



FROM REPUBLIC TO EMPIRE



Unit Overview

After establishing control over the Italian peninsula, the Romans began to build an empire by conquering territory around the Mediterranean Sea. This brought Rome into conflict with Carthage, an equally ambitious city in northern Africa. The two cities fought a series of wars to determine which one would dominate the region. Although Rome emerged victorious, the Punic Wars would have both

positive and negative long-term effects for Roman state. Let's see how it all happened.

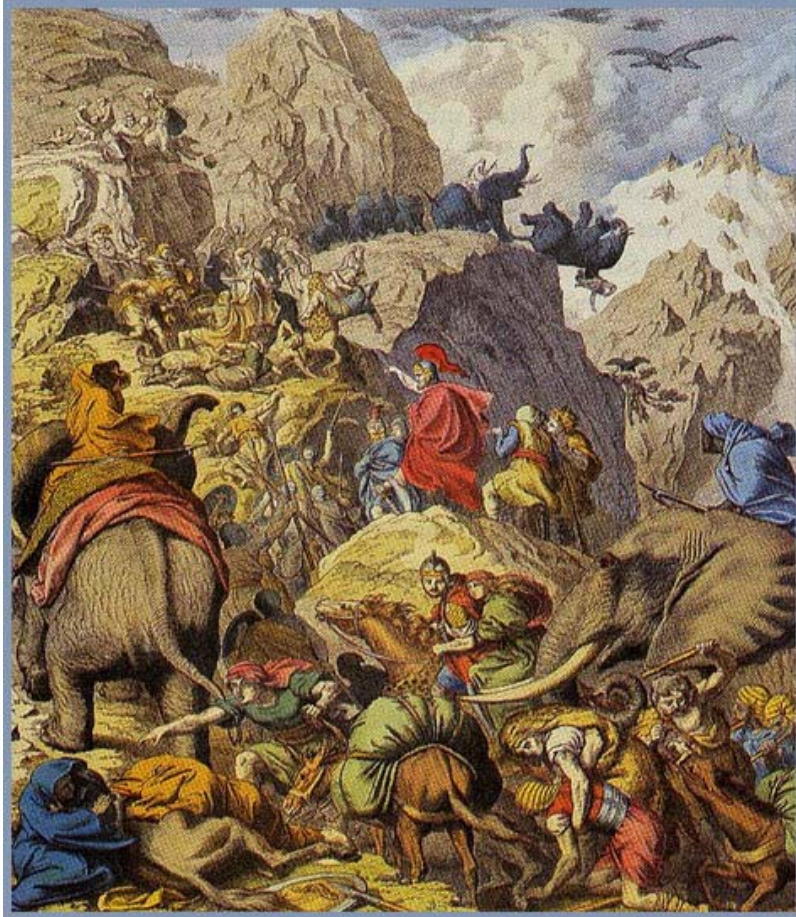
The Wars with Carthage

Carthage, once a colony of the Phoenicians, was located on the coast of northern Africa and, like Rome, had plans to dominate the area around the Mediterranean Sea. This made conflict between the two cities inevitable and resulted in a series of wars known as the **Carthaginian or Punic Wars**. When war broke out between the two cities for the first time in 264 B.C., both sides had certain advantages. Carthage, the larger of the two, had directed its energy to making money through trade. With their wealth, the Carthaginians had built a navy with over 500 ships and hired neighboring peoples to serve as soldiers. The Romans, on the other hand, had no actual navy. Since they had spent their energy on making war rather than making money, the Romans did have an experienced, well-trained army with 500,000 troops at their disposal. Their soldiers were more reliable and more loyal than those employed by the Carthage. When a Carthaginian warship ran aground in Italy, the Romans received a remarkable piece of good luck. They made 140 copies of the ship and added a few touches of their own. The Romans were then in a better position to compete with the Carthaginians on the sea.



The **First Punic War** was over control of the island of **Sicily** and dragged on for twenty-three years. Rome finally defeated Carthage, and the victory awarded Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica to Rome. For the next forty years, Rome and Carthage maintained an uneasy peace. In 218 B.C., the Carthaginian general Hannibal organized his forces at a base in Spain and prepared to attack Rome in the **Second Punic War**. He led his army, including several dozen war elephants, across France and over the Alps to raid Rome from the north. Even though this plan cost the lives of half of his soldiers, Hannibal took the Romans by surprise and won battle after battle for fifteen years.

In spite of his success, Hannibal was unable to capture the city of Rome itself. Desperate to get enemy out of Italy, the Romans sent an army to Carthage. This was a risky move, and not all Romans thought it was good idea. When the Romans began to arrive outside of their city, the Carthaginians demanded that Hannibal bring his army home to defend them. Hannibal had little choice but to comply. The Romans defeated the Carthaginians in a battle near Carthage, and the Second Punic War was another win for Rome.



Artist's Rendition of Hannibal Crossing the Alps

The damage done in Italy by Hannibal's army left the Romans with a desire for revenge that was not satisfied by winning the Second Punic War. Many Romans argued in favor of the complete destruction of Carthage. This resulted in the **Third Punic War** and the obliteration of Carthage. Those who survived the attack were sold into slavery, and salt was poured over the soil so nothing could grow there again. There was no question that Rome was the undisputable master of the western Mediterranean.

At the same time, Rome extended its power across the eastern Mediterranean and battled the rulers who had divided the empire of Alexander the Great. Greece, Macedonia and sections of Asia Minor surrendered to the Romans and became **provinces**, a term used for lands under Roman rule. Other areas, such as Egypt, formally became Roman allies. It appeared that Rome was dedicated to following a policy of **imperialism** or the establishment of control over other lands.



Ruins of Carthage



Go to Questions 1 through 8.

The End of the Republic

Rome not only conquered vast amounts of territory but also gained control of several major trade routes. As money poured into the city from taxes and increased business, a new class of wealthy Romans formed. They built impressive mansions and filled them with luxuries from distant lands. Some rich families used their money to buy country estates and turned them into large farms called **latifundia**. As Romans added new territory to their holdings, they made even greater profits by forcing captured people to work as slaves. The price of grain in the Roman markets quickly fell, and small farmers in Italy were forced to sell their property to pay their debts. Without land to farm, the unemployed moved to Rome and other cities with the hope of finding work. As the gap between the rich and the poor grew wider, angry mobs roamed the streets, and riots became common.

Although there were attempts at reform, the republic was unable to solve its social and economic problems. A series of civil wars rocked the Italian peninsula, and unrest spread throughout Rome's provinces. Popular political leaders challenged the traditional role of the Roman senate. The Roman army, no longer made up of citizen-soldiers, consisted of men who signed up to serve for sixteen years. They became professional soldiers and were willing to fight for any leader who rewarded them. This made it possible for rival politicians to form their own armies and to take control by force.



Go to Questions 9 through 11.

The Career of Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar, perhaps the most famous Roman of them all, was a master at using a loyal army to further his ambitions. In 59 B.C., he set out to conquer **Gaul**, which consisted mostly of modern-day France. After nine years and a successful military campaign, a triumphant Caesar prepared to return to Rome with his army. **Pompey**, his chief rival, convinced the senate to command Caesar to disband his troops and to come to Rome without them. Caesar defied the order and marched toward Rome with his army. In the civil war that followed, Caesar defeated Pompey and forced the senate to appoint him dictator.



Julius Caesar

Although he kept several features of the republic, including the senate, there was no doubt that Julius Caesar was the absolute ruler of Rome. In an effort to fix Rome's issues, he gave public land to the poor and established a government-sponsored works program to create jobs. Along with granting citizenship to more people, Caesar introduced a new, 365-day calendar which, with minor changes, we still use today. In spite of these efforts, Caesar's enemies plotted against him, and he was assassinated in 44 B.C. To learn more about the life and career of Julius Caesar, view the video listed below.



The Life and Times of Julius Caesar

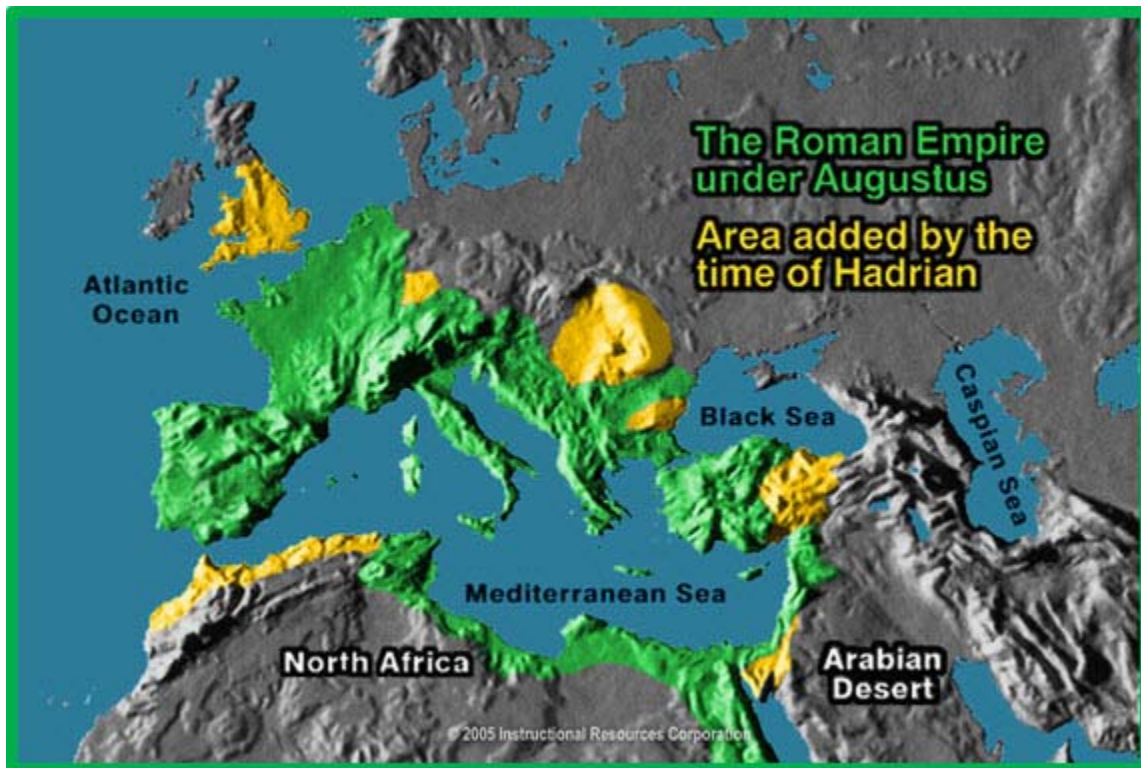
The death of Julius Caesar plunged Rome into a new round of civil wars. **Octavian**, Caesar's great nephew, and **Mark Antony**, one of Caesar's trusted generals, were determined to track down the murders. After they accomplished this, the two men engaged in a bitter struggle for power. In a sea battle, Octavian defeated Mark Antony and his ally **Cleopatra**, queen of Egypt. The senate gave Octavian the title of **Augustus** (Excellent One) and declared him the **princeps** or first citizen. This ended the Roman republic and made Augustus the first emperor of Rome.



Go to Questions 12 through 16.

Augustus Takes Charge

Augustus worked to return stability to Rome. Like Julius Caesar, he left the senate in place but added a **civil service**. This action created an efficient system of workers to make sure everything operated smoothly and to enforce the laws. They collected taxes, represented Rome in the provinces and supervised construction projects. Augustus ordered a **census** or a population count throughout the empire. New coins were issued to make it easier to conduct business, and a postal service delivered mail to Britain and other distant provinces. To create jobs, Augustus ordered a number of construction projects, and an efficient system of roads soon connected outlying territories to Rome.

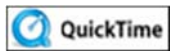




Go to Questions 17 and 18.

Pax Romana

The reign of Augustus began a 200-year period known as the **Pax Romana**, a Latin phrase that means the Roman peace. During this era, Rome and its territories, for the most part, experienced peace, prosperity and order. The Roman army patrolled the network of roads throughout the empire, and Roman ships protected the seas from pirates. As a result, travel was relatively safe, and advancements in transportation made it faster. Trade flourished, and new products came from everywhere. Spices from India, silk from China and wild animals from Africa could all be found in Rome. At the same time, ideas and knowledge were exchanged across the empire.



Augustus, the Sacred One

Not all of the emperors that followed Augustus were good rulers. Some, like Nero and Caligula, were incompetent and cruel. There were others, however, like Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius, who were committed to good leadership. Click on the graphic below to discover which Roman emperor was the most like you. In an attempt to gain public support and to quiet any unrest, most emperors offered free grain to the poor and used tax dollars to provide spectacular public entertainment. Romans of all social classes loved the chariot races held in the Circus Maximus and enjoyed watching the gladiators in the Coliseum. Similar activities took place in Roman-style arenas built throughout the empire. During the Pax Romana, Rome's political and social problems still existed but remained just below the surface.

QUIZ: WHO ARE YOU?



Go to Questions 19 and 20.

What Happened Next?

The impact of ancient Rome extended far beyond famous leaders and military accomplishments. Its achievements in engineering, literature and law continue to impact our daily lives. The rise of Christianity within the empire and the Roman reaction to this faith has shaped our thoughts and traditions. Before exploring these topics in the next unit, review the names and terms found in Unit 7; then, complete Questions 21 through 30.



Go to Questions 21 through 30.