

Roman republic

People



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Decline of Roman Republic / Rewrite The Beginnings of the mighty Roman empire as we know it today was actually quite humble. " The Roman heritage can be traced back to an early civilization of settlers from the Indo-European immigrants who between 2000 B. C. and 1000 B. C. had began to settle around the Northern Italian peninsula"(World History: The Human Experience). Of all the settlers the Romans are said to have arose from a mysterious group called the Etruscans, which ruled northern Italy around 900 B. C. to 500 B. C. The Etruscan society was made up of upper class families who owned land, or were priests. " The other class in the society was the slave laborers" (World History: The Human Experience). During the Etruscan period of rule there soon came constant revolts from the lower classes and later freeing themselves from the rule of there wealthy overlords. Among the strongest of the Etruscans were the Latins, who settled in the city of Rome in the central plains of Latium of Italy. " Thus this is the beginning of Rome's founding at 753 B. C." (World History: The Human Experience). The Tarquins were the first ruling monarchy of the Romans. They quickly developed the Roman empire through constant developments. At 534 B. C. a king named Tarquin the Proud ruled. " This ruler was known to be a cruel ruler and therefore was driven out by the Etruscans." (World History: The Human Experience). Under Etruscan rule in 509 B. C. the patricians or Latin nobles declared that Rome would become a Republic ruled by the people. The republic consisted of an executive and legislative branch. During this period of history Rome began to write down laws and pass government assemblies. At this time Rome was still a small city-state that controlled only a tiny section of Italy. The size of Rome would be comparable to the size of New York City with a population of perhaps 260, 000. As the republic form of

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government was in place Rome would also have constant battles with surrounding tribes such as the Sabines, Umbrians, Volsci and Aequi. In 396 B. C. the Romans had an all out assault on the rest of Etruria and captured the town of Veii. During this same period of time the Gaul, a semicivilized warlike people of central Europe had swept over Europe and into Italy. " The Gauls would soon invade much of Etruria" (World history; Human Experience). On the arrival into Rome the two forces met on July 18, 390, near the Allia river. The Romans were confused, They panicked and broke away from ranks and were defeated. " The Gauls burned and ransacked much of Rome, until a general named Camillus reorganized the army and won back Rome through small victories and by paying the invaders to return to the Po Valley" (World History, Human Experience). Weaken by the Gauls, Rome rebuilt itself and continued to expand. Carthage, of North Africa had also become the strongest force around the Mediterranean. In 264 B. C. they desired to control the Strait of Messina between Sicily and Italy. The Romans soon set war on Carthage, setting off the First Punic war, the Carthaginians quickly defeated and weakened the Roman armies. War continued until 241 B. C. when Carthage became weaker and retreated home in defeat. The Second Punic war in 221 B. C. was led by a young soldier of 26 years old. " His name was Hannibal and he desired to bring the war into Italy" (Decline and Fall of Rome, Nardo). His goal was to invade and capture Rome with other rebels who would join him. He led 40, 000 soldiers into Rome but half were lost during the trip. Outnumbered, Carthage still defeated Rome. By 216 B. C. the Romans had come close to being destroyed, but Rome stood strong and raised larger armies. " In 202 B. C. general Publis Scipio took the war back to North Africa and defeated Carthage" (Destruction of Carthage, <https://assignbuster.com/roman-republic/>

Appian) . Rome gained lands in Spain and won even more indemnities. Fifty years later Carthage again gained back its power. Although Rome did decide to finally end Carthage independence and controlled much of western Mediterranean in the process. At this same period of time, Rome was also acquiring land in the east. By the year 146 B. C. the Romans had direct rule over Greece and Macedonia (World History, Human Experience). With a greater number of provinces the Romans organized local officials in order to collect taxes and maintain order. These governors also called proconsuls soon stole money from the government creating greater wealth for themselves (Tacitus, Annals). These events causes revolts within the provinces. As uproar took place within Rome's republic senate, troops became tangled between their loyalty to either the senate or their generals in command. The Senate began to loose control of its individual provinces due to the continued growth of the latifundia power groups, groups of a wealthy new class that made money in there businesses, that were forming as well as the growth of corruption within the senators (Sallust, Decline of Rome). The history of the generals and troops at the time was that the Roman army had become the greatest power for Rome and violence soon became greater in power than the senate. Much of the army put their trust and fellowship with the generals (Decline and Fall of Rome, Nardo). The senate lost power to the Roman General Gaius Marius in 107 B. C., who took on reforms to strengthen the weakening Roman empire (Decline and Fall of Rome, Nardo). In 88 B. C. a new army formed where the soldiers owed allegiance to their commander and not the republic. This army under the rule of General Lucius Cornelius Sulla wanted to end Marius's command so therefore Sulla had his legions capture Rome and drove Marius out. The

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result was seven years of civil wars. Sulla, as dictator, tried to build a more solid senate but failed to take power away from the Assembly of Tribes (World History, Human Experience). The civil situations in the senate was also in distraught, members would use violence to solve many disputes. In 70 B. C. Julius Caesar , Gnaeus Pompey, and Crassus became consuls. Later in 60 B. C. the three ruled together, although it proved to be a bad plan (Decline and Fall of Rome, Nardo). Meanwhile during this time period Crassus dies in battle leaving Pompey and Caesar to hold power. Pompey then worried whether Caesar would attempt to gain power by using his legions, and ordered Caesar to leave the legions in the north and return to Rome. " Caesar ignores Pompey and crosses the Rubicon River committing treason and another civil war in Rome" (World History, Human Experience). Within two months time Caesar captures all of Italy and drives Pompey out. " Finally in 44 B. C. Caesar declares himself dictator for life" (World History, Human Experience). On March 15 44 BC. the senate assassinated Caesar causing a prolonged period of civil wars and chaos in search of a organized government. As the republic continues to shatter, Caesar's adopted son Octavian forms the second triumviate with Marc Anthony, and Lepidus. They defeat Caesars murderers in 42BC, then divided the empire into three rulers. Soon Octavian forces Lepidus to retire, and formed a revolt against Anthony . Anthony committed suicide and Octavian rose to be the Emperor of Rome. With the blessing of the senate, Octavian takes the name of Augustus. This event marks the end of the Roman republic and the start of the Roman empire in 27 B. C. The movie Gladiator shows a few of the greatest leaders of Roman times. Such individuals like Marcus Aurelius, Maximus, Commodus, and others show the great and the worst characteristics of the Roman

empire. Marcus Aurelius was in the movie *Gladiator*. He is one of the real life emperors who ruled Rome following other emperors after Caesar's death in 14 A. D. "Aurelius was backed up by the army, and had skills as effective administrators as well as contributed great developments to Rome" (*Decline and Fall of Roman Empire*, Nardo). A good leader was one that the people loved. A leader that cared for the people, and that the people would care for because of that. Aurelius when compared with Octavian had many similar characteristics. Both leaders strengthened the Empire by giving back to the people and continuing to prosper while trying to maintain quality of life. As Octavian united the regions he replaced government officials that stole from the empire with permanent government agencies to better guide efforts for reform. Aurelius also had the same efforts, while in numerous battles during his period of rule. Both men were committed to Rome because of their long term efforts to help keep the Roman empire prosperous. Then in comparing Maximus to Commodus in *Gladiator* we find a great difference with their character and how the people of Rome saw them. Maximus was a fictional character based in the movie, and was not a general in real life. Although Maximus did play a role of many generals during the time after Aurelius had passed away and during which his son Commodus ruled as emperor. Maximus was a trusted general of the army and had earned the respect of the army, senate and people of Rome. He was a brave individual who worked for the people of Rome. Commodus who is also in the movie is the direct opposite of Maximus. "Commodus is found to be vain, selfish, and spoiled, he often neglected his governmental responsibilities and spent large sums of public money on his own luxuries" (*Decline and Fall of Rome*, Nardo). Commodus was an actual real life emperor, and the son of the great

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Marcus Aurelius. Commodus took the throne at the age of 18 or 19, as he was a weak leader he also made many enemies in the capital. Maximus had few enemies aside from Commodus who was afraid that if the army legion knew Maximus was still alive would win the empire back with the help of the legions. In the movie Commodus is aware of Maximus because his father Aurelius had Maximus as the commanding general of his legions, which caused Commodus to be jealous. Of course Commodus is the bad guy of Rome, an ineffective leader who ended up being assassinated within his own palace in 192 AD. Maximus dies as a soldier after killing Commodus in the movie in a Gladiator fight. The entertainment that was subject in the movie. Gladiator battles was a form of entertainment for the Romans. "The battles also served as an offering to the gods, and was considered a religious duty" (Decline and Fall of Rome). Rulers also used these shows of battle at times to celebrate certain war victories, and significant accomplishments of a certain ruler and sometimes in honor of their families and some generals and senators (Decline and fall of Rome, Nardo). The Romans became extremely interested in these games because they gave them a sense of pride and made them feel that their empire was strong. "The architecture in the movie showed a large coliseum made of brick slabs, with wide columns that spread the weight evenly" (Decline and Fall of Rome, Nardo). The site had at least 5 levels, also consisting of a lower basement level where certain animals such as tigers, could leap out of, it also served as a storage room for the players in the games. The coliseum as they called it seated spectators. The contestants would turn to the imperial stand and shout "We who are about to die, salute you!". The wounded gladiators would appeal for mercy while the crowd would decide by jeers towards the referee either for a thumbs-up/

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down to determine the outcome. Some victorious gladiators won there freedoms. The Great empire of Rome grew from a small city-state in northern Italy, into one of the greatest empires in history. From living in simple mud straw huts to lavishly built villas the growth of this civilization has gone far and wide. " At its highest point the empire stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea, covering most of modern Europe. North to Britain, South towards northern Africa, from Morocco to Egypt into Asia Minor" (Octavian Augustus). Germania was the greatest conquest of Aurelius.. The decline of the Roman empire soon came forward. The huge empire was difficult and expensive to run. From AD 161 to 180, the emperor Marcus Aurelius had to fight many campaigns to protect the boundaries. By the third century AD the army was stretched too far and farmers left their farms, while cities suffered with market declines (Decline and Fall of Rome, Nardo). Many emperors were also weak causing generals to compete for power. Civil wars continued and the barbarians sensing the empires weakness, attacked the boundaries. Diocletian reorganized the army and provinces in AD 284. Diocletian also decided to split the empire into two parts, the east and west (World History, Human Experiences). The west would go to Maximian, while the richer east went to Diocletian. Then in AD 305 civil wars again started, until Constantine took power over the whole empire in AD 324. Later the west region would be ruled by Theodosius I. During this period of time because of weak rulers Barbarians and Huns began to settle into territories that were once Roman. In AD 395 Theodosius died causing the West and East empires to split forever. King Alaric became the first to conquer the city of Rome in 800 years (Decline and Fall of Rome, Nardo). By AD 476 the last western emperor, Romulus Augustulus was over <https://assignbuster.com/roman-republic/>

thrown by barbarians. As for the eastern region, it became prosperous as the west lost ground. It's geographic location made it a prime location for trade between Asia and Europe. The ruler Justinian who was in power from AD 527 to 556, regained some of the lost western territories, but because they did not have a strong army they did not achieve much in terms of winning wars, instead they focused on religion (World History, Human Experiences). As the once extravagant empire begins to crumble into smaller and smaller pieces another barbarian tribe called the Lombards took control of northern and eastern central Italy closing off east and west Rome in AD 568 (World History, Human Experiences). The final collapse of the Roman empire arrived in 1453 when the Ottoman Turks takes over the city of Constantinople, capital of the western empire, marking the end of the last trace of the nostalgic