

Rome – college essay



**ASSIGN
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The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire

The City-state of Rome became a republic in 509 BC. Rome fought numerous battles to become what it was at its height. It all started with the Punic wars. After they won, there was no stopping them. By the first century BC, Rome controlled most of the known world. (Mahoney, 2001)

With Augustus Caesar began the two centuries of the Pax Romana. During this time all of Rome became a collection of states rather than conquered provinces. The only threats that ever came were from the unorganized barbarian tribes who's conquest brought nothing to the Empire. (Mahoney, 2001)

The rise of the Roman Empire had many contributors. These factors would include strength in the military, society, leadership, religious, and architectural aspects of the Roman Empire. The Roman army was the largest of the group though. The army was at first only meant to defend the city of Rome but later set out to conquer. The army was first compiled of volunteers, but later as they conquered new lands, the people of those lands were drafted into the army. Not only did they have to defend the land that they had but they also had to protect the newly conquered land from revolt or invasion. (Mahoney, 2001)

Roman society was also well organized. The people were split into two classes: slaves and citizens. The citizens had many different ranks, and had special rights that non-citizens didn't. By allowing the citizens to have rights, like voting for instance, they had a sense of belonging, which in turn helped them to stand behind their country. Without the

support of the citizens the empire would have never reached the height that it did. (Mahoney, 2001)

The second most important factor in the rise of the empire was its leaders. Besides Julius Caesar who everyone knows about, Emperor Trajan ruled when the Empire was at its largest because he conquered many lands in the east. Emperor Hadrian concentrated more on how the Empire was run verses making it larger. He also helped start the Pax Romana (Roman Peace). (Mahoney, 2001)

The fourth factor was the amazing engineers, inventors, and architects in the Empire. By 200 AD the Romans had built 53, 000 miles of roads throughout the Empire. The very first was built in 312 BC. They also invented sewers, central heating systems, and the first types of concrete. (Mahoney, 2001)

The last of all the factors was religion. The Romans worshiped around 30, 000 gods in all. These included the major gods and goddesses such as Jupiter, the chief god, Neptune, god of the sea, Venus, goddess of love and beauty, and Minerva, goddess of wisdom and war. Each household also worshipped their own protective spirits. After Caesar's death, the emperors were considered gods too. People all over the empire were allowed to worship their own local gods as long as they paid homage to the Roman gods. The people built large temples for worship of their different gods. They looked to the gods to help protect their families and lives. This also helped when going into battle. How could you not win with so many gods on your side? (Mahoney, 2001)

As you have read, many things attributed to the rise of the Empire. Many things also attributed to its fall as well. These included poor leadership, economic trouble, as well

The Empire began with great leaders, but they started to decline as the Empire

went on. One of the largest problems was one that always came up after a leader was assassinated, which a great number of them were. Rome had no laws about who got the throne when someone passed away so you can imagine the free-for-all that went on there with men competing and thinking they had more strength than the others. Leaders also fought and competed with each other inside of Rome for power. A good example of this is when Pompey and his army battled with Caesar and his army to see who would succeed as the true leader of Rome. A flaw that appeared in a majority of the leaders that came to power in Rome is the fearless attitude that they carried. It was almost as if they were so cocky and self-confident that they did not think that they could be outwitted or defeated. (Mahoney, 2001)

When famine, plague, and a declining birth rate hit Rome, the number of men in the army went down drastically. When battling within Rome, the number of people that supported Rome and were behind her also went down. This also made for a huge loss of men in the army. With no one to help defend its borders, Rome started to shrink in size. (Mahoney, 2001)

When the government became oppressive and started to force everything on the people, they stopped believing in Rome. Roman leaders came up with the idea of forced labor which made peasants work on fields, roads, and

bridges. The peasants became very resentful. Many small farmers went out of business which caused the number of crops to decline. Nobles left the city to go to the peace of the countryside and left cities without leaders. With all this going wrong, Rome fell apart city by city. (Mahoney, 2001)

The Roman army was one of the finest fighting machines the world has ever known. It began as a group of Roman citizens who, with their own weapons, would defend the city of Rome when it needed them (Denison, 2000). As the empire grew, so did the need for a more powerful military. With new, more effective battle tactics and great innovations in their weaponry, the Roman military enabled the entire empire to expand and become as powerful as it did.

The Roman military was excellent at creating more efficient and deadly weaponry. With these innovations the Roman army could easily defeat Huns and any other barbarian group which were still using stones and short swords. Roman military leaders noticed that shorter swords required more energy to fatally wound an opponent because a long slashing motion was needed. Instead of giving their soldiers short swords, they were given a long thrusting sword. A soldier would simply stab an opponent rather than slash him across his body. This technique proved very effective for the Romans and they kept on conquering more land (Keppie, 1998). This simple change in a very basic tool of war made the Roman army that much better than their opponents.

Of course, all this new weaponry was useless unless the Romans knew how to use it in warfare. It turns out they were very good at that. The Romans

used their strong shields to create a kind of armored vehicle. When they were approaching a large army or a heavily guarded city, soldiers would arrange their shields to create a box covering them on all sides. The entire legion would march up to an opposing army like this. They could walk through stones, arrows, and spears. As they approached their enemies they pulled their

shields apart just enough to stick their swords through. Because they had thrusting swords, the shields didn't have to be that far apart. The legion could slaughter their enemy without suffering heavy losses (Goldsworthy, 1998).

The Roman military used many more tactics which proved successful in conquering or destroying a city or army. The Romans were one of the first armies to use incendiary bombs. These "bombs" were simply vases filled with flaming pitch or sulfur that broke and spread out on impact. They were launched into heavily fortified cities or onto ships (Goldsworthy, 1998). The Roman navy also had a very old, but very effective method of battle. Naval ships were built with large reinforced beaks made of bronze which were used to ram an enemy vessel. Soldiers aboard would drop the corvus, a large plank, and rush onto the ship and kill everyone on board, take what they could, and let the ship sink to the bottom (King, 1997).

The Roman army was one of the greatest ever. It was one of the main reasons for Rome's vast empire. However, it was this army that would help bring about the end of Rome. While the Roman army could defend against and destroy any other army in the world at its peak, in the end it couldn't

protect against itself. Numerous civil wars eventually brought about her demise. With Rome weak and its military nowhere near its peak, the barbarians destroyed the empire. The Romans lost more lives and spent more money fighting amongst themselves than in defending the empire (Goldsworthy, 1998).

During the Roman Empire there was much achievement. Not only in government

but in architecture as well. The architects of the Roman Empire were really of Greek

descent. But with the architects during the Roman Empire the cities of Italy were built. The most famous buildings and structures are in Rome. From the Leaning Tower of Pisa to the Roman Coliseum where the gladiators fought. The way the cities were built was by the labor of slaves and others. They build immense and touristy cities (Staccioli, 2000).

The Romans used elaborate play of advancing receding entablatures. The sideways placement of pavilions was so that those of the upper stories straddle the space between those below the enlivenment of the whole facade with statue-niches. These features are especially common in the eastern provinces. The buildings of the empire were built with regulations. For instance, the shops needed a wide door, barrel-vaulted interior, and a window to light a mezzanine story. Usually above the shops ran galleries with further shops set behind them (Staccioli, 2000).

An example of a wealthy Roman and emperor was the Golden House of the emperor Nero. He had a fabulous urban villa containing mechanical wonders and decorations smeared with gold and picked with jewels. Another of the normal features of a wealthy Roman's house was having fountains and statues around and patios with benches for the family to get together (Hinds, 1997).

One of the feats in Roman history that changed the way cities were built was the discovery of concrete. It was able to withstand greater weight that stone could. The concrete structures were able to be covered with plaster, brick, or even such expensive materials as bronze, marble, and alabaster. The most distinctive element of roman architecture was the arch. It was originally brought to Rome by the Etruscans. Bridges

and many other structures were typically supported by a series of arches. So were the

aqueducts that would have many layers. Another architectural achievement by the Romans was the aqueducts which brought water to long distant cities. The water would flow into reservoirs and from there it was transferred through pipes. They had drains and sewers that would carry away waste water. The aqueducts were considered evidence of the empire's greatness. Another structure that involved the use of arches was the amphitheater. It had a flat arena which was surrounded by a tier of seats. It was built during the first centuries of the Common Era. Now the coliseum is a magnificent architectural achievement because it was able to seat fifty thousand people (Staccioli, 2000).

Bibliography: