

Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire

The Roman empire began with the reign of Augustus Caesar (27 BCE-14 CE). As emperor, Augustus implemented legal reforms, secured the borders of Rome, and oversaw the construction of many buildings (like the first Pantheon). His reign ushered in a period of peace and prosperity that would last for centuries. The Roman empire was one of the greatest political and cultural powers to have ever existed.



The Roman empire saw significant advances in the fields of medicine, law, religion, government, and warfare, as the Romans adopted and improved upon the cultural achievements of the lands that they conquered. The empire was at the peak of its power around 117 AD, when it included lands that are now Spain, Italy, France, southern Britain, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, and northern Africa. In total, the Roman Empire lasted for fifteen hundred years, a thousand years longer than the Republican era which had preceded it. But over time, Roman politicians and rulers became increasingly corrupt, and the Roman army lost some of its dominance. There was frequent infighting and civil wars. The Empire was also repeatedly attacked from without by barbarian tribes like the Visigoths, Huns, Franks, and Vandals.

The ever-increasing Empire also became too large to govern efficiently. In response, Emperor Diocletian divided the Empire into the Eastern Roman Empire and the Western Roman Empire in 285 AD, but it would take over a hundred years for the split to become permanent. Eventually the Western Roman Empire succumbed to its Barbarian enemies. The last Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was defeated by the German Goth Odoacer and removed from the throne in 476 CE. The Dark Ages in Europe would follow. The Eastern Empire eventually became known as the Byzantium Empire and remained in power for another 1000 years.

Name _____ **Ancient Rome**

QUESTIONS: The Republic Becomes an Empire

1. What were the two distinct periods in Roman history?

2. Who ruled Rome during the Republic?

3. The highest-ranking leaders in the Roman Republic were called what?

4. What was the First Triumvirate and how did it affect the Republic?

5. Why was Julius Caesar assassinated?

6. Who ruled Rome after Julius Caesar's death?

7. With what event did the Roman Empire begin?

The Republic Becomes an Empire

Before there was a Roman Empire, there was a Roman Republic. The Roman Republic and the Roman Empire were two distinct major periods in Rome's history.

The Roman Republic lasted from 509 BC to 27 BC. During this time, Rome was ruled by elected officials. The highest-ranking leaders in the Roman government were called consuls. There were always two consuls at a time, and their terms were limited to a single year, in order to prevent any one man from becoming too powerful.



The Republic began to crumble when three powerful politicians, Julius Caesar, Pompey the Great, and Marcus Licinius Crassus formed an alliance which became known as the First Triumvirate. Following the death of Crassus, Pompey and Caesar became enemies. Pompey tried to garner political support against Caesar while he was away from Rome with his army, but eventually Caesar returned to Rome and defeated Pompey. But there were some in the Republic who did not wish for Caesar to hold all the power, and Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC.

After Caesar's death, a second triumvirate was formed between Marc Antony, Caesar's heir Octavian, and Lepidus. They were officially recognized as rulers by the Roman government, with more power than the consuls. After a decade, they, too, eventually began to fight over power. Octavian defeated Lepidus in 36 BC, setting into motion a civil war between himself and Marc Antony, who had an alliance with Cleopatra VII of Egypt. Octavian defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC to become the most powerful man in Rome.

He took the name "Augustus" and became the first Emperor of Rome, marking the start of the Roman Empire, during which time Rome was led by consecutive Emperors until 476 AD, when the Western Roman Empire fell.

Name _____ **Ancient Rome**

QUESTIONS: The Roman Empire

1. When did the Roman Empire begin?

2. Describe the reign of Augustus Caesar.

3. At the peak of its power, which modern day countries were a part of the Roman Empire?

4. How long did the Roman Empire last?

5. What were some of the causes of the fall of the Roman Empire?

6. What change did the Emperor Diocletian make in the Roman Empire?

7. Which part of the old Roman Empire actually fell?