Ancient Rome

Geography of Italy

Rome is located on the Italian Peninsula in southern Europe. It looks like a high-heeled boot jutting into the Mediterranean Sea. Across the top of the boot are the Alps, steep mountains that separate Italy from European lands to the north. Another mountain range, the Apennines, runs all the way down the boot from the north to the south. The landscape of Italy is similar to Greece, but the mountains in Italy are much easier to cross. As a result, the people who settled in Italy were not split up into small, isolated communities as the Greeks were. In addition, Italy had better farmland. With more capacity to produce food, Italy could support more people than Greece could.

Rome's geographic location influenced its expansion and success. Located on the Mediterranean Sea, Rome traded and interacted with other lands. It also provided a **buffer** from invasion.

Early Romans

Attracted by the mild climate and rich soil, several groups of people settled in the Italian Peninsula. Historians think that the **Latins**, a group of Latin-speaking people, lived in the area of Rome as early as 1000 B.C. They built huts on Rome's hills, tended herds, and grew crops. After a while, they decided to band together for protection. It was this community that became known as Rome.

Question: What geographic features make this a good location for a city?

Eventually, the **Etruscans** took control of Rome. The Etruscans were skilled metalworkers who became rich from mining and trade. They forced enslaved people to do the heaviest work and made their own lives comfortable. The Etruscans changed Rome from a village of straw-roofed huts into a city of wood and brick buildings. They laid out streets, constructed temples, built Rome's first sewer, and arranged public buildings around a central square. The Etruscans paved the way for the Romans to create a great civilization.

Question: How did the Etruscans help develop the Roman culture and civilization?

Birth of the Republic

The Etruscans ruled Rome for more than 100 years. Under the Etruscans, Rome became wealthy and powerful. However, the ruling family, called the **Tarquins**, grew more and more cruel. The king was said to have had many people killed, including many of his own advisors. Finally, the Romans rebelled. They overthrew the **monarchy** and set up a republic. A **republic** is a form of government in which the leader is not a king or queen but someone put in office by citizens with the right to vote. In a republic, the citizens have the power. The rise of the **Roman Republic** marked the beginning of a new chapter in Rome's history.

Roman Society

Roman Society	QUICK FACTS
Patricians	**Plebeians**
• Wealthy, powerful citizens	• Common people
• Nobles	• Peasants, crafts-people, traders, other workers
• Small minority of the population	• Majority of the population
• Once controlled all aspects of government	• Gained right to participate in government
• After 218 BC, not allowed to participate in trade or commerce	• Only Romans who could be traders, so many became wealthy

Burstein, Stanley. *World History*. Orlando: Harcourt Education, 2006. Print.
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Although being a republic seems democratic and fair, Roman society was divided into two groups. Many of Rome's **plebeians**, or common people, were calling for changes in the government. They wanted more of a say in how the city was run. Rome was run by powerful nobles called **patricians**. Only patricians could be elected to office, so they held all the political power. The plebeians were peasants, craftspeople, traders, and other workers. Even though plebeians outnumbered patricians, they couldn't take part in the government. This will lead to changes in the government.

The Battle for the Mediterranean

As Rome continued to grow, they came into conflict with another emerging civilization, **Carthage**. This conflict was over trade routes throughout the Mediterranean Sea. Rome and Carthage would fight a series of wars called the Punic Wars. Rome was ultimately victorious. The result of these wars was that Rome began to expand its control throughout the Mediterranean region.

Parts of the Republic

The Roman Republic was divided into three parts (a tripartite government). This was purposely done to separate power and prevent one person from having absolute, or complete, power.

The Roman Republic

Magistrates	Senate	Assemblies and Tribunes
• Consuls led the government and army, judged court cases • Served for one year • Had power over all citizens, including other officials	• Advised the consuls • Served for life • Gained control of financial affairs	• Represented the common people, approved or rejected laws, declared war, elected magistrates • Roman citizens could take part in assemblies all their adult lives, tribunes served for one year • Could veto the decisions of consuls and other magistrates

Burstein, Stanley. *World History*. Orlando: Harcourt Education, 2006. Print.

By giving each branch different duties and powers, no one branch could seize control of the government. We call this **checks and balances**. These core ideas of Roman government influenced the United States model for a republic.

Question: What prior events caused the Romans to want to separate power and create checks and balances?

An exception to checks and balances was the ability to elect a temporary dictator in times of emergency and crisis. An example would be times of war.

The Twelve Tables of Law

The Roman government felt it was important to write down the laws for all to see. They were placed upon bronze plaques, called the Twelve Tables of Law. The Romans are given credit for making laws that everyone has to follow.

A Move Towards Dictatorship

In times of war or other emergencies, the Roman people often elected a temporary dictator. A **dictator** in Roman times was a magistrate who was appointed to temporarily to deal with an immediate crisis or emergency.

Julius Caesar was a successful Roman general. His soldiers had the most respect for him and were extremely loyal. Although a patrician, he was very popular with the plebeians, and wanted to see social reform. For example, Caesar would give land to his soldiers for their loyalty and food to the plebeians. To the majority of Romans, he was a hero, and a man to be respected.

Julius Caesar created the **First Triumvirate**, in which three very important men (Caesar, Crassus, and Pompey) ran Rome. This weakened the Senate and patrician class. It also gave Caesar more power than any Roman had since the Tarquin kings. This caused some Senators to become jealous of his popularity and power. They were angry over his reforms, and they feared he would name himself King of Rome. Secretly, they plotted to assassinate him.

Question: Do you think Julius Caesar wanted to be King of Rome? Why or why not?

On March 15, 44 B.C., Julius Caesar was murdered on the floor of the Senate. The reaction of the Roman people was shock and anger. They loved Caesar. A **Second Triumvirate** was created and the assassins were hunted down.   After years of a power struggle, **Octavius** (Octavian) emerged as the sole leader and took the title "**Augustus Caesar.**"

By naming himself "Augustus Caesar," Octavius is responsible for single handedly ending the Roman Republic. Rome would now be an empire, ruled by **emperors**.

Question: What do you think are the pros and cons to having an emperor?

Expansion and Pax Romana

Under the reign of emperors, the empire continued to expand. Augustus, for example, worked to strengthen and improve the empire. He cleaned the city streets and had many new buildings erected. Augustus once said, "I found Rome a city of brick, and I left it a city of marble." Rome's territory no longer just meant the Italian Peninsula. The empire began to expand deeper into the European continent and the Mediterranean Sea.

The time of the emperors also meant a time of relative peace and prosperity (a period of success and wealth) known as the *Pax Romana* (Roman peace). This time period saw the greatest achievements and for some of its greatest emperors, including **Emperor Trajan**.

Question: Look at the two maps above. Describe Rome's expansion under the Empire.
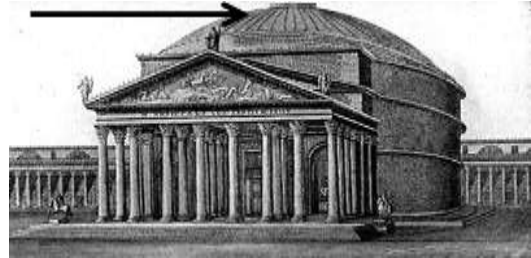
Roman Achievements

Latin, the language of the Romans, is the basis of the "**Romance Languages**," such as Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Romanian. English comes from German, but many of its vocabulary are influenced by or come directly from Latin. For example, words like *et cetera*, *veto*, and *curriculum* come from Latin.

Many subjects like medicine, law, and science use Latin names for plants and animals. A cat's scientific name is *felis catus*.

In architecture and engineering, the Romans greatly advanced previous accomplishments and were often focused on solving problems about everyday life. They changed the **post and lintel** and developed the **arch** and **dome**, which they used to build higher, more stable structures. The most famous example in Roman engineering is the **Coliseum** (**Colosseum**). Romans also invented cement, which allowed them to build bigger and stronger.

Roman Roads were just as important. They allowed the empire to be unified, both for trade and protection.

Aqueducts carried fresh water from the mountains to the large population in the cities. This water was used for fountains, bath houses, and sewers.

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Question: Look at the image above of the construction of a Roman road. Describe how a Roman road was made. How are modern roads made?