

# 1. SPARTACUS and the SLAVE REVOLT

Rome needed workers to maintain its wealth. The first people conquered by the Roman army were welcomed as citizens, but after 265BC, many conquered people were auctioned off as slaves. Many of the great architectural achievements of ancient Rome were created with the grueling labor of slaves.

A slave named Spartacus led a slave revolt that threatened the stability of the Roman Republic. Spartacus was likely from Thrace, a land northeast of Greece, but we don't know much about his early life. Spartacus may have been a soldier in the Roman army, but was condemned to slavery. He was forced to train to be a gladiator. In ancient Rome, most gladiators were armed slaves who went into battle with other slaves or wild animals for the entertainment of the Roman people. In 73BC, Spartacus and a group of other gladiators escaped captivity by seizing kitchen knives and fighting their way to freedom. The Romans sent a small force to capture the escaped gladiators, but the slaves killed most of the Roman soldiers and took their weapons.

The Roman army believed they cornered the escaped slaves on Mount Vesuvius by blocking the only path from the mountain. Spartacus and his soldiers secretly climbed down a steep cliff using vines as ropes. The slave army then attacked the Romans from behind, killing most of the unprepared soldiers. The slaves continued to win battles with Roman armies and became folk heroes for many of the poorest people of ancient Rome. Folk heroes are popular with common people, but not with people in power. The ranks of the slave army grew as they liberated other slaves, and as word of their success grew, as many as 120,000 of the poorest people of Rome joined the revolt. Spartacus' powerful army plundered the Roman countryside for more than two years.

The slave revolt ended after a bloody series of battles near the southern tip of the Italian peninsula in 71BC. Two Roman generals, Crassus and Pompey, led a force 40,000 soldiers. The slaves were no match for the superior weapons of the Roman armies. Spartacus was killed in battle, but six thousand of his soldiers were taken prisoner and crucified. Crucifixion is a form of execution where the prisoner is nailed to a cross and left to die a slow, painful death. The crosses were placed along the Apian Way, one of Rome's most traveled roads. The sight of the crucified slaves served as a gruesome reminder of the strength and the brutality of the Roman army.

Crassus and Pompey returned to Rome as heroes. The Senate selected them to be consuls, but Crassus and Pompey were soon to come into contact with the greatest general in Roman history: Julius Caesar.

## 2. JULIUS CAESAR: ROMAN DICTATOR

Rome was a huge and very rich empire after the second Punic War, but the Senate did a poor job of running the Roman republic. The Senate was designed to govern a city, not a growing empire. The senators often took bribes or were not careful about how they voted in the forum. Many Romans wanted a strong leader, and the ambitious Julius Caesar was an obvious choice.

Caesar sought the office of consul in 60BC. He had recently returned from Spain where he served a year as governor. The two consuls at the time were Crassus and Pompey. Rather than become involved in a struggle, Caesar convinced Crassus, Pompey, and the Roman Senate to name him a third consul. This partnership of three equal rulers later became known as the First Triumvirate.

When Caesar's year-long term as consul ended, the Senate appointed him to be governor of Gaul. Gaul was a territory northwest of the Italian peninsula. Caesar led an army that captured most of Western Europe. His successes on the battlefield made Caesar the most popular man in Rome.

In 49BC, the Senate ordered Caesar to return to Rome, but to leave his army behind. Caesar feared that his opponents would destroy him, so he ignored the order and marched his army back to Rome. Caesar's orders clearly told him not to bring his army across the Rubicon River. When Caesar reached the river, he knew he faced an important decision. Caesar knew that if he obeyed the Senate and disbanded his army, his career would be over; but if he marched his troops across the river, the Senate would order Pompey and his army to retaliate. Today when people say they are "crossing the Rubicon," they refer to a very significant decision that cannot be undone.

Caesar's army seized control of Italy while Pompey and his army fled to Greece. Caesar hunted Pompey and defeated Pompey's army. Pompey then escaped to Egypt with Caesar in pursuit. When Caesar arrived in Egypt, the ten-year-old king of Egypt, Ptolemy XIII, presented Caesar with Pompey's decapitated head.

The Roman people admired Caesar as a war hero and a strong leader. In 46BC, they elected Caesar dictator of Rome. A dictator is a ruler with complete control. Caesar used his power to make many changes in Rome, often without approval from the Senate. Caesar instituted the Julian calendar of 365¼ days. Caesar's calendar is closely related to the calendar we use today. The month of July is named in honor of Caesar.

A year after his election as dictator, the Roman people elected Caesar "dictator for life." The Roman senators were outraged at Caesar's power and popularity. On March 15, 44BC, Caesar was met by a mob of sixty senators who stabbed the dictator to death.

### 3. CAESAR AUGUSTUS: FIRST EMPEROR

Julius Caesar was so popular with the Roman people that the Senate named him dictator for life, but in 44BC, a group of senators stabbed Caesar to death. Caesar's primary lieutenant, Marc Antony became the ruler of Rome, but Caesar's will provided a surprise. Caesar ignored both Antony and Caesarion. Caesarion was Caesar's son with Cleopatra. The dictator instead named Octavian as his sole heir. Octavian was Caesar's eighteen year-old grandnephew. An heir is someone who inherits a title or property. Caesar's will made Octavian one of the richest men in Rome, but the will provided Octavian with something even more valuable: the right for Octavian to call himself Caesar.

Octavian joined Antony and another general named Lepidus in an uneasy alliance known as the Second Triumvirate. Octavian and Antony forced Lepidus into retirement in 36BC. Octavian became the sole ruler of Rome with the death of Marc Antony five years later. Octavian ruled Rome for 41 years, a period when Rome developed into a military empire, so Octavian is considered by historians to be the first Roman Emperor. Octavian was careful not to meet the same fate as his great granduncle. He was very respectful to the senators, but the Senate knew that Octavian controlled the army and could do as he pleased.

Octavian took measures to earn the loyalty of the Roman army. He encouraged the soldiers to retire by providing them with land. Once the soldiers retired, Octavian did not have to be concerned with the army turning on him. Further, Octavian knew he could count on the retired soldiers' support if he was challenged by the Senate.

The Senate gave Octavian the title of Augustus in 27BC. Augustus means "the respected one." Octavian is usually referred to as Caesar Augustus after that date. Caesar Augustus restored peace and order to Rome after years of civil war. He made sure the lands throughout the empire were well run and taxes were fair. He built roads and bridges, government buildings, and huge public baths. He said, "I left Rome a city of marble, though I found it a city of bricks."

The armies of Caesar Augustus conquered most of Western Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. The Romans claimed all of the land surrounding the enormous Mediterranean Sea, which they called "a Roman lake." Rome developed into a great empire because of the strength and discipline of its army. The professionally trained Roman soldiers were divided into large units called legions. Each legion would have as many as 6,000 soldiers.

The Roman army was so powerful that it protected citizens from attack from the tribes who lived beyond the empire. Historian Edward Gibbon later described the two hundred-years of peace that began with the rule of Caesar Augustus as the *Pax Romana*, or the "Peace of Rome."

## 4. THE ROMAN EMPIRE AFTER AUGUSTUS

Caesar Augustus had complete power in Rome, but he showed great respect for the Senate. Later emperors made no secret of their power. The Senate continued to exist, but senators had little control over the affairs of the empire. Some of the emperors who followed Augustus ruled wisely. Others were foolish and cruel.

Nero was perhaps the most notorious emperor in Roman history. Nero became emperor when his mother conspired to kill his stepfather. Once Nero came to power, he ordered his mother's execution. Nero also killed two wives and a stepbrother. Nero ruled the empire by day, but at night he prowled the streets of Rome assaulting women. Nero believed himself to be the most talented person in the Roman Empire. Never before had an emperor performed on a stage as an actor or singer. Many Roman nobles considered Nero's performances to be outrageous and lacking talent, but no one would risk torture or death by criticizing the emperor. In AD67, Nero toured Greece. He participated in many games and contests, but no rival dared to beat the emperor. As Nero devoted himself to his artistic pursuits, he lost ruling power. In AD68, Nero faced an attack from his soldiers. His guard claimed Nero cried out, "What an artist the world is losing," as he stabbed himself in the neck.

The Roman Empire reached its greatest size in AD117 under the emperor Trajan. The empire extended from Britain and Spain, across France, southern Germany, and the Balkan Mountains. The empire also included North Africa, and stretched as far east as the Caspian Sea. In AD121, the emperor Hadrian built a wall across northern England to keep out invaders from Scotland. The Romans called the Scots "barbarians," possibly because their Celtic language reminded the Romans of the sounds made by sheep. In time, the Romans called all of the people they felt were uncultured "barbarians." Barbarian warriors from Germany would later lead to the end of the Roman Empire.

The Romans used great public projects to make their capital city the most advanced of the ancient world, and to create the largest empire of the era. The Romans particularly excelled at building roads. The roads made it easier to travel, move troops, collect taxes and trade with faraway provinces. The expression, "All Roads Lead To Rome" refers to the fact that Rome was the center of the ancient civilized world. Many of the roads, bridges and aqueducts of ancient Rome are still used today. Roman engineers brought water into the city by building water bridges called aqueducts. Nine aqueducts provided the Roman people with 38 million gallons of water every day. Parts of the Roman aqueduct system still supply water to fountains in Rome.

The Romans built many huge stadiums called amphitheaters. People would gather in amphitheaters to watch shows with clowns, jugglers and acrobats. Some Roman entertainment was very cruel. People would watch fights between wild animals and gladiators. Gladiators were usually slaves or criminals who fought with swords against animals or one another. A skillful gladiator might win his freedom by defeating an opponent. More often, the gladiators lost their lives. The greatest Roman amphitheater, the Colosseum, still dominates the Roman skyline. Only a portion of the Colosseum remains standing. Earthquakes destroyed some of the structure. Some of the stone used to build St. Peter's Basilica (church in the Vatican), came from the Colosseum.

Perhaps the greatest Roman engineering achievement was the sewer. Because Rome is in a valley among seven hills, there is nowhere for dirty water to go. The sewer system made it possible for Rome to become the largest city in the world. The population of the city of Rome swelled to more than one million people at the height of the empire.

## 5. CHRISTIANITY and CONSTANTINE

Most of the people who lived in and near Jerusalem during the reign of Caesar Augustus were Jews who believed in one God. This was unusual because at that time most Romans were pagans. Pagans are people who believe in many gods. The Romans allowed the Jews to practice their faith and did not force the Jews to worship Roman gods. About AD30, a holy man named Jesus began to attract a following in Jerusalem. The followers of Jesus angered Roman authorities because they refused to follow Roman laws. The authorities arrested and executed Jesus by nailing him to a cross. This form of execution is known as crucifixion.

Roman emperors became increasingly intolerant of Christianity. In AD202, Emperor Septimius Severus banned any Roman citizen from converting to Christianity or Judaism. Those who disobeyed the emperor were often tortured by soldiers or wild animals at sporting events. Despite the persecutions, Christianity continued to grow. Emperor Constantine later ended the persecution of Christians when he made Christianity legal throughout the Roman Empire.

By the fourth century, Rome was under attack by barbarian invaders from north of the Italian peninsula. In AD330, the Emperor Constantine moved his government from Rome to a city almost 1500 miles to the east called Byzantium. Constantine wanted a city safe from foreign invasion. The emperor renamed the city “Constantinople,” which means “city of Constantine.” While Constantine himself worshipped Roman gods, upon his death, he requested to be baptized into the Christian Church. Fifty years after Constantine’s death, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Roman civilization survived for centuries in Constantine’s eastern empire, long after the actual city of Rome and the empire’s western provinces fell to invaders. Historians refer to the Eastern Roman Empire as the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine Empire included parts of modern Greece, Serbia and Turkey. The Byzantine Empire lasted until 1453, when it fell to Turkish warriors. The warriors brought their faith in Islam to Constantinople and converted many of the churches to mosques. Constantinople is now known as Istanbul, Turkey.

While the empire continued in the east, the city of Rome was under attack. Illiterate Visigoth warriors overran “the Eternal City” in AD410. In AD476, a Visigoth warrior named Odoacer made himself emperor of Rome. The city of Rome continued to exist, but the Western Roman Empire dissolved into many small kingdoms. Western Europe fell into a period of war and disease known as the “Dark Ages.” Then, after about 1000 years, the region experienced a “rebirth” known as the Renaissance. The Renaissance was an era of invention and discovery when art, architecture, and science thrived. The people of the Renaissance referred to the era of the Greeks and the Romans as “the classical age,” a term we still use today.

## **ANSWER IN COMPLETE SENTENCES**

**(not on this page)**

### **SPARTACUS**

1. Where did Rome get its slaves from?
2. What were the slaves mostly used for?
3. Who was Spartacus?
4. Why do you think the slave revolt, led by Spartacus, was so successful for 2 years?
5. Spartacus was a folk hero to many people in ancient Rome. What is a folk hero?

### **JULIUS CAESAR**

1. Describe how decisions were made in the Roman republic, before Julius Caesar became dictator of Rome.
2. What does "crossing the Rubicon" mean (refer to Caesar's actions) and describe an instance where you, or someone you know, has "crossed the Rubicon."
3. What is a Dictator?
4. Identify 2 of Caesar's "enduring impacts"
5. Why did the senators kill Julius Caesar?

### **CAESAR AUGUSTUS**

1. What is an heir?
2. Why do you think Octavian was generous to the soldiers when they retired?
3. Why do you think Caesar Augustus was respectful of the senate despite his great power?
4. What do you think Augustus meant when he said, "I left Rome a city of marble, though I found it a city of bricks?"
5. Some people say that we live in an era that could be referred to as the Pax Americana. What do you think Pax Americana might mean? Why?

## **THE ROMAN EMPIRE AFTER AUGUSTUS**

1. List and briefly describe four examples of Roman technology.
2. How do you think Rome's many roads eventually helped lead to the downfall of the city?
3. Why do you think people enjoyed the "bloodthirsty" elements of Roman entertainment so much? Are we any better today (MMA, Movies, etc...)?
4. What problems would have occurred in Rome if they did not have an adequate sewage system?
5. Explain why only a portion of the Roman Colosseum remains standing.
6. Do you think it was easier, or harder to manage the Roman Empire after Caesar Augustus's reign?
7. Why did the Roman's have such a fear of foreign people and cultures?

## **CHRISTIANITY and CONSTANTINE**

1. What is a pagan?
2. How did Roman authorities initially react to Jesus's followers? Why?
3. Why did Constantine move his capital to Byzantium?
4. What is the current name of the city once named Constantinople?
5. Why do you think Constantine joined the Church on his deathbed?
6. What happened to the Roman Empire?