To Edward Gibbon, an 18th-century English historian and author of *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, "the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous" was the 2nd century A.D. It was during this century that the Roman Empire reached its greatest extent and was, according to Gibbon, "governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom." A Roman subject of the 2nd century agreed and had this to say about the era:

The whole world keeps holiday; the age-long curse of war has been put aside; mankind turns to enjoy happiness. Strife has been quieted, leaving only the competition of cities, each eager to be the most beautiful and the most fair. Every city is full of gymnastic schools, fountains and porticos, temples, shops, and schools of learning. The whole earth is decked with beauty like a garden.

There were those who would disagree. Some thought Roman rule was a mixed blessing at best, and others felt it was oppressive and tyrannical, a rule in which the Romans used their military power cruelly and unjustly. A 20th-century British historian, Arnold Toynbee, called the 2nd century A.D. a time of stalemate when the world "lay more or less passive under the pall" of Roman power. Writing in the 2nd century, the Roman historian Tacitus [tas'ə tsəs] quoted the words of a British chieftain: "They [the Romans] make a desert and call it peace." The Jews, whose country was destroyed by the Romans, would generally have agreed.

A difference of opinion is a good point at which to begin to look at Roman history. In truth, military conquest did make Rome a world state. The boundaries of the empire expanded as the Roman armies scored victory after victory. Yet force alone was not enough to maintain a unified state. Skillful diplomacy, effective government, a flexible system of law, a widespread network of
roads and commercial towns—all of these factors helped Rome bring together within one empire a great number of peoples of diverse backgrounds.

For more than two centuries, from 27 B.C. to A.D. 180, the Romans maintained the Pax Romana, or "Roman Peace," throughout their far-flung domain.

**Reading Preview**

In this chapter you will read how Rome grew from a small Italian city-state to a vast empire.

1. The Roman Republic arose on the Italian peninsula.
2. The republic became a far-flung empire.
3. The Roman Empire lasted for many centuries.
4. The Romans developed a lasting Greco-Roman culture.
The Roman Republic arose on the Italian peninsula.

Between 2000 and 1000 B.C., about the time that the Greek-speaking tribes were moving into their future homeland, another branch of Indo-Europeans moved south through the Alps into the Italian peninsula. Most important among these peoples were the Latins, a group of tribes who settled in the Tiber [tiˈbær] River Valley of western Italy. About 750 B.C., the Latins built a small settlement near the Tiber River. Over time, the city of Rome grew from this modest beginning.

Early Rome was ruled and influenced by the Etruscans.

In the 7th century B.C., the Latin tribes were conquered by their powerful neighbors to the north, the Etruscans. Little is known about the Etruscans, but they are believed to have come from Asia Minor. They drained the marshes around Rome, encouraged trade, and taught the Latins to write with the Greek alphabet and to use arches in their buildings. In addition, the Romans began to worship some of the Etruscans’ gods and to make statues of these gods as the Etruscans had.

Many important features of Roman government developed under Etruscan rule. The Etruscans were responsible for bringing the first city-state civilization to Italy. A king of Etruscan descent ruled the state and was elected to his office by the Latin tribal chieftains. He served as high priest, as well as chief magistrate (a government official who has the power to uphold the laws), and chose a group of nobles, called the Senate, to advise him. These high-ranking freemen were usually large landowners and were known as patricians [pəˈtrɪʃənz], or fathers of the state. In contrast, the small farmers and tradespeople were known as plebeians [pliˈbɛəns], or common people.

Consuls and the Senate led the Roman Republic.

In the 7th and 6th centuries B.C., an Etruscan family named Tarquin ruled Rome. A bitter rivalry for power developed in the family until eventually,

The Chimera [ko mirˈa], the most famous example of prized Etruscan bronzework, is a mythical monster with a lion’s body, goat’s head, and serpent’s tail.
one member, Tarquin the Proud, murdered the king and declared himself ruler. A tyrant, he was despised by the people and was finally deposed by the Senate in 509 B.C.

The Senate then set up a republic, a state in which the citizens elect representatives to run the government. As in early Greece, power in the Roman Republic was held tightly by those people at the top of the social scale.

The new republic was governed by two consuls, who were the chief magistrates, and the Senate.

The consuls could serve for only one year, a provision that kept them from becoming too powerful. In wartime or other emergencies, however, a dictator, or absolute ruler, could rule in place of the consuls, but the term of office was limited to six months. The Senate was made up of 300 patricians appointed for life by the consuls. This powerful group of senators conducted foreign policy, proposed the laws, handled the government's finances, and nominated the consuls for office.

**Rome expanded within the Italian peninsula.**

Soon after Tarquin and the Etruscans were overthrown in 509 B.C., Rome and the nearby Latin tribes got together to form a defensive alliance known as the Latin League. By the beginning of the 4th century B.C., Rome and the league successfully controlled the central Italian peninsula.

Soon, however, two setbacks to Roman expansion occurred. The first was the invasion in 390
Many factors contributed to the military success of the Romans.

The Romans succeeded in both conquering and managing diverse peoples and territories because of four basic reasons. These reasons relate to Rome’s favorable geography, strong family values, great military strength, and wise leadership.

Geography. In conquering the hostile peoples surrounding Rome—Etruscans in the north, hill tribes in central Italy, and Greeks in the south—the Romans were favored by geography. One important advantage was the city’s central location on the Italian peninsula. This position gave the Romans a strategic advantage over their enemies, who had difficulty uniting successfully.

Another advantage resulted from the mountainous terrain of the Italian peninsula. The Alps to the north kept all but the most determined invaders from entering the peninsula. In addition, the Romans were not hurt by the Apennines, which ran down most of the Italian peninsula. These mountains were not as rugged as those found in Greece and therefore did not work against Rome’s unification of the area. (See the map, page 102.)

Family values. Most of the early Romans were farmers. They lived simply, worked hard, and fought well. In general, the Roman family was a close-knit group held together by affection, the necessities of a frugal life, and the strict authority of parents. Both parents played important roles in family activities and taught their children loyalty, courage, and self-control. Most Romans took their civic and religious duties seriously.

The stern virtues prized by Roman family life were a source of strength to the early republic. In later years, when increasing power and wealth began to undermine family life, some people were unhappy about the passing of the old order. “Rome stands built upon the ancient ways of life,” warned a poet of the 3rd century B.C. who felt the need for a return to the strong family values of the past.

Military strength. The success of the Roman conquests was largely the result of a well-trained army of citizen-soldiers. The basic military unit was the legion [lēˈjan], an infantry force of 6,000 men at full strength. Each legion was divided into groups of 120 men. At first only Roman property owners could be soldiers. However, as Rome ex-
expanded and the need for soldiers increased, conquered peoples were forced to supply troops for the army.

In addition to enriching a strong army, Rome's military strength also aided its political goals. New military roads, such as the Appian Way, connected Rome to other cities on the Italian peninsula. These new roads, intended to speed the movement of troops, also opened up trade and communication among Italian cities.

Wise leadership. The Romans had great talents for organization. For example, they gave full privileges of Roman citizenship to some of their conquered peoples. This select group of conquered people could vote and hold political office in Rome. Others were given less important rights, such as the right to own property.

In addition, Rome granted a large measure of independence to the peoples it conquered. They were free to run their own affairs, set up their own assemblies, and elect their own magistrates. Rome, however, controlled the administration of justice and handled city-to-city affairs. As a result, the Roman Republic maintained stability.

The plebeians fought for equal rights within Rome.

Soon after the founding of the republic, the plebeians began to demand a greater role in government. As Rome's territory expanded, its need for loyal and well-trained citizen-armies grew. As a result, the plebeians, who made up the bulk of the army, were able to gain a greater voice and role in the government over time.

Under pressure from dissatisfied plebeians, the Roman government allowed the plebeians to establish their own assembly. This assembly, called the Concilium Plebis ("gathering of the plebeians"), was governed by plebian-elected leaders called tribunes. At first, this assembly lacked power and influence, but over time its power began to grow.

In addition to dealing with plebian concerns in their own assembly, the tribunes also sat in on Senate discussions. They could not take part in the debates or vote, but if they felt that the laws under discussion would not be in the plebeians' favor, they could cry out "Veto," which meant, "I forbid." Although at first the veto did not stop the Senate from passing laws, it did encourage senators to rethink unpopular legislation.

About 450 B.C. the plebeians won the right to have the laws of the republic written down and available for all to see. This prevented judges from making different decisions on similar cases in order to favor patrician interests. These written laws were called the Law of the Twelve Tables. They were carved on twelve bronze tablets and hung in the forum, a central, open-air meeting place.
Little by little, the plebeians made more gains. The veto power of the tribunes became more effective, and by the 4th century B.C., a plebeian held one of the consulships. In addition, plebeians became eligible for membership in the Senate and other government offices that had previously been reserved for patricians. Two such offices were the praetors [prēˈtɔrəz], who were judges in charge of the law courts, and censors [senˈsɔrz], who upheld the moral code of the republic and registered citizens for tax and voting purposes.

In 287 B.C. a law made the plebeian assembly into a popular assembly that made laws that were binding on all citizens. The old distinctions between patrician and plebeian were wiped away. However, a rising class of rich plebeians, whose wealth had come from trade, industry, or marriage, eventually took control of the assembly. As a result, the struggle for political power and social equality did not come to an end. In the centuries ahead, differences in wealth and status continued to play an important part in the story of Rome.

Section 1 Review

Identify Rome, patricians, plebeians, republic, pyrrhic victory

Main Ideas
1. In what ways did the Etruscans influence the development of Rome?
2. What were the two main leadership positions of the Roman Republic? Were these positions generally filled by patricians or plebeians?
3. Where did Rome’s first expansion efforts take place? What defensive alliance first attempted to unify the region around Rome?
4. Why was Rome able to be a military success? How did the geography of Italy help Rome?
5. Why were the plebeians able to demand equal rights in the Roman government? Give two examples in which they were successful.

Critical Thinking
Assessing Cause and Effect: Imagine that you are a Roman general who is conquering foreign lands. Would you choose to grant the defeated the kinds of privileges that the Romans usually granted? Why or why not?

The republic became a far-flung empire.

Once the Romans had dominated the Italian peninsula, they turned to the northern coast of Africa, where the city of Carthage remained as Rome’s only rival. Carthage had been founded in 814 B.C. by Phoenicians and had grown into a rich and large commercial power from sea trade in the western Mediterranean. The Carthaginian domain included territory in north Africa and the Iberian peninsula (present-day Spain and Portugal) and trading centers on the islands of Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily. The strong Carthaginian navy, made up of mercenary soldiers who fought primarily for money, blocked Roman expansion in the Mediterranean.
A strong rivalry between Rome and Carthage led to the Punic Wars.

Between 264 and 146 B.C., Carthage and Rome maintained a bitter rivalry and fought three major wars for control of the western Mediterranean. These wars are known as the Punic [pyü’nik] Wars, from the Latin Punicus for “Phoenicians.”

The First Punic War. This first of many struggles centered around the 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’s strong navy could use the Strait of Messina as a short bridge from Sicily onto the Italian peninsula.

The contest between Rome and Carthage was clearly unequal. The odds favored Carthage, which was rich in gold, manpower, and ships. The Romans, with a strong army, were not a seafaring people, but they realized that Carthage could be defeated only if its navy were smashed. With amazing determination, the Romans built up a navy. In a series of naval battles, several Roman fleets were destroyed. Finally, however, the Romans defeated the Carthaginians in 241 B.C.

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. No longer was Roman power restricted to the Italian peninsula, and the Roman navy proved supreme in the western Mediterranean.

The Second Punic War. This next war of revenge took place 22 years after the first ended. It has been called a “conflict between the nation Rome and the man Hannibal.” Hannibal was a young and ambitious Carthaginian general whose military genius has been rated as equal to that of Alexander the Great. He is said to have sworn on a sacred altar to his father, also a general, to remain Rome’s enemy for life.

Hannibal forced Rome to declare war in 219 B.C. by attacking a Roman ally, the city of Sagunto in Spain. With cavalry, African war elephants, and about 40,000 infantrymen, Hannibal then crossed through southern Gaul and over the Alps into Italy. Trace this route on the map on page 102. The difficult journey cost Hannibal about half of his men, much of his equipment, and all but one elephant. With the Gauls of northern Italy enlisted as allies, Hannibal began to march south.

To meet the emergency, the Romans made Fabius Maximus dictator. He was a cautious leader who refused to risk an all-out battle. Although his policy of watchful waiting succeeded in frustrating Hannibal, it was also unpopular with the many Romans who wanted a face-to-face battle.

Their opportunity finally came at Cannae [kan´ə] in southern Italy. There, in 216 B.C., Hannibal encircled the Romans and wiped out a force at least a third larger than his own. He was stopped however, from inflicting a mortal blow upon Rome. He dared not lay siege to Rome without reserves of manpower and supplies. Because the Romans and their loyal allies controlled the seas, Hannibal was cut off from his resources.

Finally, the Romans decided to open up another front under the bold leadership of Scipio [sip’ë ō] the Elder. Scipio was a general believed to be Hannibal’s match in terms of military strategy. Roman forces invaded north Africa, and Hannibal was forced to return home to defend Carthage. At Zama in 202 B.C., 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. Despite these terms, the Romans were still afraid that Carthaginian power would grow once again.

The Third Punic War. True to the Romans’ suspicion, over the next 50 years, Carthage slowly
regained its power. Roman resentment of this growing strength reached a peak when, in 149 B.C., Rome sent an ultimatum to Carthage demanding that the Carthaginians abandon their city and settle away from the coast. Since this demand was equal to a death sentence for such a commercial power, the Carthaginians had to refuse.

Rome responded by attacking Carthage and laying siege to the city, an act that kept food from coming into Carthage and led to widespread starvation. When the Romans finally entered Carthage, they burned the city to the ground and are said to have destroyed the fertility of the soil by throwing salt into plowed fields. Thus, in 146 B.C., the Third Punic War ended and the Carthaginians were broken. The few who survived were sold into slavery, and the Carthaginian lands in north Africa became the Roman province of Africa.

**Roman expansion led to changes within the republic.**

Shortly after the end of the Second Punic War, Roman expansion turned eastward. After a series of wars, they defeated the Macedonians, and in 146 B.C., made Macedonia a Roman province. In the same year, the Romans burned Corinth and made the other Greek city-states subject to Rome.

The Romans began their move into the lands that are now considered the Middle East when, in 133 B.C., the king of Pergamum in Asia Minor abandoned his throne. This relief suggests how Roman military ships might have been used, with soldiers on deck, ready to attack, and slaves working the oars below.
willed his kingdom to Rome. The king apparently feared that the discontented masses in his kingdom would revolt unless Rome, with its reputation for maintaining law and order, took over. In addition, Egypt and other nearby countries allied themselves with Rome and later became Roman territories. By 100 B.C., Rome controlled almost every land that bordered the Mediterranean, which the Romans called *Mare Nostrum*—“Our Sea.”

**Political changes.** As Rome became increasingly involved in foreign affairs, the Senate grew in power and prestige by conducting state negotiations. The popular assembly had the power to ratify, or approve, treaties and to declare war, but, in reality, this body acted merely to confirm the decisions of the senators. 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.

**Economic changes.** In addition to politics, the wars also hurt farming in the Italian peninsula. The small landowners of the republic, whose spirit had made Rome so strong, saw their lands either devastated by Hannibal’s army or left unattended because of frequent calls into military service. To add to their problems, large supplies of cheap grain were coming in from Sicily.

Many small landowners who found that they couldn’t compete in this changing market drifted to Rome in search of jobs. However, jobs were scarce. The large landowners around Rome were already using slaves who had been captured in the wars to work their land, and there was no large-scale industry offering other jobs. An unhappy, out-of-work mob thus developed in the city.

In contrast to the poverty and unemployment of the masses, the riches of war pouring into Rome made some people wealthy for the first time. Wealthy landowners, who had plentiful slave labor, were encouraged to buy more and more land. Many stopped growing grain and switched to the more profitable production of olive oil and wine, or of sheep and cattle. This new wealth changed Roman attitudes toward the state. The traditions of public duty and self-discipline gradually gave way to greed and soft living.

**Civil war.** Two brothers of a prominent Roman family, Tiberius [ˈtɪbərɪəs] and Gaius [ˈɡaɪəs] Gracchus [ˈɡrækəs], came to the support of the dissatisfied masses. In 133 B.C. Tiberius was elected tribune. He believed that the decline of the Roman character could be stopped if the backbone of the old Roman society, the small landowner, were restored to its old strength.

To help this become a reality, 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. Since his proposal would have taken away land from some of the richest families, a group of rich men had Tiberius murdered.

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

Rome was now the scene of bitter rivalry between the People’s party, supported by the plebeians and the masses, and the Senate, the agent of the rich patricians. The country was divided by violence and civil war.

Finally, Sulla [ˈsʊla], an able general and strong supporter of the Senate, restored order. Appointed dictator by the Senate, he doubled the size of this ruling council and limited the power of the veto. Sulla’s changes wiped out many of the gains made by the plebeians in their struggle for equality. In 79 B.C. Sulla retired, believing that his work would be permanent. He had brought peace to the republic, but his changes didn’t last.

**Julius Caesar became dictator of Rome.**

During the time of civil strife, the army had changed. Traditionally, the Roman army had been made up of citizens who fought because of a duty to the state. 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 for long periods of time and were loyal to their military leader. Under these conditions, a popular general could easily use his military power to gain political power. Such a man was the brilliant general Julius Caesar [ˈsɛˈzɑːr].

99
The marble statue of Julius Caesar above, located in Rome, is his best surviving full-length portrait.

**Caesar's rise to power.** After a successful military career in the Iberian peninsula, Julius Caesar joined with Pompey, another military hero, and Crassus, one of the wealthiest men in Rome. Their support made it possible for Caesar to become consul. In 60 B.C. the three men formed the First Triumvirate [trī um'va rät'], a three-person governing body that was to rule the Roman state.

From 58 to 51 B.C., 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 Roman masses. The jealous 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, 49 B.C., Caesar brought his army across the Rubicon River, the southern boundary of Caesar's province, into the northern part of the Italian peninsula. By defying the Senate's orders to come alone, Caesar had in effect declared war on his former ally Pompey and the Senate. Today the expression "crossing the Rubicon" means taking a step that commits a person to a set course of action. Caesar's set course of action was war.

Afraid of the legions who were friendly to Caesar, Pompey and most of the senators fled to Greece. Caesar followed and defeated them. When Caesar returned to Rome, he became dictator.

**Caesar's rule as dictator.** During his five years of rule, Caesar made moderate reforms. These reforms were generally made to strengthen both Rome and Caesar's own power. He weakened the power of the Senate, but at the same time increased its membership to 900 by 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. In addition, he introduced a new, more accurate calendar that was based on Egypt's ancient calendar. With minor changes, it is still in use today.

The Senate feared that Caesar meant to make himself king and establish a dynasty, a change in the government that would threaten the Senate's role in the selection of the 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., 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.

**Octavian became the first Roman emperor Augustus.**

Before his death, Julius Caesar had made his grandnephew and adopted son, Octavian, his heir. (An heir has the right to receive a property or title after the death of its owner.) The 18-year-old Octavian joined with Mark Antony, 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.

For the next ten years, Octavian and Antony shared absolute power in the republic. Octavian ruled Rome and the western part of the empire while Antony ruled Egypt and the eastern part. During the time that 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 31 B.C., at Actium, a cape on the western coast of Greece, Octavian’s fleet clashed with that of Antony and Cleopatra. When Cleopatra fled the battle, Antony deserted his men and followed her to Egypt. The following year, when Octavian landed in Egypt, 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 own hands, largely through his control of the army. He was called imperator (“victorious general”), a term from which the word “emperor” comes. In 27 B.C. the Senate gave Octavian the honorary title of Augustus, a title previously reserved for the gods meaning “the Majestic.” After a century of civil war, Rome at last had been united under one ruler. With the reign of Augustus, the Roman Empire began.

---

**Section 2 Review**

**Identify** Carthage, Punic Wars, Hannibal, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, Julius Caesar, Octavian

**Main Ideas**

1. Why was Carthage an effective rival for Rome? Why did the First Punic War center around Sicily?
2. How did the lives of the small Roman landowners change as Rome became a world power? How did their problems affect city life?
3. How was Julius Caesar able to secure enough power to become dictator? Why did the Senate fear him?
4. How did Octavian become supreme ruler?

**Critical Thinking**

**Assessing Cause and Effect:** Why do you think Rome’s rapid expansion would result in a significant strengthening of the power of the Senate and a weakened role for the plebeians in the government?

---

3. **The Roman Empire lasted for many centuries.**

During the reign of Augustus, from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14, 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 sands of the Sa-

Augustus, whose youthful face graces the front side of this Roman coin, was a wise and powerful emperor.
This map uses different colors to show changes over time. Note that the Romans gradually brought under their control all of the Mediterranean world. Which of the following provinces—Egypt, Dacia, Gaul, Thrace, Britain—were added after A.D. 14?

Augustus was the architect of the Pax Romana.

Generally, the first two centuries of the empire were peaceful and prosperous. This period, from 27 B.C. to A.D. 180, is known as the Pax Romana, or “Roman Peace.” Within the empire, business grew as conditions for trade improved. Bandits and pirates 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 such distant lands as India and China.

Augustus proved to be a wise ruler. He improved the government that had grown corrupt during the later days of the republic, especially in the provinces. To do this, Augustus created a professional civil service, open to all classes and based on talent. In addition, he established a permanent, professional army that was loyal to the emperor and stationed away from the political arena out in the isolated frontier provinces. A census of citizens was taken and tax rates were adjusted. A program of public works was begun, and roads and bridges were built.

Augustus was not successful, however, in his at-
tempts to restore the old ideas of Roman simplicity and home life. Laws were passed to encourage large families, to strengthen the bonds of marriage, and to limit luxurious living—but with little lasting effect. Augustus made the old religious rituals again a part of the affairs of state by rebuilding old temples and reviving religious festivals. In time, worship of the emperor began, and as the years went by, served as a unifying bond.

The Roman Empire maintained its strength despite its generally poor leaders. When Augustus died in A.D. 14, the Senate voted the title of emperor to his stepson, Tiberius, who proved to be only an adequate ruler. It was during his reign, which lasted until A.D. 37, that Jesus was crucified in Judea. (See Chapter 10.) From the time of Tiberius to the end of the western empire in A.D. 476, Rome was ruled by more than 70 emperors, only a few of whom were very capable. (See the list of Roman rulers on pages 802-803.)

In spite of incompetent rulers, the empire held together until A.D. 395. Efficient administrators at many levels of responsibility kept justice and order, and commercial strength helped keep the empire stable. Only when economic decline and social unrest set in did the lack of good leadership at the top seriously weaken the empire.

Several of Rome's poor leaders were brutal tyrants who are remembered for their violent and irrational deeds. For instance, Caligula was a madman who killed many people, including his sister, and made his favorite horse a senator. Nero, judged the most wicked and worthless ruler ever to rule Rome, murdered his wife and his mother. He was also accused of persecuting Christians and setting fire to Rome in A.D. 64, a great nine-day catastrophe that destroyed half the city.

During the 2nd century A.D., however, the empire enjoyed the rule of several competent emperors. Trajan, a Spanish general who ruled from 98 to 117, was an ambitious military leader. Under his rule, the empire reached its greatest extent. His successor, Hadrian, ruled from 117 to 138. Hadrian made it his policy to strengthen the frontiers. Traveling throughout the empire, he supervised the building of many public works. One of the most famous projects was Hadrian's Wall in Britain, built as a protection against the Celtic tribes of Scotland. (See the map on page 102.)

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 the quiet study of books to the blood and brutality of the battlefield. His volume of essays, called Meditations, remains one of the most powerful expressions of the Stoic philosophy, which promoted the view that virtue is the highest good and that passion should be restrained. (See Chapter 5.) Marcus Aurelius' advice was, "Blot out vain pomp; check impulse; quench appetite; keep reason under its own control."

Roman mismanagement led to the destruction of Judea.

It would be wrong to assume that all the inhabitants of the Roman Empire were happy under Ro-

This portrayal of the emperor Marcus Aurelius is the only bronze equestrian statue (depicting a rider on horseback) to have survived from Roman times.
man rule. One of the worst failures of Roman imperial administration was the mismanagement of Judea, the land of the Jews. (See map, page 102.) High taxes, harsh enforcement of the law, and interference in their religion led Jews to revolt between A.D. 66 and 70. The Romans brutally suppressed the Jews, destroyed their state, enslaved many, and removed large numbers to other parts of the empire.

In A.D. 135, after the Jews had made some progress toward returning Judea to its former prosperity, the emperor Hadrian tried to obliterate Jerusalem as a Jewish city and construct a temple to Jupiter on the site of the Holy Temple. This sparked a vast uprising in which at least half a million Jews were killed. Hadrian outlawed the Jewish religion and renamed Judea “Palestine,” the Latin name for the Philistines who had once lived along the coast many centuries earlier. After this uprising was put down, the Jews became a minority in their own country. The center of Jewish life gradually shifted to the Diaspora—communities outside Judea where many Jews already lived, such as Alexandria, Damascus, and Babylon.

**Economic decline and political instability weakened the empire.**

By the end of the 2nd century A.D., attacks on the frontiers of the Roman Empire came more and more often. To meet these threats, Roman leaders doubled the size of its army. The drain on the supply of troops and resources brought on an economic crisis that was made more severe by several other factors.

**Economic decline.** Poverty and unemployment were on the rise. In addition, imports (goods brought into the empire from foreign lands for sale or use) began to exceed exports (goods sent out of the empire for sale or use elsewhere), creating an unfavorable balance of trade. In an attempt to save
some of the valuable metals that were leaving the empire as money, the emperors reduced the gold and silver content of the money in circulation.

The replacement of these metals with lead served to devalue, or decrease the value, of the coins. Because money was worth less, people charged higher prices. This in turn led to inflation—a sharp increase in prices caused by a great expansion of the money supply. The inflation experienced throughout the empire caused yet more hardship and poverty.

**Political instability.** Business was hurt by crime of all kinds which, in turn, was caused by political instability. Meetings of the Senate and the popular assembly had become mere formalities. These two groups were no longer effective in governing the state since the political power was held by the emperor, who himself was often at the mercy of the army. Peaceful succession to the throne was rare, and the death of an emperor signaled a free-for-all struggle. Of the 29 emperors who ruled between A.D. 180 and 284, only four died of natural causes. The others were murdered.

The soldiers had the real power to select the new emperor. As a result, emperors often followed the cynical advice of Emperor Septimius Severus, who is said to have told his sons, “Make the soldiers rich and don’t trouble about the rest.” To keep the legions at full strength, members of Germanic tribes were recruited and war captives were forced to enlist. These new legionnaires cared for the empire only so long as they were paid. However, the empire was still strong and had lasted a very long time. In A.D. 248 Emperor Philip celebrated the 1,000th anniversary of Rome’s legendary founding on April 21, 753 B.C.

**Two emperors tried despotism to save Rome.**

After a century of decline and civil disorder, two emperors were able to halt for a while the disintegration of the empire. The first was Diocletian [diˈkliːʃən], who reigned from A.D. 284 to 305. He set up a full-fledged despotism, which is a government ruled by someone with unlimited power. Harsh laws controlled all business.

Constantine was the next emperor, and he enforced even more despotic control over his subjects. He also moved the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, which he then renamed Constantinople after himself. (See map, page 102.)

Diocletian and Constantine halted civil war and economic decline for a time. Yet, as a cure, despotism proved worse than the ills from which the empire suffered. State regulation of business killed individual initiative. A secret police force choked off reform. Trade came to a standstill in many places, and the amount of wealth available for taxation decreased. After the death of Constantine in 337, rivals for the throne butchered one another. The last ruler of a united Roman Empire was Theodosius I. At his death in 395, the empire was divided between his two sons. In effect, the period of Roman dominance and greatness was over.

---

**Section 3 Review**

**Identify.** *Pax Romana, Diaspora, inflation, despotism*

**Main Ideas**

1. How did Augustus improve the government during the *Pax Romana*?
2. Why was the empire able to survive during periods when there were bad rulers?
3. How did the Romans mistreat the Jews?
4. What problems weakened the empire between A.D. 180 and 284? Who held the real political power?
5. How did the despotism of Diocletian and Constantine affect Rome?

**Critical Thinking**

**Predicting Effects:** What do you think might have happened if Rome had been ruled by effective leaders at the beginning of its economic problems?

4. **The Romans developed a lasting Greco-Roman culture.**

Most roots of Western civilization can be traced to the blend of Greek and Roman culture, known as classical culture, that flourished during the *Pax Romana*. The Romans admired Hellenistic culture and borrowed widely from the Greeks. In the process, certain elements of Roman culture were
changed. For example, Roman sculpture became even more lifelike than the Greek; Roman architecture, more elaborate and more secular, or nonreligious, in function. In addition, the Romans made many contributions of their own, such as an outstanding legal system.

**Roman law and the Latin language contributed to Western civilization.**

A common set of laws and a common language served to unify the diverse peoples of the Roman Empire. In addition, both Roman law and Latin, the language of the Romans, had a great influence on the development of modern civilizations.

**Roman law.** In modern-day Italy, France, Spain, and Latin America, law codes based on Roman legal principles are still in use. Law in modern English-speaking countries was also greatly influenced by Roman law. In fact, along with the Latin language, the system of law devised by the Romans is probably their most lasting contribution.

Written Roman law developed from the Law of the Twelve Tables—those written laws won by the plebeians so that they would know how they were being ruled. As Rome expanded, laws governing noncitizens were added. The legal interpretations, or decisions, of magistrates in the provinces were kept, and these served as precedents, or examples, to help other judges decide similar cases in court.

Sometimes, the existing laws of a conquered place influenced the magistrate’s decision. In this way, local rules and customs became a part of the larger body of Roman law. Roman laws became international, particularly the laws dealing with commerce. When Augustus was emperor, professional law schools were established to teach the law. Later, in the 6th century A.D., Justinian, emperor of the Eastern empire, had this huge body of laws codified, meaning that the laws were organized into a system that could more easily be used.

**Latin language.** Latin is one of the Indo-European languages, as are English, German, Slavic, Greek, Persian, and Sanskrit. The Romans did not develop writing until the 7th century B.C., when they adopted the Greek-style alphabet used by the Etruscans, which was based on the Phoenician alphabet. (See Chapter 3.)

Latin was the official language of business, religion, education, government, and the arts throughout the empire. During the Roman years, two forms of Latin developed. One was literary Latin, the form used in writing. It was highly admired for its logic and exactness. The second form was the vernacular [vər näkˈəl], or informal spoken language used in people’s everyday dealings. From this form of Latin developed the modern Romance

---

**DAILY LIFE**

Roman artwork, books, artifacts, and buildings have revealed much about the lives and times of these people. This collection shows how a wealthy young Roman girl may have spent her days. The painting (near right) shows her with a pen and book, studying. The room (left) was a bedroom, and the comb (far right), carved from wood. Note that the leather shoe is quite modern in its styling.
Latin Words in English

Latin is the source of many English words. Of course, the English language did not exist in Roman times, but ever since the Middle Ages, when English began to take shape as a separate language, new words with Latin roots have entered the English vocabulary.

audio            mobile
Demonstrate      noble
Erase            peace
Face             puerile
Graduate         question
Homicide         radius
Index            salary
Journey          salmon
Kitchen          tuba
Labor            umbrella

languages, which include Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian.

All of these languages are written in the Roman alphabet, as are English, German, Dutch, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Finnish, Swedish, and Turkish. Although English is a Germanic language, it includes thousands of words with Latin origins. Literary Latin was preserved for centuries after the end of the western Roman Empire because it was the official language of the Roman Catholic Church. Many American high-school students have continued to study Latin in the 20th century.

The Romans were inventive engineers and architects.

A network of roads knit together the Roman realm. They were built to help speed the movement of armies and military supplies, but the roads were open to the public for travel and commerce. Built of several layers of stone, the Roman roads were superior to any highways constructed in Europe until the 1800s. Roman engineering skill was used throughout the empire in the construction of numerous dams, bridges, drainage systems, and aqueducts, which are bridgelike structures that hold water pipes.

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

To make their structures solid and lasting, Roman architects used cement and concrete as basic materials. Exteriors were faced with marble or stucco, a plaster that sets with a hard, stonelike coat, and decorated with sculpture. The Romans preferred ornate decoration to the simplicity of earlier Greek architecture. Also in contrast to the Greeks, whose greatest architectural achievements were usually reserved to honor their gods, the Romans’ finest buildings were used for judicial or other public functions.

Roman public buildings were both magnificent and practical. The public baths were multileveled structures that included steam rooms, bathing and swimming pools, gardens, gyms, and libraries. The Roman baths, which were like modern athletic clubs, served as popular meeting places. Entry to the baths was frequently paid for by political candidates seeking votes.

The Roman Colosseum, a huge amphitheater, was a main feature of a special welfare system used by Roman politicians to keep the plebeians happy and under control. This welfare system, known as “bread and circuses,” provided free grain (the “bread”) and free entertainment (the “circuses”). The Colosseum, where much of the free entertainment took place, was the scene of mock naval battles and bloody gladiator fights, in which war prisoners and condemned criminals fought fiercely to the death for the amusement of the crowds. At the Circus Maximus, a stadium in Rome, thrilling chariot races were held.
The Romans are justly famous for city planning. Provincial cities and towns were usually built around a forum, a public square that would be close to the crossing of two main roads. The main civic buildings and the marketplace were centrally located in the forum area, and building codes were enforced to keep architectural styles uniform.

The logical planning in the provinces was in strong contrast to the capital city of the empire. Rome had narrow, winding streets, a poor drainage system, and was overcrowded. In the 2nd century A.D., the city's population of more than a million persons was jammed into 9 square miles. Augustus claimed that he had found Rome brick and had left it marble. However, the splendid public buildings were often flanked by dark and flimsy tenement houses. During the lifetime of the empire, Rome was a sprawling, bustling city of both magnificence and squalor.

The Romans used Greek models for literature.

Throughout the history of Rome, Greek literature remained the most important influence on Latin literary works. An educated Roman was expected to know Greek. Wealthy families often owned Greek slaves who served as tutors for the children of the household. With Greek models to imitate, the Romans developed a literature of the first rank. Although it was the Greek genius to speculate brilliantly about destiny and the universe, the Ro-
The Roman Forum, shown both in ruins today and how it might have looked in Roman times (inset), grew from a market place to the center of civic life.

Romans had a gift for describing less abstract ideas, using literature to point out important ethical concepts of right and wrong. Further, just as the Greeks are noted for their philosophical original thinking, the Romans are known for being practical and for adapting the ideas of others.

The wealth and leisure resulting from Roman conquests provided a growing audience for literature. From about 100 B.C. to A.D. 14, Latin literature was at its height. This period has been called the Golden Age of Latin literature.

One of the leading writers of the Golden Age was the master statesman and polished orator, Cicero [sis′ə rō′]. His speeches, letters, and essays showed a wide-ranging intellect and noble character. The respect he commanded as spokesman for the Senate made Mark Antony jealous, and, in 43 B.C., Antony had Cicero put to death.

Another famous statesman, Julius Caesar, also contributed to Latin literature. His military history, Commentaries on the Gallic Wars, is famous for its careful descriptions and vigorous style. Caesar's contribution to literature also served the political purpose of keeping the name of the ambitious general in the public eye. Later, in 47 B.C., Caesar gained lasting fame with a brief but meaningful message sent to the Roman Senate after a victory in battle. Since then, the message, containing only the words Veni, vidi, vici [wav'nē wdī wdī'kē] meaning "I came, I saw, I conquered," has been studied by generations of American students.

The greatest poet of the Golden Age was Vergil [vĕr'jəl]. He has been called the "Homer of Rome" because the Iliad and the Odyssey served as models for his epic, the Aeneid [i nē'id]. The chief character in Vergil's work was Aeneas, the legend-
ary Trojan hero who overcame many obstacles before founding the city of Rome. The most outstanding aspect of the Aeneid is Vergil’s patriotism; the glories of Rome were praised in poetry, such as in the following excerpt.

Others, doubtless, will mould lifelike bronze with greater delicacy, will win from marble the look of life, will plead cases better, chart the motions of the sky with the rod and foretell the risings of the stars. You, O Roman, remember to rule the nations with might. This will be your genius—to impose the way of peace, to spare the conquered and crush the proud.

Another patriotic writer was Livy [livˈeɪ], whose history of Rome was called From the Founding of the City. By picturing the past greatness of Rome in glowing terms, he hoped to convince his readers to return to the simple ways of their ancestors.

The Roman historian Tacitus [tasˈə tæs] is best known for Germania, his study of the German tribes who lived north of the imperial frontiers. Like Livy, Tacitus urged a return to traditional Roman values. His work contrasts the strength and simplicity of the Germans with the weakness and immorality of upper-class life in Rome.

Another important writer was the Greek biographer Plutarch [pluˈtɑrk]. His masterpiece, Parallel Lives, paired 46 biographies of Greek and Roman statesmen, orators, or warriors whose careers and talents were similar. Plutarch did not flatter the Greeks at the expense of the Romans; his accounts were well balanced and his judgments of character sound. His descriptions of people and events are so colorful that Parallel Lives proved to be an invaluable source for later writers. The famous English playwright William Shakespeare drew heavily on Plutarch’s biographies when writing Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra.

**Greeks in the empire made important scientific discoveries.**

During Roman times most of the noted men of science were Greeks. The center for research and experimentation was Alexandria, Egypt. One famous Greek scholar was the astronomer Ptolemy [tolˈəmɛ]. Between A.D. 127 and 151, he brought together in one book all that was then known about astronomy. For 1,500 years Ptolemy’s views were generally accepted by educated people and were widely taught.

Unlike the Greek scientist Aristarchus before him, who believed that the earth revolved around the sun, Ptolemy believed that the sun revolved around the earth. Also a mapmaker, Ptolemy was the first to draw the earth as round, although Greek astronomers had known that it was round since the 3rd century B.C. In his map, Ptolemy exaggerated the size of Asia. This exaggeration later led the explorer Christopher Columbus to believe that the Atlantic Ocean was smaller than it is and to set sail from Spain in search of Asia.

The Greek physician Galen [ɡəˈlæn], who lived in the 2nd century A.D., also studied in Alexandria. Next to Hippocrates, the famous Greek who encouraged the study of medicine and disease, Galen was the most famous doctor of ancient times. He discovered that arteries contain blood, and not air, as had been previously believed. Although the Romans themselves made few contributions to scientific knowledge, they were skillful in applying Greek findings in medicine and public health. The Romans built the first hospitals. About A.D. 14 the first school of medicine was begun in Rome. It was there that Celsus [kɛlˈsəs], a well-known Roman-born physician, wrote and taught. One of his books describes surgical procedures for removing tonsils and cataracts.

---

**Section 4 Review**

**Identify** classical culture, aqueduct, Vergil, Ptolemy

**Main Ideas**

1. In what ways did Roman law and the Latin language continue to be used after the end of the empire?
2. What are two examples of the Romans’ skill in engineering? How was Roman architecture different from that of the Greeks?
3. What was the greatest influence on Roman literature? Name two of the writers of the Golden Age and list at least one of their works.
4. What were two important scientific discoveries made by Greeks during Roman times?

**Critical Thinking**

**Recognizing Values:** Consider the different approaches and functions of Greek and Roman architecture. What do you think are some of the underlying values of each society?