

History of italy  
throughuot the years  
history essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Italy is a boot-shaped peninsula extending into the central Mediterranean Sea. Off the toe of the boot lies the island of Sicily. The sea provided some protection for the early people of Italy. Later the Romans used the sea as highway for conquest and trade. It is a mountainous country. The Alps are mountain situated at the top of the boot. It blocks the cool winds giving the region a pleasant climate. However, the Alps give only limited protection from invaders. The Po River, which is fed by melting snow from the Alps, provides water for the rich farming region of the northern plain. Another mountain range, the Apennines, runs down the length of Italy. Most people lived in the west. There are also good harbors and long rivers that could be easily navigated by boats.

The city of Rome enjoy many natural advantages of their good geographic position. Living as they did on higher ground overlooking the Tiber river, Romans could watch for enemy attacks, so they could easily defend themselves. Located as they were in the center of Italy, the Romans became masters of that peninsula. Situated as they were near the fertile plain, they are the peninsulares up crops with which they could feed their people.

Because early Romans lived near the coast, they found it easy to expand into the Mediterranean region and, eventually to extend their rule over large part of Europe, Africa and the Middle East. The Tiber provided food and transportation. The Romans built the port of Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber for ships too large to move up the river.

## **Early People**

The people who founded Rome were farmers and herders during their early history, they fought for control of the neighboring areas. Their struggles helped shape a belief in duty, discipline and patriotism.

The Romans also adapted ideas from the advanced civilizations of the Phoenicians, and the Greeks who had set up colonies in Sicily and Italy.

## **Think and Explain**

How did Italy's geography help the Romans unite the peninsula? The Etruscans who migrated into Italy from Asia Minor seized Rome about 600 B.C. During the next 100 years, the Romans absorbed many ideas from their Etruscan alphabet which the Etruscans borrowed from the Greeks. They enjoyed Etruscan styles of art and worshipped Etruscan gods alongside their own. They also learned Etruscan building techniques including the arch.

## **Roman Republic**

Features of the Roman government were developed under the Etruscan rule. The Etruscans were responsible for bringing the first city-state civilization to Italy. A king of Etruscan descent ruled the state elected to his office by the Latin tribal chieftains. He served as high priest, as well as a magistrate, and chose a group of nobles called Senate, to advise him. These high ranking freemen were usually large landowners and were known as patricians or fathers of the state. In contrast, the small farmers and trade people were known as plebeians or common people.

## **Early Government**

There were two main classes of people in ancient Rome; the patricians were the upper class,

the nobility and wealthy land owners. The plebeians were the lower class. It included every one from well to do tradesmen all the way to the very poor.

## **Think and Explain**

Why were the plebeians discontented during the early Republic? The patricians controlled the government of the early Republic through the Senate. The Senate was made up of 300 patricians who served for life. It guided foreign and domestic policies. Every year, the Senate chose two consuls or officials from their own class to administer the laws of Rome. A popular assembly, elected by the plebeians, approved the choice of consuls, but had little voice. During their one year term, consuls directed the government and commanded the army. The consuls had equal power. Each had the right to veto or block an action of the other. In Latin, the word veto means "I forbid".

In time of crisis, the Senate would appoint a dictator to replace the consuls. A dictator had absolute power but could only hold office for six months.

## **The Roman Army**

At first, only patricians served in the Roman army. But the Republic faced many enemies including the Etruscans, the neighboring Latins, and the Gauls who lived north of the Po River. After the Gauls burned Rome in 390 B. C. E.; the Senate turned to the plebeians' help. It required all citizens who owned land including plebeians and patricians to serve in the army.

<https://assignbuster.com/history-of-italy-throughout-the-years-history-essay/>

Roman soldiers trained in the use of slings, javelins, spears, and swords. Wealthy Romans provided their own equipment and served without pay while citizens received small salaries. Roman commanders enforced strict discipline. Such training and discipline made the Roman army highly effective.

The Roman army was divided into legions of about 6,000 soldiers. Each legion was divided into smaller units that could be moved around briskly.

Between 509 B. C. E. and 133 B. C. E., Rome conquered many lands. As Rome grew, plebeians who fought in wars demanded more rights. The Senate kept its power and prestige but the government gradually changed.

### **Think and Explain**

Do you think the Roman Republic owed its success more to its form of government or to its army? The popular Assembly was changed by an Assembly of Centuries and an Assembly of Tribes. The Assembly of Centuries was made up of the entire Roman army, including patricians and plebeians. It passed laws and elected the consuls, who until then had been chosen by the Senate. It also chose other officials, including the censor who registered the population for tax and voting purposes. The censor also enforced the moral code. Still, all government officials were patricians.

The Assembly of Tribes was made up of plebeians. It elected 10 tribunes to speak for plebeian interests. At first, the tribunes had no official role in government. But when angry plebeians refused to fight for Rome, the Senate accepted the demand for a code of law.

In 451 B. C. E., Rome's first written law code was carved into 12 stone tablets that were found in the Forum. It is called the Law of the Twelve Tables. This law showed the strict separation between the patricians and the plebeians from serving as consuls, entering the Senate, or marrying patricians.

For the next 200 years, the plebeian won more rights. Marriage between the patricians and plebeians were allowed. Tribunes won the power to veto any government action that threatened the rights of the plebeians. The Assembly of Tribes gained the right to pass laws. Eventually, the plebeians won the right to hold office, including consul. They were even allowed into the Senate.

## **The Roman Family**

The Romans lived in large extended families. Parents of many children were rewarded and bachelors were penalized. Large families were guaranteed a steady supply of soldiers to fight in wars and of farmers to settle in newly conquered lands.

Under Roman law, the father had absolute power over the entire household. Roman law gave him the rights to sell his son or daughter into slavery.

In practice, Roman fathers were generally fair-minded. Their discipline was strict, but they were also concerned with the family welfare . Children learned the responsibilities early. Parents stressed the virtues of hard work, courage, and loyalty.

## **Education**

Wealthy families imported Greek tutors to educate their children. But most fathers supervised their children's education personally. Boys and girls from rich families attended private schools. Girls often received education as thorough as the boys.

Schools emphasized history. Stories of Roman heroes gave children a sense of pride. Students were also taught practical skills such as reading, writing, and public speaking.

## **Women in Roman Society**

In the early part of the Roman republic, women had few rights. They were citizens and might be called on to testify in court but could not vote or hold public office. Later women gained more rights when new laws gave them control over their own property.

Roman attitudes towards women differed from those of the Greeks. The Roman did not restrict women to a separate part of the house. Women could attend the theater and join in public festivals. Women often shared in household decisions and kept the family accounts.

## **Religion**

The Romans worshipped many gods. Each household had a shrine devoted to the spirits the Romans believed protected their homes and the fields. Everyday, family members gathered to make offerings to Vesta , goddess of the hearth.

The Romans were fond of public religious festivals and games dedicated to individual gods and goddesses. They worshipped Janus, the god of beginnings and Jupiter, an Etruscan God who was identified with the Greek God Zeus. The Roman goddess Venus was similar to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. Mars to them is the Greek god Ares, the god of war.

## **Roman Expansion**

### **Think and Explain**

How did Rome conquer and rule a diverse empire?

After Tarquin and the Etruscans were overthrown in 509 B. C. E., Rome and other Latin tribes got together to form a defensive alliance known as Latin League. By the start of 4th century B. C. E. Rome and the league successfully controlled the central Italian peninsula. Later, setbacks to Roman expansion occurred. The first was the invasion in 390 B. C. E. by the Gauls, who were fierce warriors who came from what is now known as France and northern Italy. The Gauls destroyed the Roman army, and almost burned Rome to the ground, and held a small group of Romans under siege for seven months. The Gauls left after they were paid a huge ransom in gold, and damaged the Roman prestige. This defeat from the Gauls served to strengthen the Romans, leading them to fortify the city.

Another setback took place when other members of the Latin League revolted. After two years of war, Rome defeated its former allies, dissolved the league and forced each tribe to sign a separate treaty. The Romans then turned north and conquered the Etruscans, who were weak because of repeated attacks by the Gauls.



The only serious rival left to the Romans on the Italian Peninsula were the Hellenistic Greeks in southern Italy and Sicily. Their city states were flourishing centers of Greek culture. The Greeks were alarmed at the growing power of Rome. And to help stop the Roman expansion, they called upon Pyrrhus, a relative of Alexander the Great, an ambitious military leader from Epirus in northern Greece. In 280 B. C. E. with an army of 25,000 men and 20 elephants, he defeated the Romans in battle. The war elephants, unknown in Italy at the time, crushed the enemy forces much like the tanks have done in modern times.

Pyrrhus then invited the former members of the Latin League to join forces with him against Rome but they refused. He made a peace offer to Rome, but it was rejected. Pyrrhus then launched a second successful attack, but he obtained great losses that he exclaimed, "Another such victory and we are lost". To this day, a costly victory is known as a Pyrrhic victory.

When the third battle failed to force the Romans to make peace, Pyrrhus returned to Greece. The Romans then quickly conquered the Greek lands on the Italian peninsula. By 270 B. C. E. Rome was master of all central and southern Italy. Full citizenship was given to nearby Latins by the Romans. Other people were not given citizenship but they were allowed to control their own affairs.

Military roads were built by the Romans like the Appian Way that connects Rome to other Italian cities. This allowed troops to move rapidly and encouraged trade and helped unify the people of Italy. The Roman farmers

and soldiers who received land in the new territories spread Roman customs and the use of Latin, the Roman language.

## **Punic Wars**

The conquests made by Rome signaled the rivalry with a city-state on the coast of North Africa named Carthage. Carthage was founded by the Phoenician traders in 814 B. C. E.. From then on, it grew into a large trading empire stretching across North Africa and into Spain.

When Rome conquered the Greek cities of Southern Italy, it inherited the rivalry between the Greek cities and Carthage over trade. Later on, Rome and Carthage became suspicious of each other. The struggle for the control of western Mediterranean became inevitable . Between 264 B. C. E. and 146 B. C. E. Rome and Carthage fought three wars called Punic wars. “ Punic” comes from the Latin word” Punicus”, means “ Phoenicians”

[http://www.bible-history.com/rome/map\\_punic\\_wars.gif](http://www.bible-history.com/rome/map_punic_wars.gif)

The first Punic War broke out in 264 B. C. E. and it was centered on the control on a Carthaginian settlement on the northeastern tip of Sicily. The Carthaginians feared that once the Romans had conquered the Greek cities of southern Italy, they would move to control Sicily as well. The Romans on the other hand, were concerned that Carthage strong navy could use the Strait of Messina as a short bridge from Sicily into the Italian Peninsula.

Carthage which was rich in gold, manpower, and ships were at an advantage position while the Romans, with a strong navy were not a seafaring people. The Romans realized that to defeat Carthage, they should destroy its navy.

<https://assignbuster.com/history-of-italy-throughout-the-years-history-essay/>

With strong determination, the Romans built up a navy. In a series of naval battles, several Roman fleets were destroyed, but finally on 241 B. C. E. the Romans defeated the Carthaginians in 241 B. C. E.

Sicily became the first Roman province and was made to pay an annual tribute of grain to Rome. Later, the islands of Sardinia and Corsica were conquered and made into a single province. Roman power was not only restricted to the Italian Peninsula, but was made supreme in the western Mediterranean.

The second Punic War took place 22 years after the first Punic war ended. It was a conflict between Rome and Hannibal. Hannibal was a young ambitious Carthaginian general who is a military genius. According to stories, he has sworn to his father, another general, to remain enemy of Rome for life.

Hannibal declared war in 219 B. C. E. by attacking the city of Sagunto in Spain. Sagunto was an ally of Rome. With cavalry, and about 40,000 infantrymen, he crossed through southern Gaul and crossed over the Alps into Italy.

Hannibal lost about half of his men, much of his equipment and almost all of his elephants. Hannibal's opportunity came at Cannae in southern Italy on 216 B. C. E.. He encircled the Romans and wiped out a force. He was stopped from inflicting a mortal blow upon Rome. He dared not lay siege to Rome without reserves of manpower and supplies. Romans and their allies controlled the seas so Hannibal was cut off from his resources.

Under the leadership of Scipio the Elder, a general believed to be Hannibal's match in terms of military strategy, Roman forces invaded North Africa. Hannibal was forced to return home to defend Carthage. At Zama in 202 B. C. E. Hannibal was defeated and fled to the east to save his life. The peace terms dictated by the Romans were harsh. Carthage gave up its navy, lost its freedom in foreign affairs, paid annual tribute to Rome, and surrendered Spain. But still, Rome was still afraid that Carthaginian power would grow once again.

Over the next 50 years, true to the Roman suspicion, Carthage slowly regained its power. Roman resentment of this growing strength reached a peak in 149 B. C. E. Rome sent an ultimatum to Carthage demanding that Carthaginians abandon their city and settle away from the coast. The Carthaginians refused.

Rome attacked Carthage and laid siege to the city, an act that kept food from coming to the Carthage that led to widespread starvation. When finally Romans entered Carthage. They burned the city to the ground and said to have destroyed the fertility of the soil by throwing salt into the fields. In 146. B. C. E. the Third Punic war ended. The few who survived were sold into slavery , and the Carthaginian lands in north Africa , became Roman province of Africa.

## **The Rise of Julius Caesar**

By 100 B. C. E. Rome controlled almost every land that bordered the Mediterranean, which the Romans called Mare Nostrum -“ Our Sea.”

As Rome became increasingly involved in foreign affairs, the Senate grew in power and prestige by conducting state negotiations. Political power had become concentrated in the Senate, and the tribunes had become pawns of the senators. Corruption in government increased, particularly in the provinces, where officials often used their jobs to make themselves rich.

In addition to politics, the wars also hurt farming in the Italian peninsula. The small landowners of the republic saw their lands devastated by Hannibal's army or left unattended because of frequent calls in military service. Added to these problems are the large supplies of cheap grains were coming in from Sicily.

Many landowners who found that they could not compete in the market moved to Rome in search of jobs, however, jobs are scarce. The rich landowners in Rome were using slaves who had been captured in wars to work in their land. An unhappy people thus developed in the city.

On the other hand, the riches of war pouring in to Rome made some people wealthy. Wealthy landowners who had plentiful slave laborers were encouraged to buy more land. Many stopped growing grain and shifted to the profitable production of olive oil and wine. This new wealth changed Roman attitudes toward the state. The tradition of public duty and self-discipline gradually gave way to greed and soft living.

Two brothers, Tiberius and Gaius, from a prominent family came to support the dissatisfied masses. Tiberius was elected tribune who believed that the decline in Roman character could be stopped if the small landowner were restored to its old strength.

To realize this, Tiberius proposed a law that would divide the farmlands gained in war among the out-of-work farmers. He also wanted to make it against the law for any person to own more than a certain amount of land. A group of rich men had Tiberius murdered.

Gaius was elected tribune ten years later and worked on his brother's reforms. He was able to pass a bill, and the wealthy were alarmed. Many of Gaius's supporters were attacked. Gaius himself committed suicide.

Rome then was the scene of bitter rivalry by the supporters of the plebeians and the patricians. The country was divided by violence and civil war.

It was Sulla, an able general and strong supporter of the Senate who restored order. Appointed dictator by the Senate, he doubled the size of the ruling council and limited the power of the veto. Sulla's changes wiped out many of the gains made by the plebeians. In 79 B.C.E. Sulla retired. He had brought peace to the republic, but his changes did not last.

## **Julius Caesar Became a Dictator of Rome**

During the time of civil strife the army had changed. Now the army included volunteer soldiers from the landless class who expected to get rich from the gains of war. They were willing to serve long periods of time and were loyal to their military leader. Under this condition, a popular general could easily use his military power to gain political power. Such a man was Julius Caesar, a brilliant general.

After a successful military career in the Iberian Peninsula, Julius Caesar joined with Pompey, another military hero and Crassus, one of the wealthiest

man in Rome . Their support made it possible for Caesar to become consul. In 60 B. C. E., the three men formed the First Triumvirate, a three person governing body that was to rule Rome.

### **Think and Explain**

Why did some Romans oppose Julius Caesar? Is it also the same today? From 58 to 51 B. C. E., in the Gallic Wars, Caesar conquered Gaul and extended Roman borders northward to include most of modern France and Belgium. He also led his legions to invade Britain. These accomplishments made Caesar popular with the masses . The Senate fearing his growing power, ordered him to return to Rome without his army. Caesar knew that to obey meant imprisonment or death. Crassus had died fighting a battle, and Pompey, he knew, out of fear of Caesar, had conspired with the Senate to ruin him.

On January 10, 49B. C. E. Caesar together with his army crossed the Rubicon River, the southern boundary of Caesar's province into the northern part of the Italian Peninsula. By defying the Senate's order to come alone , Caesar in effect declared war on his former ally Pompey and the Senate . Today, the expression “ crossing the Rubicon” means taking a step towards a course of action. And Caesar's action was war.

**[http://www. mariamilani. com/rome \\_maps/map \\_caesar \\_battles. jpg](http://www.mariamilani.com/rome_maps/map_caesar_battles.jpg)**

Pompey and most of the Senators fled to Greece fearing Caesar and his legion. Caesar followed them and defeated them. He boasted his triumph in

three words: " Veni, Vedi Vici", which means " I came, I saw, I conquer "

Upon his return to Rome, he was declared a dictator.

## **Caesar as a Dictator**

Caesar made reforms during his five year rule. These reforms were to strengthen Rome and Caesar's power. He weakened the power of the Senate, but at the same time increased its membership to 900 allowing more representation of the provinces. Roman citizenship was extended to persons' living outside Italy, an action that helped to unite the Roman territory. In the provinces taxes were adjusted and the administration worked to reduce corruption.

Caesar also reduced unemployment among the poor by creating public building projects . He distributed land to the poor. He increased the pay of the soldiers He even introduced a calendar based on Egypt's ancient calendar called Julian calendar. With minor changes it is still being used today.

The Senate feared that Caesar meant to make himself a king and establish a dynasty, a change in the government that would threaten the Senate's role in the selection of ruler. A group of men, including Marcus Brutus, one of his best friends, joined in a plot to murder Caesar. On March 15, 44 B. C. E. a day known to the Romans as the " Ides of March", the plotters surrounded Caesar on the floor of the Senate building and killed him.

## **The Roman Empire**

Julius Caesar had made his grandnephew and adopted son, Octavian, his heir even before his death. The 18-year old Octavian joined with Mark Antony,

<https://assignbuster.com/history-of-italy-throughout-the-years-history-essay/>



Caesar's chief lieutenant, to restore order in Rome after Caesar's death and to punish the murderers. They attacked Brutus and his fellow conspirators, defeating them in the battle of Philippi which took place in 42 B. C.

Octavian and Antony shared absolute power in the republic for the next ten years. Octavian ruled Rome and the western part of the empire while Antony ruled Egypt and the eastern part. During the time Octavian was shrewdly increasing his power in Rome, Antony had fallen in love with Cleopatra, the ambitious queen of Egypt. When word reached Rome that Antony had given Roman territory to Cleopatra and was plotting to seize the whole empire, Octavian persuaded the Romans to declare war on Egypt.

In the battle of Actium on the western coast of Greece on 31 B. C. E. Octavian's fleet clashed with that of Antony and Cleopatra. When Cleopatra fled the battle, Antony deserted his men and followed her to Egypt. When Octavian landed in Egypt in the following year both Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide after failing to rally support against Octavian. Soon, Egypt became a Roman province.

Octavian returned to Rome and proclaimed that he would restore the government to a republic. Although he was careful to observe the forms of republican government, he still kept the final power in his hands. He was called imperator, a term from which the word "emperor" comes. In 27 B. C. E. the Senate gave Octavian the honorary title Augustus, a title previously reserved for the gods meaning "the Majestic". After a century of civil war, Rome at last had been under one ruler. With the reign of Augustus, the Roman Empire began.

The Five Good Emperors [http://z. about.com/d/ancienthistory/1/6/s/Q/2/Nerva\\_1. jpg](http://z.about.com/d/ancienthistory/1/6/s/Q/2/Nerva_1.jpg)

## **The Empire lasted for many centuries**

The Roman Empire extended east to the Euphrates River and west to the Atlantic Ocean, north to the Rhine and Danube rivers, and south across the Mediterranean to the Saharan desert during the reign of Augustus.

## **Pax Romana**

The first two centuries of the empire were peaceful and prosperous. This period from 27 B. C. E to 180 C. E. is known as Pax Romana or Roman Peace. Business grew as conditions for trade improved. Pirates and bandits were hunted down, and roads and sea lanes were cleared for commerce.

Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber river, served as a seaport for Rome, Egypt, North Africa, and Sicily furnished grain for the entire empire. Timber and various farm products came from Gaul and central Europe, and the Iberian peninsula supplied gold, silver, and lead . Outside the empire, Rome carried on a thriving trade with distant lands such as India and China.

Augustus proved to be a wise leader. He improved the government that had grown corrupt during the latter part of the republic, especially in the provinces. To do this, Augustus created a professional civil service, open to all classes and based on talents. He also established a permanent professional army that was loyal to the emperor. A census of citizens were taken and tax rates were adjusted, a program of public works begun, and roads and bridges were built. He erected fine public buildings. He was said to

have boasted that while he has found Rome a city of bricks, he left it a city of marbles.

When Augustus died, the Senate voted his name among the other gods and the Romans erected temples throughout the empire in his honor. From this, imperial cult (emperor worship) began and later this brought conflict between the church and the state.

The emperors that followed after Augustus did away with all the outward forms of the Republic, which both Julius and Augustus had kept. Slowly, they strengthened their powers and unified the empire.

Tiberius succeeded Augustus to the throne. It was during his term, which lasted until 37 C. E., that Jesus was crucified in Judea. From the time of Tiberius to the end of the western empire in 476 C. E., Rome was ruled by 70 emperors, but only a few were capable.

Tiberius was followed by three other Julian Emperors. Caligula was a good king for the first few months of his reign. However after an illness, he became bloodthirsty and slew many Romans. Eventually, he was assassinated. It was Claudius who brought about the conquest of Britain, and began the practice of letting the provinces send men to sit in the Senate. He was a well-meaning emperor and was believed to have been poisoned by his ambitious wife, Agrippa, who wanted Nero, her son by a previous marriage, to succeed to the throne. Nero governed well at first, but the possession of unlimited powers made him very wicked. A great fire broke out, burning half of the city, and it was rumored that Nero set it. Nero cast the blame of the fire upon the Christians and he ordered the first persecution of the Christians

in which both Peter and Paul were killed. Nero sank deeper into a vice and crime and his suicide brought to an end the rule of the Julian emperors.

The next line of emperors were the Flavian emperors who ruled Rome for twenty five years. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius ruled during the two years of disorder following the end of Julian emperors. Then came Vespasian who ruled well. He founded the Flavian line. He was remembered for the siege and capture of Jerusalem by his son, Titus, who later succeeded him.

Emperor Titus was greatly loved by the people. He considered a day lost when the day passed without his having done a good deed. Upon his death, he was succeeded by Domitian, his cruel brother. Domitian accomplished worthwhile things but he put hundreds to death that no one felt safe with him.

He met his death at the hands of a freed man. During the 2nd century C. E. the empire enjoyed the rule of several competent emperors. They were called the Five Good Emperors. The first of the five was Nerva. Next was Trajan, a Spanish general who ruled from 98 to 117 C. E., was an ambitious military leader. Under his rule, the empire reached its greatest extent.

His successor Hadrian, ruled from 117 to 138 C. E. Hadrian made it his policy to strengthen the frontiers. He supervised the building of many public works. One of the most famous projects was Hadrian's Wall in Britain, and was built as a protection against Celtic tribes of Scotland.

Marcus Aurelius who ruled from 161 to 180, was one of the few emperors to win the respect of his people. Although he was troubled by invading Germanic tribes he preferred reading to war. His books of essays, called

Meditations, remain one of the most powerful expressions of Stoic philosophy. It reveals his character. He made promotions in the public office depending on merit. He reformed the criminal laws and did much for the slaves and the poor. His son Commodus succeeded him. Commodus was slain bringing to an end the rule of the Antonians.

The Roman Empire [http://www. utexas. edu/courses/medworld/map12\\_romanempire. jpg](http://www.utexas.edu/courses/medworld/map12_romanempire.jpg)

Following the death of Commodus was a period of disorder. This was also the period known as the rule of the Barracks Emperors. Out of the chaos, Diocletian, the last of the Barrack Emperors, he drove the barbarians back and crushed rebellions in the empire. He reorganized the government to make it highly centralized and responsible to him alone. The empire was divided into four prefectures. The two more populous prefectures were under Caesar. These sections were further divided into provinces, each under a governor. The emperors held office for twenty years after which the Caesars succeeded in power. A spy system of secret police safeguarded the efficient and honest administration of the empire.

## **The Greco-Roman Culture**

Most roots of the Western civilization can be traced to the blend of Greek and Roman culture known as classical culture. Classical culture flourished during the Pax Romana. The Romans admired Hellenistic culture and borrowed extensively from the Greeks. In the process, certain elements of Roman culture were changed.

## **Art, Architecture and Engineering**

A network of roads knit together the Roman world. Roads were established to speed up the movement of armies and military supplies, and at the same time used for travel and commerce. Roman roads were built of several layers and was said to be superior to any highways constructed in Europe until 1800's. Engineering skill was used throughout the empire in the construction of numerous dams, bridges, drainage systems, and aqueducts. Aqueducts are bridge-like structures that hold water pipes. Aqueducts carry water from reservoirs in the country to the cities.

In the early years, the Romans had learned from the Etruscans how to build arched constructions called vaults. Gradually, the Romans improved vault forms so that large interior spaces could be enclosed. They also invented domes to roof structures.

## **Roman Architecture**

Arch of Constantine <http://karenswhimsy.com/public-domain-images/ancient-roman-architectur/images/ancient-roman-architectur-1.jpg>

To make the structure solid and lasting, Roman architecture used cement and concrete as basic materials. Exteriors were faced with marble or stucco, a plaster that sets with a hard, stone like coat, and decorated with