

J. The Importance of Rome

1. The world we live in begins mainly with ancient Greece. It was the Greeks who began to push humanity upward from the archaic plateau, and it was mainly Greek ideas that were reborn in the “Renaissance” (Rebirth).
2. There was, however, another thread of progress in ancient times that became combined with Greek culture. We now turn to the story of *Rome*.
3. It was in Rome that a “republic” with unique protections for individual rights was first created. This served as another important example to the Founding Fathers of the United States. It was Rome that eventually conquered Greece and used Greek ideas to shape the huge *Roman Empire*.
4. This is why after Rome collapsed in 476 AD, and the Dark Ages passed, the people of the Renaissance revived not just Greek culture but *Greco-Roman* ideas.

K. Legendary Origins: Remus and Romulus

1. The Romans believed that their city had been founded by a pair of brothers called Remus and Romulus.
2. The legend says that the two boys were the children of the Roman god Mars and a priestess of the goddess Vesta.
3. When the king discovered that the priestess had had children (which was illegal), he ordered her and the children killed, but a servant took the boys and placed them on the river Tiber in a basket.
4. They floated downstream, to be discovered by a she-wolf who suckled them, and then they were discovered and raised by a shepherd.
5. When the boys returned to Rome as men, they competed to see who would be king. Romulus killed his brother, and became the city's first legendary king.

L. The Early Roman Republic

1. Following the kingship of Romulus, Rome was ruled by a dynasty of kings known as the Tarquins.
2. Roman history begins when the Romans deposed their last king, Tarquinius Superbus **c.509 BC**.
3. Rome then became a government called a “republic,” but which was still very aristocratic. (The word “republic” comes from the Latin “Res Publica”—a public affair.)
4. It was ruled by the nobles, called “patricians.” (The word “patrician” comes from the Latin word for father, which is “pater.” A patrician was a son of a noble father.)
5. Only members of the patrician clans could participate in the government.
6. The commoners, known as “plebeians,” had no control over the government.
7. The patrician assembly created the laws of Rome, and selected the two officials to enforce the laws, known as “consuls.”

8. The consuls had complete power over all Roman citizens during their term of office, but they only held office for one year. Afterwards, if they had not ruled well, they could be put on trial for their actions, and even killed. This placed a major limitation on their power, and was the first step towards a republic.
9. The consuls were advised by the patrician leaders, whose assembly was known as the Senate.

M. The First Secession of the Plebeians and the Creation of the Tribune

1. As in Athens, the commoners were under the power of the government, and often treated unfairly. For one, they experienced debt slavery just as in Athens (by failing to return borrowed food and money, and having their property and freedom taken from them to pay the debt.)
2. As a protest, the entire plebeian population left the city in a time of war and began to construct another city. This is an example of “secession,” which means the breaking away of a part of a country to form a separate country.
3. The patricians realized that they could not defend Rome by themselves against its enemies. They were forced to free all the debt slaves and to give the plebeians protection from the power of the consuls.
4. The patricians agreed to allow the plebeians to be protected by two government officials, who acted like a combination of police officer and lawyer. These officers were called “tribunes.”
5. The tribunes were given special powers. They could personally intervene to stop a patrician or plebeian from taking any action whatsoever.
6. Most importantly, they could stop a consul from arresting or harming a plebeian.
7. Anyone who interfered with a tribune instantly became an “outlaw.” (He could legally be killed by anyone. Even a tribune could be outlawed this way!)
8. The plebeians did not get any power in the government. They could not make any laws. But they were protected *from the government* by the tribunes.
9. This was a new idea. Nobody in history had ever created a government where part of the government could obstruct the functions of another part of the government, thus protecting the people from the unchecked power of the government. This is an important part of the idea of a “republic,” which American Founding Fathers referred to as “checks and balances.”

N. A Written Constitution for Rome

1. The Importance of Written Laws
 - a) Written laws, like the American Constitution, help to protect individual rights, because objective laws are laws that must be followed by the government itself, and which the citizens can insist upon.
 - b) Another value of a written code of laws is that citizens know their rights and responsibilities. They know what crimes are prohibited, and the punishments

for those crimes. This helps guide them to be rights-respecting.

- c) Another value of written laws, however, is that when the people understand the laws, they can work to change or replace them. In the most extreme case, as in the secession of the plebeians, or more recently, the American Revolution, the citizens can essentially rebel and force a drastic change.

2. The Second Secession of the Plebeians (449 BC)

- a) The plebeians wanted written laws, but the patricians did not like the idea of having another limit placed on their power.
- b) Ten officials were given one year to create this new set of laws. In the mean time, there were to be no consuls or tribunes, because no one would be allowed to interfere with them.
- c) After a year they claimed that they needed another year to complete the task.
- d) The plebeians feared that the lawmakers would try to set themselves up as the permanent aristocratic rulers of Rome, so they rebelled.
- e) As before, they marched away from Rome. They *seceded*.
- g) This Second Secession of the Plebeians forced the patricians to complete the work of the new set of written laws.

3. The Laws of the Twelve Tables

- a) The final set of laws produced are known as the “Laws of the Twelve Tables” because they were engraved on twelve bronze tablets.
- b) The laws were placed on display in the Roman Forum (the central marketplace of Rome.)
- c) Tragically, the full content of the laws, is not known, because they were destroyed when Rome was sacked by the Gauls in 390 BC. We only know about the laws through other sources that quote or refer to them.

O. More Progress for Rome

1. The constant desire of patricians to have power over the plebeians stemmed from the belief that patricians were superior (in every every important way) to plebeians.
2. Because they thought they were superior, patricians made it illegal for patricians to marry plebeians.
3. Gaius Canuleius, a tribune, pushed for this law to be changed.
4. The Lex Canuleia (“lex” means “law”), obviously named after him, made it legal for plebeians to marry patricians.
5. When the marriage of plebeians and patricians was legalized, the patricians worried that the patrician traditions of nobility would be ruined.
6. They created two new officials, the censors, whose job it was to make sure that patricians to behave in a noble/superior way.
7. A patrician consul named Marcus Manlius then attempted to help the plebeians further, and he was accused of trying to make himself king and executed after his consulship.

8. Soon after, however, a tribune named Gaius Licinius proposed a solution to the problem of debt slavery, and a means of making sure the solution would be accepted.
9. The first of his “Licinian Laws” put limits on how much conquered lands any one person could buy. This way the Patricians would be stopped from buying it all up.
10. To help the plebeians get a fair share would mean having an official with more extensive powers than a tribune (who still could not legally leave the city of Rome itself). Licinius insisted that one consul should be a plebeian.
11. When the patricians resisted, the plebeians re-elected Gaius Licinius as the tribune for ten years running. The patricians finally gave in.

P. The Rise of the Roman Empire

1. Until the year 264 BC, Rome gradually came to dominate Italy, and extend its republic.
2. Conquered cities in Italy could earn their way to full citizenship and rights.
 - a) In times of war when Rome needed help against a new adversary, the conquered cities would also have to provide troops.
 - b) As Romans, they could travel to Rome to participate in the assemblies, and their own nobles were recognized as Patricians. They also received all the legal protections of Roman citizens.
 - c) As allies, they were given land as a reward for fighting, and if they continued to please Rome, they would get full citizenship.
3. Unfortunately, Rome's success in Italy led to a contest with the north African city of Carthage over control of the western Mediterranean.
4. The Carthaginians were themselves colonists from Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon) who had settled in northern Africa, in what is today Tunisia. Their capital was Carthage, and their empire included Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia, and part of Spain. (The “Punic Wars” are known by this name because the Romans called the Phoenicians the “Punici.”)
5. The war between them was rooted in the simple cause of rivalry over land.
6. Because of their three wars (264-146 BC), the Romans decided to rule the Carthaginians outright, and deny them a path to Roman citizenship. Sicily (previously held by Carthage) thus became the first Roman “province.” This meant that the Romans were not going to let its people be a part of the republic.

Q. Slavery and the Decline of the Republic

1. By the end of the Third Punic War (146 BC), the Romans had conquered Greece, Spain, and much of northern Africa and Turkey.
2. They had also enslaved many of the people of these regions.
3. Because there were so many slaves available to the Romans, slaves were not valued as highly as before. The price of slaves dropped, and Romans bought more of them.
4. The Romans also treated slaves very badly, because they could easily be replaced.

5. In Sicily, the first Roman province, the Romans held many slaves, and because they treated them so badly, there were a number of rebellions called “*servile wars.*”
6. The Romans did not decide to give up slavery, even though in a republic, people are not supposed to rule each other. Slavery was practiced by all cultures in the world. They viewed it as a natural part of life, and could not see a way to abandon it.

R. The Fall of the Roman Republic

1. Desperate for someone to restore the character of the republic, the Romans turned to various charismatic leaders, the most famous and pivotal of which was Julius Ceasar.
2. Caesar had conquered Gaul (France today), and decided to try to make himself king by leading his army back to Rome.
3. On occasion, Caesar's friend Marc Antony would offer Caesar a crown in public, but the reaction of the people was always negative, because the Romans still viewed monarchy so badly.
4. Fearing he would become king, a conspiracy including one of the descendants of Lucius Junius Brutus assassinated Caesar on the “Ides of March” (March 15) in 44 BC.
5. The result, however, was not the securing of the republic, but a tragic civil war that led to Caesar’s nephew Octavian becoming the first real Roman emperor.

S. The Roman Empire

1. After winning the civil war, Octavian exercised the powers of a consul, a tribune, a censor, and more all at once – effectively making him a monarch.
2. In addition, Octavian was granted the honorary name of “Augustus,” i.e. “illustrious one.” He was honored with the title “Imperator,” meaning “great conqueror.” And, finally, he was titled “Princeps” (“first citizen”).
3. Since he had no son, Augustus had to choose from among other possible candidates. He chose his son-in-law Tiberius.
4. Tiberius was worried about a successful who had conquered parts of Germany, and who thus became known as “Germanicus,” so he had Germanicus assassinated, but that did not stop others from conspiring against him. Germanicus's son Caligula had Tiberius assassinated and took his place.
5. From this point on, the usual mode of succession in the empire was replacement by assassination.
6. After this, Rome made no contributions to human history. All that matters about this story is just how big the empire got, and how it died.
7. By 117 AD, the Roman empire had reached its maximum extent, reaching across from Portugal to Mesopotamia, and south from Egypt up into Britain in the north. The following maps provide two views of the empire’s size. The latter is a useful overlay of the empire compared to the present-day continental United States.



Map of the Roman Empire at its greatest extent (c.117 AD) — and shown compared to the present-day United States.

T. The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

1. After 117 AD, when Rome could grow no more, it naturally began to shrink.
2. Feeling the strain of managing the empire, the emperor Diocletian divided the empire into *four* - a system of rule known as the *tetrarchy*!
3. The presence of four co-rulers discouraged assassination, since it was harder to seize power when it was so decentralized.
4. It also facilitated the defense of the empire, by placing the rulers directly in charge of those areas that need their attention.
5. A crucial problem, however, was that it was very expensive to have four emperors. They all had courts, with all the trappings. And so taxes rose, making life harder on the people in the empire.
6. Then, starting in 376, the Germanic barbarians appeared on Rome's northern border, begging to be allowed into the empire. They were being driven into Roman territory by a terrifying conquering horde that had crossed from Asia into Europe: the Huns!
7. Rome could not fight them all. By 476, the date we have used for the Fall of the Roman Empire, all of Rome's imperial provinces had been seized by invading barbarians, Italy itself had been ravaged by multiple invaders, and Rome twice



A famous sculptural depiction of the *Tetrarchy* - a mutually supporting system of four emperors ruling at the same time in different parts of the empire devised by Diocletian c.293 AD.

sacked. All that remained was for someone to officially announce that the Roman Empire was truly finished.

U. The Triumph of Christianity and Rise of Europe

1. The tetrarchy was supposed to work by having emperors work as a team. However, one of the new emperors named Constantine refused to accept the scheme.
2. The result was an extended civil war for control of the empire that lasted eighteen years altogether, which Constantine won, becoming at the same time the first *Christian* emperor.
3. The line of Christian emperors was almost uninterrupted thereafter.
4. The final triumph of Christianity within Rome was achieved under emperor Theodosius (r.380-395) who made Christianity the only legal religion within the empire.
5. As the barbarian tribes invaded Rome, some were converted to Christianity, and the prestige of the leader of Christianity, the Pope, grew when he met with Attila the Hun and somehow discouraged him from attacking the city of Rome.
6. As the tribes jostled for position, the Church was a constant, and as the European kingdoms began to take shape, they chose to be connected to the Pope in Rome. When Charlemagne cemented the alliance, the new version of Europe that would arise was guaranteed to be Christian.