. These two areas are now called France and the United Kingdom, but for many years they were just provinces in the Roman Empire.

Julius Caesar took over Rome's government. Like many men before and after him, Julius Caesar found that good generals are not always popular politicians. He passed many laws to help the poor. When the wealthy Romans thought he had done too much for the poor, they had him killed.

Augustus followed Julius Caesar as Rome's ruler. He was careful not to anger the Senate too much. Instead, he worked out a better plan of government for the Roman Empire. He tried hard to make government honest and helpful to the people. The empire was fairly stable for about 200 years after this.

During this time, a new religion, Christianity, had its beginnings in the Hebrew nation of Palestine. Jesus of Nazareth preached his beliefs among the people there. The Romans ruled Palestine. A Roman court ordered Jesus put to death, and Roman soldiers carried out the court's order.

After the death of Jesus, his followers spread his teachings. Many Romans felt Christianity offered them more than did their gods. Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire. Roman leaders killed many early Christians, yet the nation of Rome finally adopted Christianity as its official religion.

Even though things seemed pretty good, Rome was weakening. The Romans had too many slaves and had grown lazy. Far too many people were on welfare or were supported by the government. The Roman rulers spent too much money on armies, and they raised taxes too high in order to pay for the cost of the armies and the government. In order to raise more money, the government started mixing copper with the silver in its coins.

CRITICAL THINKING
 Rome was extremely powerful for a long time, and was destroyed. What lessons can you learn from the fall of Rome?

The Roman Empire was divided into two parts. The eastern part lasted a thousand years longer than did the western part. By 476 C.E., the western part

CRITICAL THINKING
 The Roman emperors gave gifts to their subjects to keep them happy. What does this mean?

tribe—a group of semi-independent communities that occupy a common territory and are related by bonds of kinship, language, culture, values, and traditions

invade—to enter another nation's territory by force

had been destroyed. Fierce tribes of warlike people from the north invaded. The Visigoths and the Vandals finally destroyed the city of Rome itself. These tribes had not been part of the Roman Empire. They ended the great Roman Empire because Rome had become weak and lazy.

PUZZLE: THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The nine questions below all have their answers hidden in the word search. Some of the answers are written across, up, down, or even backward. Some cross each other. Can you find all nine answers? Write each answer on the line provided after the question. Then circle each answer in the word search.

L J U L I U S C A E S A R
 A P A O E S T R I B U N E
 T O D S C E D S L A V E S
 I P E G V A N D A L S U S N
 N E B G L A D I A T O R S
 C H R I S T I A N I T Y T
 F A R A I E G A H T R A C

1. What language did Romans speak? _____
2. What great Roman general captured Gaul? _____
3. What African state did Rome fight? _____
4. What new religion came to Rome after the death of Jesus? _____
5. *Vandalism* means "destruction of property." The origin of this word comes from a German tribe. What is the name of that tribe? _____
6. What was the name of the Roman lawmaking group that was elected for life? _____
7. What name was given to a man chosen to represent the common people in Rome's government? _____
8. What word means "professional fighter"? _____
9. What group of people did much of the work in Rome? _____

unemployed—without a job

welfare—help given by the government to needy people

arena—an enclosed area used for sports contests or entertainment

gladiator—a professional fighter of ancient Rome

politician—a person who holds or runs for public office

Christianity—a religion based on the teachings of Jesus Christ