

P. The Rise of the Roman Empire

1. In the early part of its history, Rome conquered its neighbors in Italy, who were a lot like the Romans, so they allowed them to join the republic, but then they fought a very different people called the Carthaginians.
2. The Carthaginians were originally 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. Because the Romans called the Phoenicians the “Punici,” history remembers their wars as the *Punic Wars* (264-146 BC).
3. Instead of making the defeated Carthaginians into Roman citizens, the Romans decided to turn their territory into *provinces*, and make their people into slaves.
4. The Romans then began to treat slaves very badly, because they could easily be replaced as they conquered more and more people.
5. Some of them were even made to fight to the death in stadiums for entertainment. These slaves were known as “gladiators.”

Q. The Fall of the Roman Republic

1. Many Romans did not like slavery and did not like having an empire, but they did not know how to change Rome back into a republic.
2. 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 Caesar.
3. Caesar had conquered Gaul (France today), and decided to try to make himself king by leading his army back to Rome.
4. 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.
5. Fearing he would become king, a conspiracy including one of the descendants of Lucius Junius Brutus named Marcus Brutus assassinated Caesar in 44 BC.
6. 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. In addition, Octavian was granted the honorary name of “Augustus,” i.e. “illustrious one.” And, finally, he was titled “Princeps” (“first citizen”). He was smart to avoid trying to be called a “king” or an “emperor.”
2. Since he had no son, Augustus had to choose from among other possible candidates. He chose his son-in-law Tiberius.
3. Tiberius was worried about a successful general 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.

4. From this point on, the usual way emperors were replaced was by assassination.
5. After this, Rome really didn't do anything positive.
6. It just got bigger and bigger, until 117 AD.



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

T. The Decline 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 was supposed to make it harder for anyone to take over by killing one of them.
4. A crucial problem, however, was that it was very expensive to have four emperors. so taxes rose, making life harder on the people in the empire. And it was only natural that eventually one of them would try to take over and rule by himself.
5. This is indeed what happened when the emperor of Gaul (France) & Britain, named Constantine decided he could achieve sole imperial power, and invaded Italy.
6. Constantine was the first emperor to be a Christian. For centuries after the life of Jesus, belief in Christianity grew even though the Christians were persecuted because they wouldn't worship the Roman emperors as gods.
7. As the story goes, Constantine had a vision of the Christian cross, in which he was told "in hoc signo vinces" (Latin for "by this sign, you shall conquer.") After his victory over his Italian rival in the Battle of Milvian Bridge, Constantine then issued the *Edit of Milan* of 313 AD, which made Christianity legal in the Roman empire. It was the first step towards the eventual triumph of Christianity in Roman culture, even as the empire itself was collapsing.