

The western roman empire – the rise and fall

[History](#), [Empires](#)



Western Roman Empire | A map depicting the separate empires of Rome|
Mediterranean Society: The Roman Phase From Kingdom To Republic The
Etruscans and Rome (Previous Wiki notes) There are many different versions
on how Rome started the ones told to kids are very simple with very few
names: . Ancient Rome for Kids The story of Romulus and Remus for adults
have dates, more names and details: Wolf Country, Myth and Stories You can
find many versions of myths, however the version the text book talks about
Aeneas, a refugee from Troy who migrated to Italy when Greek invaders
destroyed his land.

Tow of his decedents, twins; Romulus and Remus, almost didn't survive
infancy because and evil uncle abandoned them by a flooded Tiber River. A
she-wolf found them and nursed them back to health. When the boys grew
older, Romulus founded the city of Rome and established himself as its first
kind in 753 B. C. E. However scholars tell a different story. Some Greek
historians believe that Aeneas settled at Rome, which was a small city-state.
In the fourth century B. C. , Rome began to expand and Romans came into
greater contact with the Greeks, which suggest that Aeneas has a role in the
creation of the great city.

In the first century B. C. , the Roman Poet Virgil developed the Aeneas myth
in his epic poem the Aeneid, which talked about Aeneas' journey to Rome.
Augustus, the first Roman emperor and emperor during Virgil's time,
and Julius Caesar, his great uncle and predecessor as the Roman ruler, were
known to be decedents of Aeneas. (Information founded in the article: This
Day in History: Rome founded) The text book talks about how Indo-
Europeans migrated crossed the Alps and settled through the Italian

peninsula, including the future site of Rome. The Roman Republic and Its Constitution

The Romans got rid of the last Etruscan king in 509 B. C. E. The republican constitution had two consuls; military and civil. These consuls were elected by an assembly that was dominated by the high class, or patricians. There was also a senate which advised the consuls and helped ratify major decisions. Because both the senate and consuls represented only the interests of the patricians there were many conflicts between the patricians and the lower class, or plebeians. To solve these conflicts, the patricians gave the plebeians tribunes, or people the plebeians could elect to speak for them.

The tribunes had the power to intervene and veto decisions. The plebeians began to gain power, by the early third century B. C. E the plebeians' tribunes dominated Roman politics. From Republic To Empire Imperial Expansion and Domestic Problems During the second and first centuries B. C. E, the relations between the classes were so strained that there was much conflict and violence. Two brothers, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus worked to spread the land possession and tried to limit the amount of land a certain person could hold. Unfortunately though, they were both assassinated for fear of gaining influence over Roman affairs.

The people that were in control of the political power, were of a small class that used the power to only help themselves and their class. In 87 B. C. E Marius marched on Rome and during the first century B. C. E, Rome was in civil war. When Marius died the next year, Sulla planned to take power and soon did in 83 B. C. E. Many conservatives supported Sulla because he imposed many conservative legislation. The Foundation of Empire Julius

Caesar seized Rome in 49 B. C. E by being a very popular public figure. He believed strongly in social reform and conquered Gaul.

He was responsible for a lot of social reforms and changed the government to centralized control. Caesar claimed the title "dictator for life", which earned him his assassination in 44 B. C. E. After Caesar was killed, his adopted son, Octavian, after defeating Mark Antony, took over Rome and brought civil conflict to an end. The senate bestowed the title "Augustus," to him in 27 B. C. E. He ran a monarchy disguised as a republic. While he was in power, a new standing army was created and the imperial institutions began to take root. Continuing Expansion and Integration of the Empire

The two centuries following Augustus's rule, the Romans conquered lands in the Mediterranean basin, western Europe, and down the Nile to Kush. For two and a half centuries into the third century a long era of peace was prevalent among economic and political integration, this was called pax romana, or "Roman peace". Another important Roman advance was the road and highway system. The new road systems created were very well engineered and allowed for extremely quick and urgent travel, which improved the postal system extremely. Also during this time, Romans began developing a system of written law at about 450 B. C. E.

They developed a system called the Twelve Tables, which was a basic law code for citizens for the early republic. Economy and Society In the Roman Mediterranean Trade and Urbanization Latifundia owners grew various crops to export in North Africa, Egypt, and Sicily. Ships carried several hundred tons of crops to cities for consumers. Other cities and regions could now focus on cultivating fruits and vegetables or manufacturing goods.

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Archaeologists have uncovered a pottery factory north of Rome that probably employed hundreds of workers and had a mixing vat that could hold more than 10, 568 gallons (40, 000 liters) of clay.

The Mediterranean sea became an essential sea for the Romans because it linked many cities and was used for trading. They called the sea *mare nostrum* which means "our sea." The Roman military and navy kept the seas mostly free of pirates to ensure that cargoes could move freely over long distances. The city of Rome received taxes, tributes, booty and other wealth from military expansion. Rome also received most of the profit from Mediterranean trade. The money was used for urban development. In the first century C. E. , there were about 10, 000 statues, 700 pools, 500 fountains, and 36 monumental arches.

The state financed the construction of temples, bath houses, public buildings, stadiums, and aqueducts. The aqueducts were very important because they brought fresh water to Rome. They used concrete (invented by Roman engineers) to build the aqueducts because it is very strong. The population increased dramatically because construction employed hundreds of thousands of workers. **Family and Society in Roman Times** The eldest male was usually the head of the common Roman family and ruled as *Pater Familias*, or "father of the family".

As the *pater familias*, the father could do anything he wanted with his children, like planning weddings or even executing them. Despite Roman law, women could hold high influence within the family. The women also would help plan weddings and even help with family finances by finding loopholes in Roman Law. As time went on, new classes of people

accumulated lots of private wealth for themselves. The wealthy would live in palaces and eat exotic dishes with animal tongues in them. If there are wealthy people, there are lots of poor people, who became a big problem in Rome.

The poor would often riot, but the government used a technique called "Bread and Circuses" where they would supply the poor with subsidized grain and spectacular public entertainment. One big part of Roman society was the slaves. About one third (Two sixths, three ninths, etc. ,) of the population were slaves; most of which worked on Latifundia, while others worked mines. During the second and first centuries, slaves would often revolt. One of the more serious revolts being in 73 BCE where 70, 000 slaves rebelled was led by Spartacus. City slaves had a much less difficult life.

Female slaves worked as servants, whereas educated or talented male slaves could lead comfortable lives, such as Epictetus, who became a Stoic philosopher. Some slaves hoped for manumission, so they could leave the slave life behind. This was not mandatory for owners, so they slaves still had to work under the owner's command until they might be set free. The owners could do anything they wanted to with the slaves. The Cosmopolitan Mediterranean GreekPhilosophyand Religions of Salavation The Romans believed in Gods and Goddesses who intervened in human affairs, and tutelary deities who looked after the welfare of families.

As the Roman empire grew, they experienced more cultures, which lead to them adopting deities from other people and adapted them to their own purposes. As well as using other cultures' deities, they also borrowed religious practices, like animal sacrifices. The Greeks inspired the Romans in

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ways like rational thought and philosophy. One example is the Stoicism. The Stoics "sought to identify a set of universal moral standards based on nature and reason that would transcend local ethical codes". Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 b. c. e.) was a Roman thinker who adopted the Stoic values.

In adapting Hellenistic thought to Roman needs, Cicero drew heavily from Stoics' moral and ethical teachings. Cicero believed that the pursuit of justice is a person's duty and was against those who sought wealth and power through immoral ways. The majority of people believed in religions of salvation because it gave them a promise of future existence. Religions of salvation became key features of Mediterranean society in the Hellenistic times. The roads of the Roman empire not only served as trade routes, but as openings for the word of religious salvation to spread. Mithraism started as a cult for Mithras, a god for the sun and light.

Soldiers in Anatolia adapted the cult to their own interests, and related it to strength and courage rather than the sun and light. The cult of Mithras did not allow women, but cults for goddesses like Isis spread. The cult of Isis was the most popular before Christianity spread. All of these religions spread through the Mediterranean basin. Judaism and Early Christianity In an attempt to encourage political loyalty, emperors often created state cults to worship the emperors as gods. The Jews believed that the creation of these cults was totally outside of the belief of their religion.

Jews often refused to pay taxes to the emperors who had claimed themselves to be gods. As the Romans began to spread into the eastern Mediterranean region the relations between the Romans and the Jews became more and more tense. Between the third and first centuries B. C. E.

the Jews mounted several rebellious attacks against the Romans but ultimately failed. The Roman forces outfought the rebels during the Jewish War of 66 to 70 C. E. Some Jews actively fought the Romans and others founded new sects that looked for saviors. They observed a strict moral code and participated in rituals designed to reinforce a state of community.

They also looked for a savior who would take them away from Roman rule and lead them to establish a community in which they could practice faith without interference. The early Christians probably had little contact with them but had many of the same concerns. Christians formed their community around Jesus of Nazareth. | Jesus of Nazareth| The Fall of the Roman Empire Internal Decay in the Roman Empire Although it is perceived that the collapse of the Roman empire only had one cause, there were actually multiple causes that caused the fall of the empire.

The combination of internal problems and external pressures proved deadly for the civilization. Internal political problems included internal opposition, which was mostly the work of the 26 claimants. The claimants were successors to the imperial throne, and were nicknamed " barracks emperors. " Their deaths were violent, often times because of one another, and held their power for short periods of time. The sheer size of the Roman empire also proved problematic for the future of Rome. Central governments were difficult to control over large areas, and epidemics soon spread like wildfire over the uncontrolled region.

Eventually, self-sufficient economies took the place of a large central government. Diocletian, who reigned from 284-305 CE, attempted to solve the problem of size by dividing the empire into two administrative districts.

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Two co-emperors ruled the districts, with the aid of lieutenants and 4 officials, or tetrarchs. Only these officials were allowed to minister. Diocletian was a skilled administrator who brought Rome's armies under control, and strengthened the imperial currency. Although his war strategies were more effective than his economic ones, this helped stabilize Rome's economy.

His retirement later resulted in civil war. Constantine was the son of Diocletian's co-ruler Constantius became the emperor. Constantine wanted to become the sole emperor of Rome, so he reunited the Eastern and Western districts of Rome. Constantine wanted a new capital for the new united empire, so he built the city of Constantinople. Old problems of centralized government arose from this reunion, as both the population and economy of reunited Rome declined. There were no resources left to protect the new empire and its people, ending the reign of Constantine.

Germanic Invasions and the Fall of the Western Roman Empire Military threat from migratory Germanic peoples and Germanic invasions brought an end to Roman authority in the western half of the empire, while the eastern half survived another millennium. The Visigoths, the most famous of this group of migrants, adopted Roman culture and laws, but were advised to settle outside of the imperial boundaries. The Huns, who migrated from Central Asia, were brilliantly led by the warrior-king Atilla, who organized the Huns into a nearly unstoppable military unit. They attacked Germanic peoples living on Roman empire boundaries.

The Huns disappeared after Atilla's death, but the Germanic peoples had such an effect from their violence that they began to seek refuge in Rome. They scattered in settlements throughout the Western Roman empire, and <https://assignbuster.com/the-western-roman-empire-the-rise-fall/>

later overthrew the governments they were living under. The Visigoths, under the leadership of Alaric, sacked Rome in 410 CE. Odovacer, a Germanic ruler, deposed Romulus Augustulus, ending the Western Roman empire. Cultural Change in the Late Roman Empire Germanic peoples governed and organized society with their own traditions now that they lacked the guardianship of the Romans.

They adopted some Roman influence, mostly Roman laws which resonated deeply within their systems. Roman and Germanic traditions later blended to form Medieval Europe. Christianity survived the Roman empire collapse, and it became a huge influencer in the region. Constantine promulgated the Edict of Milan, which allowed Christians to practice their faith openly in the Roman empire. Constantine himself converts to Christianity, and the later emperor, Theodosius, makes Christianity the official religion of the Roman empire.

Christianity historically resonated with the lower classes and women because of its equal nature, but during the 4th century CE, that began to change when intellectual elites began to take more interest in Christianity. St. Augustine (354-430 CE) was the most important and influential figure in the spread of Christianity after the collapse of the Western Roman empire. He was a bishop of Hippo, (a town in Northern Africa) and worked to reconcile Christianity with Greek and Roman philosophical traditions, and to articulate Christianity with the upper classes.

Controversy arose within the religion, putting tension between people who interpreted the Christian doctrine in different ways. The foundation of the institutional church formed shortly after these disputes began to arise. The bishop of Rome, known as the Pope, and 4 patriarchs, were the church

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officials. Bishops and patriarchs would assemble in church councils to solve disputes, often times over the interpretations of Christian doctrines. In the meantime, missionaries converted Germanic peoples to Christianity.