



The Roman Empire

The Big Idea

The creation of the Roman Empire transformed Roman government, society, and economy.

Why It Matters Now

The Roman Empire has served throughout history as a model of political organization and control.

Key Terms and People

civil war
Julius Caesar
triumvirate
Augustus
Pax Romana

Setting the Stage

As Rome enlarged its territory, its republican form of government grew increasingly unstable. Eventually, the Roman Republic gave way to the formation of a mighty dictator-ruled empire that continued to spread Rome's influence far and wide.

The Republic Collapses

Rome's increasing wealth and expanding boundaries brought many problems. The most serious were growing discontent among the lower classes of society and a breakdown in military order. These problems led to a shakeup of the republic—and the emergence of a new political system.

Economic Turmoil As Rome grew, the gap between rich and poor grew wider. Many of Rome's rich landowners lived on huge estates. Thousands of enslaved persons—many of whom had been captured peoples in various wars—were forced to work on these estates. By 100 BC, enslaved persons formed perhaps one-third of Rome's population.

Small farmers found it difficult to compete with the large estates run by the labor of enslaved people. Many of these farmers were former soldiers. A large number of them sold their lands to wealthy landowners and became homeless and jobless. Most stayed in the countryside and worked as seasonal migrant laborers. Some headed to Rome and other cities looking for work. They joined the ranks of the urban poor, a group that totaled about one-fourth of Roman society.

Two brothers, Tiberius and Gaius (GUY•us) Gracchus (GRAK•us), attempted to help Rome's poor. As tribunes, they proposed such reforms as limiting the size of estates and giving land to the poor.

Tiberius Gracchus

Tiberius Gracchus was a Roman official who noted that soldier-farmers were being reduced to poverty. After long years of service, many legionnaires returned home to find their farms had been sold or were in such bad shape that they had to be abandoned. Tiberius spoke eloquently about the plight of the landless former soldiers.

Analyze Historical Sources

How does Tiberius Gracchus highlight the difference in quality of life between the rich and the poor?

“The savage beasts have their . . . dens, . . . but the men who bear arms and expose their lives for the safety of their country, enjoy . . . nothing more in it but the air and light . . . and wander from place to place with their wives and children.”

—Tiberius Gracchus quoted
in Plutarch, *The Lives of
Noble Greeks and Romans*

The brothers made enemies of numerous senators, who felt threatened by their ideas. Both met violent deaths—Tiberius in 133 BC and Gaius in 121 BC. A period of **civil war**, or conflict between groups within the same country, followed their deaths.

Military Upheaval Adding to the growing turmoil within the republic was a breakdown of the once-loyal military. As the republic grew more unstable, generals began seizing greater power for themselves. They recruited soldiers from the landless poor by promising them land. These soldiers fought for pay and owed allegiance only to their commander. They replaced the citizen-soldiers whose loyalty had been to the republic. It was now possible for a military leader supported by his own troops to take over by force. Eventually, one would do just that.

Julius Caesar Takes Control In 60 BC, a military leader named **Julius Caesar** joined forces with Crassus, a wealthy Roman, and Pompey, a popular general. With their help, Caesar was elected consul in 59 BC. For the next ten years, these men dominated Rome as a **triumvirate**, a group of three rulers.

Caesar was a strong leader and a genius at military strategy. Following tradition, he served only one year as consul. He then appointed himself governor of Gaul (now France). During 58–50 BC, Caesar led his legions in a grueling but successful campaign to conquer all of Gaul. Because he shared fully in the hardships of war, he won his men’s loyalty and devotion.

The reports of Caesar’s successes in Gaul made him very popular with the people of Rome. Pompey, who had become his political rival, feared Caesar’s ambitions. In 50 BC, the senate, at Pompey’s urgings, ordered Caesar to disband his legions and return home.

Caesar defied the senate's order. On the night of January 10, 49 BC, he took his army across the Rubicon River in Italy, the southern limit of the area he commanded. He marched his army swiftly toward Rome, and Pompey fled. Caesar's troops defeated Pompey's armies in Greece, Asia, Spain, and Egypt. In 46 BC, Caesar returned to Rome, where he had the support of the army and the masses. That same year, the senate appointed him dictator. In 44 BC, he was named dictator for life.

Caesar's Reforms Julius Caesar governed Rome as an absolute ruler, one who has total power. However, he started a number of reforms. He granted Roman citizenship to many people in the provinces. In addition, he expanded the senate, adding his friends and supporters from Italy and other regions. Caesar also helped the poor by creating jobs, especially through the construction of new public buildings. He started colonies where people without land could own property, and he increased pay for soldiers.

Many nobles and senators expressed concern over Caesar's growing power, success, and popularity. Some feared losing their influence. Others considered him a tyrant. A number of important senators, led by Marcus Brutus and Gaius Cassius, plotted his assassination. On March 15, 44 BC, they stabbed him to death in the senate chamber.

Beginning of the Empire After Caesar's death, civil war broke out again and destroyed what was left of the Roman Republic. Three of Caesar's supporters banded together to crush the assassins. Caesar's 18-year-old grandnephew and adopted son Octavian (ahk•TAY•vee•uhn) joined with an experienced general named Mark Antony and a powerful politician named Lepidus. In 43 BC, they took control of Rome and ruled for ten years as the Second Triumvirate.

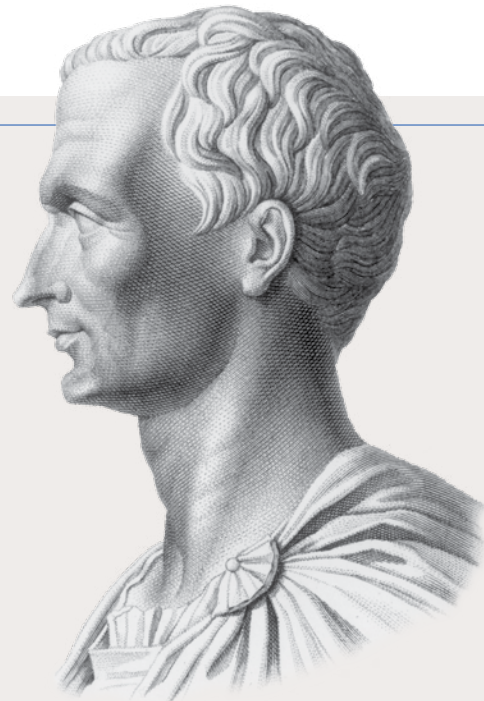
BIOGRAPHY

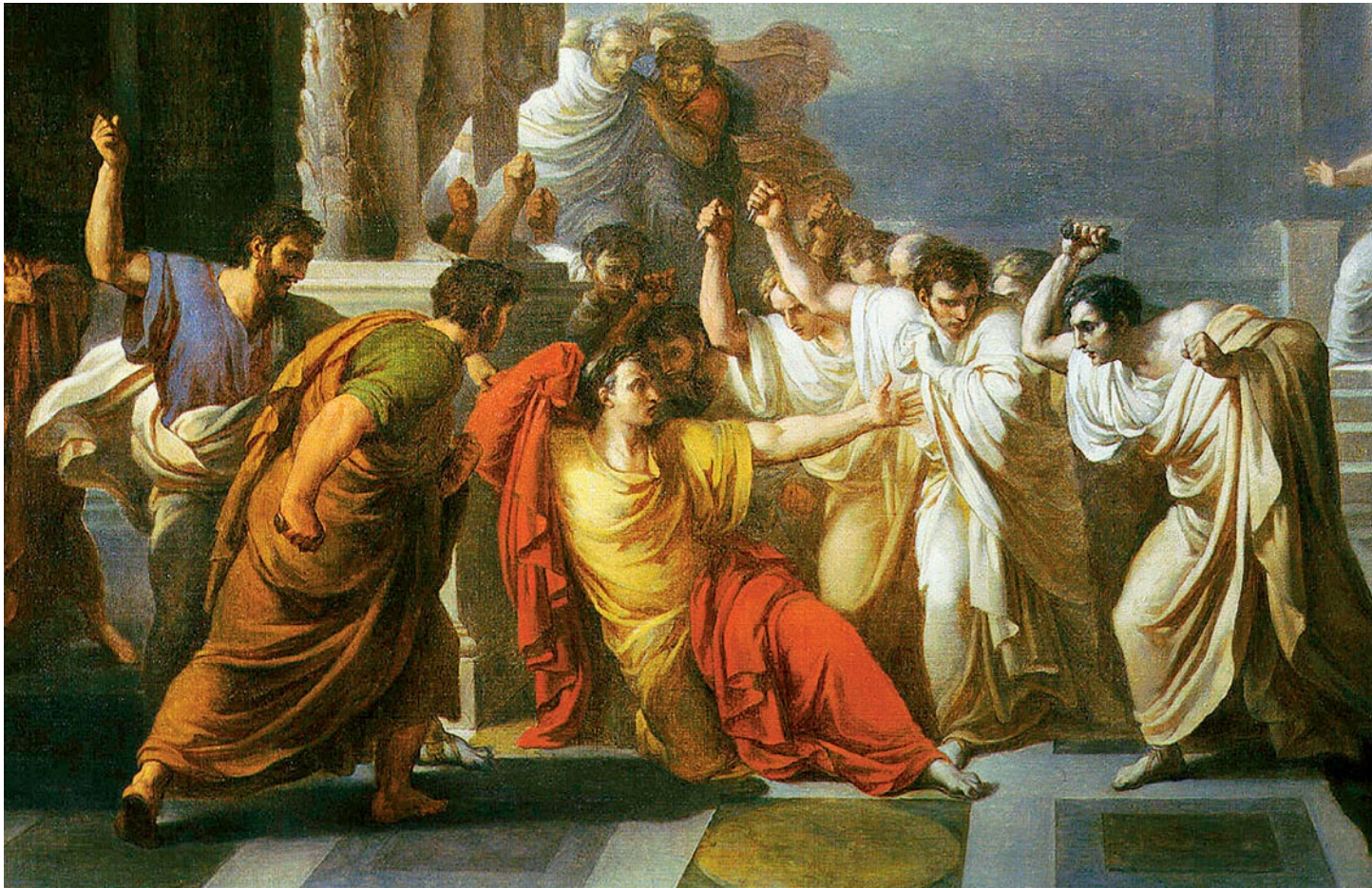
Julius Caesar

(100–44 BC)

In 44 BC, on March 15, Caesar prepared to speak to the Senate, unaware that important senators plotted his death. According to legend, his wife, Calpurnia, begged him not to go. She said she had seen him in a dream dying in her arms of stab wounds.

When Caesar arrived at the Senate chamber, he sat in his chair. Soon the plotters encircled him, took knives hidden in their togas, and stabbed him 23 times, as depicted in the painting at the top of the next page. They were led by Gaius Cassius and Caesar's friend Marcus Brutus. Caesar's last words were "Et tu, Brute?" ("You, too, Brutus?").





Vincenzo Camuccini's painting *Death of Caesar* (1798) shows how Caesar's assassination was perpetrated by a conspiracy of Roman senators.

Their alliance, however, ended in jealousy and violence. Octavian forced Lepidus to retire. He and Mark Antony then became rivals. While leading troops against Rome's enemies in Anatolia, Mark Antony met Queen Cleopatra of Egypt. He fell in love with her and followed her to Egypt. Octavian accused Antony of plotting to rule Rome from Egypt, and another civil war erupted. Octavian defeated the combined forces of Antony and Cleopatra at the naval battle of Actium in 31 BC. Later, Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide.

While he restored some aspects of the republic, Octavian became the unchallenged ruler of Rome. Eventually he accepted the title of **Augustus** (aw•GUHS•tuhs), or "exalted one." He also kept the title *imperator*, or "supreme military commander," a term from which *emperor* is derived. Rome was now an empire ruled by one man.

Reading Check

Analyze Motives

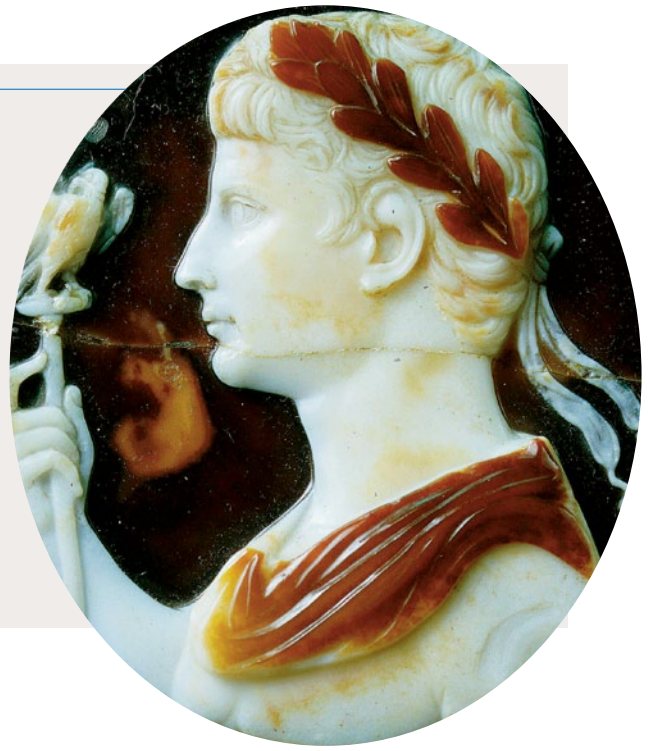
Why did Caesar's rivals feel they had to kill him?

Augustus

(63 BC–AD 14)

Augustus was the most powerful ruler of the mightiest empire of the ancient world. Yet, amid the pomp of Rome, he lived a simple and frugal life. His home was modest by Roman standards. His favorite meal consisted of coarse bread, a few sardines, and a piece of cheese—the usual food of a common laborer.

Augustus was also a very religious and family-oriented man. He held to a strict moral code. He had his only child, Julia, exiled from Rome for not being faithful in her marriage.



A Vast and Powerful Empire

Rome was at the peak of its power from the beginning of Augustus's rule in 27 BC to AD 180. For 207 years, peace reigned throughout the empire, except for some fighting with tribes along the borders. This period of peace and prosperity is known as the *Pax Romana*—"Roman peace."

During this time, the Roman Empire included more than three million square miles. Its population numbered between 60 and 80 million people. About one million people lived in the city of Rome itself.

A Sound Government The Romans held their vast empire together in part through efficient government and able rulers. Augustus was Rome's ablest emperor. He stabilized the frontier and created a system of government that survived for centuries. By collecting taxes, Augustus's government had money to spend on fixing roads, building and repairing temples, and constructing numerous other splendid public buildings. He also set up a civil service. That is, he paid workers to manage the affairs of government, such as the grain supply, tax collection, and the postal system. Although the senate still functioned, civil servants drawn from plebeians and even former slaves actually administered the empire. After Augustus died in AD 14, the system of government that he established maintained the empire's stability. This was due mainly to the effectiveness of the civil service in carrying out day-to-day operations.

Vocabulary

civil service persons employed in the civil administration of government

Julio-Claudians and Flavians After the death of Augustus, for the next 54 years, relatives of Julius Caesar, called the Julio-Claudian Emperors, ruled the empire. The abilities of these emperors varied widely. Tiberius, Augustus’s adopted son, was a good soldier and a competent administrator. His brutal and mentally unstable successor, Caligula, however, once supposedly demonstrated his power to the Roman Senate by appointing his favorite horse as consul.

Nero, the last of the Julio-Claudians, committed suicide in AD 68. After his death, civil wars raged in Rome, and four military leaders claimed the throne in turn. The last of them, Vespasian, reestablished order. During his reign and those of his two sons, stability returned to the empire. Together these three emperors are known as the Flavians.

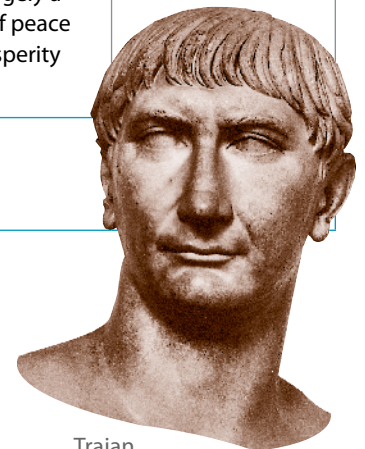
The Good Emperors In AD 96 a new line of emperors established itself on the Roman throne. Called the Good Emperors, these five rulers governed Rome for almost a century. Almost all of the Good Emperors were from the provinces rather than from Rome. Consequently, they continued opening up Roman imperial society by admitting more members of the provincial elites into the Senate and the imperial administration.

Roman Emperors, AD 37–180

Bad Emperors			Good Emperors		
Caligula <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37–41 • Mentally disturbed 	Nero <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 54–68 • Good administrator but vicious • Murdered many • Persecuted Christians 	Domitian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81–96 • Ruled as a dictator • Feared treason everywhere and executed many 	Nerva <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 96–98 • Began custom of adopting heir Trajan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 98–117 • Empire reached its greatest extent • Undertook vast building program • Enlarged social welfare 	Hadrian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 117–138 • Consolidated earlier conquests • Reorganized bureaucracy Antoninus Pius <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 138–161 • Reign largely a period of peace and prosperity 	Marcus Aurelias <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 161–180 • Brought empire to height of economic prosperity • Defeated invaders • Wrote philosophy



Caligula



Trajan

Interpret Charts

What are three areas of Roman life that the good emperors improved?

Under the Good Emperors the empire grew tremendously. It reached the limits of its expansion under Trajan, who added present-day Romania, Armenia, Mesopotamia, and the Sinai Peninsula to the empire. Trajan's successor Hadrian, however, thought the empire had grown too large. He withdrew from almost all these eastern additions and built defensive fortifications along the frontiers to guard against invasions. In northern Britain, for example, Hadrian built a wall some 73 miles long.

Legal System Roman law also unified the empire. Stability in the Roman legal system was achieved by laws passed by assemblies, the Senate, or the emperor. These laws specified what could or could not be done and what the penalties were for breaking the law. With few exceptions, the same laws applied to all citizens in the empire, wherever they might live.

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Trade in the Roman Empire, AD 200



Agriculture and Trade Agriculture was the most important industry in the empire. All else depended on it. About 90 percent of the people were engaged in farming. Most Romans survived on the produce from their local area. Additional food (when needed) and luxury items for the rich were obtained through trade. In Augustus's time, a silver coin called a denarius was in use throughout the empire. Having common coinage made trade between different parts of the empire much easier.

Meanwhile, manufacturing increased throughout the empire. In Italy, Gaul, and Spain, artisans made cheap pottery and textiles by hand in small shops. The most important manufacturing centers, however, were in the east, where cities such as Alexandria made products like fine glassware.

Rome had a vast trading network. Ships from the east traveled the Mediterranean protected by the Roman navy. Cities such as Corinth in Greece, Ephesus in Anatolia, and Antioch on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean grew wealthy. Rome also traded with China and India.

A complex network of roads linked the empire to such far-flung places as Persia and southern Russia. These roads were originally built by the Roman army for military purposes. Trade also brought Roman ways to the provinces and beyond.

Reading Check

Summarize

To what does the term *Pax Romana* refer?

Lesson 2 Assessment

- 1. Organize Information** Create a graphic organizer similar to the one shown. Fill it in with at least three ways that Rome changed as it became an empire. What changes do you consider negative? Why?

Changes in Rome
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dictator claims sole power••

- 2. Key Terms and People** For each key term or person in the lesson, write a sentence explaining its significance.
- 3. Analyze Causes** What factors contributed to the fall of the Roman Republic?
- 4. Summarize** What were the main reasons for the Romans' success in controlling such a large empire?
- 5. Synthesize** In what way did Roman law unify the Roman empire?
- 6. Analyze Causes** What role did Julius Caesar play in the decline of the republic and the rise of the empire?
- 7. Analyze Issues** What aspects of Roman society remained similar from republic to empire?
- 8. Form Opinions** What was Augustus's greatest contribution to Roman society? Why?
- 9. Analyze Effects** What was the impact of Augustus's government spending on Rome?



Life in the Roman Empire

The Big Idea

The Romans developed a complex society in which different classes of people lived.

Why It Matters Now

Life in the Roman Empire inspired many of the social customs we have today.

Key Terms and People

villa
paterfamilias
circus
augurs

Setting the Stage

Throughout its history, Rome emphasized the values of discipline, strength, and loyalty. A person with these qualities was said to have the important virtue of *gravitas*. The Romans were a practical people. They honored strength more than beauty, power more than grace, and usefulness more than elegance.

The Roman People

Most people in the Roman Empire lived in the countryside and worked on farms. In Rome and smaller cities, merchants, soldiers, slaves, foreigners, and philosophers all shared the same crowded, noisy streets. Here, people from all walks of life came together to create a diverse society.

Rich and Poor The *Pax Romana* provided prosperity to many people, but citizens did not share equally in this wealth. Wealth and social status made huge differences in how people lived. Classes had little in common.

The rich lived extravagantly. They usually had both a city home and a country home, or **villa**, that included conveniences such as running water. They spent large sums of money on gardens, slaves, and luxuries. Wealthy Romans gave banquets that lasted for many hours and included foods that were rare and costly, such as boiled ostrich and parrot-tongue pie.

Wealthy Roman men spent much of their time embroiled in politics. Since public officials were not paid, only the wealthy could afford to hold office. Wealthy Romans could frequently be found meeting with public officials or with favored political groups. However, ties of marriage, friendship, and family alliances were as important as class interests. In addition, Roman politicians worked to perfect their public-speaking skills to better sway the opinions of members of the popular assemblies.

Unlike the wealthy, most of the nearly one million residents of Rome barely had the necessities of life. During the time of the empire, much of the city's population was unemployed. The government supported these people with daily rations of grain.

In the shadow of Rome's great temples and public buildings, poor people crowded into rickety, sprawling tenements. Fire posed a constant threat because of the torches used for light and the charcoal used for cooking. In part to keep poorer citizens from rebelling against such conditions, free food and public entertainment became a major feature of city life in Rome.

Slaves and Captivity Slavery was a significant part of Roman life. It was widespread and supported the economy. The Romans made more use of slaves than any previous civilization. Numbers of enslaved persons may have reached as high as one-third of the total population. Most slaves were conquered peoples brought back by victorious Roman armies and included men, women, and children. Children born to slaves also became slaves. Slaves could be bought and sold. According to Roman law, enslaved people were the property of their owners. They could be punished, rewarded, set free, or put to death as their masters saw fit.



This mosaic from the third century shows a Roman man named Fructus being served a drink by his slave, Myro.



Roman families of all classes enjoyed the company of pets such as the dog portrayed in this mosaic.

Slaves worked both in the city and on farms. Many were treated cruelly and worked at hard labor all day. Some strong, healthy male slaves were forced to become gladiators, or professional fighters, who fought to the death in public contests. Other slaves, particularly those who worked in wealthy households, were better treated. Occasionally, slaves would rebel. None of the slave revolts succeeded. More than a million slaves lost their lives attempting to gain their freedom.

Family Like many other ancient peoples, Romans were patriarchal. The head of the family—the **paterfamilias**, or family father—was the oldest living male. He had extensive powers over all other family members. This included his wife, his sons with their wives and children, his unmarried daughters, and his family slaves. Within this family structure, Romans emphasized the virtues of simplicity, religious devotion, and obedience.

Adoption was an important aspect of Roman society. Some families with no sons would adopt a teenage boy or young man to serve as the heir to the paterfamilias. Adoption was one way of ensuring that the family name was carried on. Roman women could do little without the permission of their fathers or husbands. However, women could own and inherit property. Among the lower classes, though, women had more freedom. Lower-class women often worked outside of the home as shopkeepers or at similar jobs.

Reading Check

Contrast

How was life different for rich and poor citizens in Rome?

Vocabulary
Stratified having a
class structure

Roman Society

Roman society was highly stratified. The lives of rich and poor citizens differed greatly. Even so, there were a few common elements that most members of Roman society shared.

Public Entertainment To distract and control the masses of Romans, the government provided free games, races, mock battles, and gladiator contests. By AD 250 there were 150 holidays per year. Romans also enjoyed bloody spectacles in amphitheaters. The Colosseum, a huge arena that could hold 50,000, would be filled with the rich and the poor alike. The spectacles they watched combined bravery, cruelty, honor, and violence.

By far the most popular entertainment offered in the amphitheaters was the gladiatorial combats. Such shows often ended with the death of one or both of the professional fighters, who were usually slaves. In other contests, gladiators engaged in combat with wild animals brought from distant lands such as tigers, lions, and bears. Often, condemned criminals were thrown into the arena to be killed by ferocious beasts.

Romans of all classes also enjoyed the **circuses**, where chariot races took place. In Rome many such races were held in the Circus Maximus, a race-track that could accommodate 250,000 spectators. Roman audiences particularly enjoyed the spectacular crashes that frequently occurred. They also liked theater, particularly comedies and satires. Performers such as mimes, jugglers, dancers, acrobats, and clowns also became quite popular.

DOCUMENT-BASED INVESTIGATION Historical Source

Gladiator Games

Gladiator games were one of the ways that the Roman government controlled the masses of common citizens. The gladiators themselves were usually slaves; they would fight each other or a wild animal.

Thumbs-up or thumbs-down—that is how a match often ended for a gladiator (shown in the mosaic battling a tiger). When one of the combatants fell, the organizer of the games usually determined his fate. A thumbs-up sign from him meant that the fighter would live. Thumbs-down meant his death. The crowd usually played a key role in these life-and-death decisions. If the masses liked the fallen gladiator, he most likely would live to fight another day. If not, he was doomed.



Analyze Historical Sources

What do the gladiator games reveal about how slaves were regarded in Rome?



The Origins of Christianity

The Big Idea

Christianity arose in Roman-occupied Judea and spread throughout the Roman Empire.

Why It Matters Now

Christianity has spread throughout the world and today has more than a billion followers.

Key Terms and People

Jesus
apostle
Paul
Diaspora
Constantine
bishop
Peter
pope

Setting the Stage

While religion played an important role in Roman society, the worship of Roman gods was impersonal and often practiced without a great deal of emotion. As the empire grew, so too did a new religion called Christianity. Born as a movement within Judaism, it emphasized a personal relationship between God and people—and attracted many Romans.

The Life and Teachings of Jesus

Roman power spread to Judea, the home of the Jews, around 63 BC. At first the Jewish kingdom remained independent, at least in name. Rome then took control of the Jewish kingdom in AD 6 and made it a province of the empire. A number of Jews, however, believed that they would once again be free. According to biblical tradition, God had promised that a savior known as the Messiah would arrive and restore the kingdom of the Jews. Roughly two decades after the beginning of Roman rule, many believed that such a savior had arrived.

Jesus of Nazareth Although the exact date is uncertain, historians estimate that sometime around 6 to 4 BC, a Jew named **Jesus** was born in Bethlehem in Judea. Historical records of the time mention very little about Jesus. The main source of information about his life and teachings is the Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament of the Christian Bible. According to the Gospels, Jesus was raised in the village of Nazareth in northern Judea. He was baptized by a prophet known as John the Baptist. As a young man, he took up the trade of carpentry.

At the age of 30, Jesus began his public ministry. For the next three years, he preached, taught, did good works, and reportedly performed miracles. His teachings contained many ideas from Jewish tradition, such as monotheism, or belief in only one God, loving others, and the principles of the Ten Commandments. Jesus emphasized God's personal



Mary Magdalene was an important woman in Jesus' ministry.

Reading Check

Hypothesize

Why did the followers of Jesus think he was the Messiah?

relationship to each human being. He stressed the importance of people's love for God, their neighbors, their enemies, and even themselves. He also taught that God would end wickedness in the world and would establish an eternal kingdom after death for people who sincerely repented their sins.

A Growing Movement Some of the Gospels are thought to have been written by one or more of Jesus' disciples, or pupils. These 12 men later came to be called **apostles**.

As Jesus preached from town to town, his fame grew. He attracted large crowds, and many people were touched by his message. Because Jesus ignored wealth and status, his message had special appeal to the poor. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," he said.

Jesus' Death Jesus' growing popularity concerned Roman leaders. According to the New Testament, when Jesus visited Jerusalem about AD 29, enthusiastic crowds greeted him as the Messiah, or king—the one whom the Bible had said would come to rescue the Jews. The Roman governor Pontius Pilate accused Jesus of defying the authority of Rome. Pilate arrested Jesus and sentenced him to be crucified, or nailed to a large wooden cross to die like thousands of other opponents of Rome.

After Jesus' death, his body was placed in a tomb. According to the Gospels, three days later his body was gone, and a living Jesus began appearing to his followers. The Gospels go on to say that he then ascended into heaven. The apostles were more convinced than ever that Jesus was the Messiah. It was from this belief that Jesus came to be referred to as Jesus Christ. *Christos* is a Greek word meaning "messiah" or "savior." The name *Christianity* is derived from "Christ."

Historical Source

The Gospels

Nearly all of our knowledge of Jesus comes from the Gospels—the first four books of the New Testament. The New Testament along with the books of the Hebrew Bible today make up the Christian Bible.

Jesus instructed people to repent of their sins and seek God's forgiveness. To obtain this forgiveness, he said that people must love God above all else and treat others as they would want to be treated. In addition, they should practice humility, mercy, and charity. Jesus' words, as related in the Gospels, were simple and direct.

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone hits you on the cheek, let him hit the other one too; if someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well. Give to everyone who asks you for something, and when someone takes what is yours, do not ask for it back. Do for others just what you want them to do for you."

—Luke 6:27-31

Analyze Historical Sources

How does this passage support Jesus' emphasis on humility, mercy, and charity?



Christ's Charge to Saint Peter by Renaissance artist Raphael depicts Jesus calling the apostle Peter to duty as the other apostles look on.

Christianity Spreads Through the Empire

Strengthened by their conviction that he had triumphed over death, the followers of Jesus continued to spread his ideas. Jesus' teachings did not contradict Jewish law, and his first followers were Jews. Soon, however, these followers began to create a new religion based on his messages. Despite political and religious opposition, the new religion of Christianity spread slowly but steadily throughout the Roman Empire.

Paul's Mission One man, the apostle **Paul**, had enormous influence on Christianity's development. Paul was a Jew who had never met Jesus and at first was an enemy of Christianity. While traveling to Damascus in Syria, he reportedly had a vision of Christ. He spent the rest of his life spreading and interpreting Christ's teachings.

The *Pax Romana*, which made travel and the exchange of ideas fairly safe, provided the ideal conditions for Christianity to spread. Common languages—Latin and Greek—allowed the message to be easily understood. Paul wrote influential letters, called Epistles, to groups of believers. In his teaching, Paul stressed that Jesus was the son of God who died for people's sins. He also declared that Christian converts were not obligated to follow Jewish law. It was this universality that enabled Christianity to become more than just a local religion.



Paul was one of Jesus' apostles. His Epistles helped to spread Christianity.

Jewish Rebellion During the early years of Christianity, much Roman attention was focused on the land of Jesus' birth and on the Jews. In AD 66, a band of Jews rebelled against Rome. In AD 70, the Romans stormed Jerusalem and destroyed the temple complex. All that remained was a western portion of the wall, which today is the holiest Jewish shrine.

The Jewish fortress near Masada held out until AD 73. It had taken nearly 15,000 Roman soldiers almost two years to conquer the fewer than 1,000 Jewish defenders at Masada. Over the course of the rebellion against Rome, about a half million Jews were killed.

The Jews made another attempt to break free of the Romans in AD 132. Another half-million Jews died in three years of fighting. Although the Jewish religion survived, the Jewish political state ceased to exist for more than 1,800 years. Most Jews were driven from their homeland into exile. This dispersal of the Jews is called the **Diaspora**.

History in Depth

The Jewish Diaspora

Centuries of Jewish exile followed the destruction of their temple and the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. This period is called the Diaspora, from the Greek word for "dispersal." Jews fled to many parts of the world, including Europe.

In the 1100s, many European Jews were expelled from their homes. Some moved to Turkey, Palestine, and Syria. Others went to Poland and neighboring areas.

The statelessness of the Jews did not end until the creation of Israel in 1948.

Vocabulary

Scapegoats groups or individuals who innocently bear the blame for others

Reading Check

Find Main Ideas

What helped to spread Christianity through the Roman world?

Persecution of the Christians Christians also posed a problem for Roman rulers, mainly because they refused to worship Roman gods. This refusal was seen as opposition to Roman rule. Some Roman rulers also used Christians as scapegoats for political and economic troubles.

By the second century, as the *Pax Romana* began to crumble, persecution of the Christians intensified. Romans exiled, imprisoned, or executed Christians for refusing to worship Roman deities. Thousands were crucified, burned, or killed by wild animals in the circus arenas. Other Christians and even some non-Christians regarded persecuted Christians as martyrs. Martyrs were people willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of a belief or a cause.

A World Religion

Despite persecution of its followers, Christianity became a powerful force. By the late third century AD, there were millions of Christians in the Roman Empire and beyond. Christianity had a widespread appeal for a variety of reasons. Christianity grew because it

- embraced all people—men and women, enslaved persons, the poor, and nobles;
- gave hope to the powerless;
- appealed to those who were repelled by the extravagances of imperial Rome;
- offered a personal relationship with a loving God;
- promised eternal life after death.



Constantine

Constantine Accepts Christianity A critical moment in Christianity occurred in AD 312, when the Roman emperor **Constantine** was fighting three rivals for leadership of Rome. He had marched to the Tiber River in Rome to battle his chief rival. On the day before the battle at Milvian Bridge, Constantine prayed for divine help. He reported that he then saw an image of a cross—a symbol of Christianity. He ordered artisans to put the Christian symbol on his soldiers' shields. Constantine and his troops were victorious in battle. He credited his success to the help of the Christian God.

In the next year, AD 313, Constantine announced an end to the persecution of Christians. In the Edict of Milan, he declared Christianity to be one of the religions approved by the emperor. Christianity continued to gain strength. In 380, the emperor Theodosius made it the empire's official religion.

Early Christian Church By this time, Christians had given their religion a structure, much as the Roman Empire had a hierarchy. At the local level, a priest led each small group of Christians. A **bishop**, who was also a priest, supervised several local churches. The apostle **Peter** had traveled to Rome from Jerusalem and became the first bishop there. According to tradition,

Vocabulary

hierarchy a group of persons organized in order of ranks, with each level subject to the authority of the one above

Spread of Christianity in the Roman World to AD 500



Jesus referred to Peter as the “rock” on which the Christian Church would be built. As a result, all priests and bishops traced their authority to him.

Eventually, every major city had its own bishop. However, later bishops of Rome claimed to be the heirs of Peter. These bishops said that Peter was the first **pope**, the father or head of the Christian Church. They said that whoever was bishop of Rome was also the leader of the whole Church. Also, as Rome was the capital of the empire, it seemed the logical choice to be the center of the Church.

A Single Voice As Christianity grew, disagreements about beliefs developed among its followers. Church leaders called any belief that appeared to contradict the basic teachings a heresy. Dispute over beliefs became intense. In an attempt to end conflicts, Church leaders tried to set a single, official standard of belief. These beliefs were compiled in the New Testament, which contained the four Gospels, the Epistles of Paul, and other documents. The New Testament was added to the Hebrew Bible, which Christians called the Old Testament. In AD 325, Constantine moved to solidify further the teachings of Christianity. He called Church leaders to Nicaea in Anatolia. There they wrote the Nicene Creed, which defined the basic beliefs of the Church.

Augustine and *The City of God*

One of Augustine's best-known books is *The City of God*. It was written after Rome was sacked in the fifth century AD. Augustine wrote that the fate of cities such as Rome was not important because the heavenly city, the city of God, could never be destroyed.



“The one consists of those who live by human standards, the other of those who live according to God’s will. . . . By two cities I mean two societies of human beings, one of which is predestined to reign with God for all eternity, the other is doomed to undergo eternal punishment with the Devil.”

—Augustine,
The City of God

Analyze Historical Sources

Why would Augustine write his book after Rome had been attacked?

Reading Check

Making Inferences

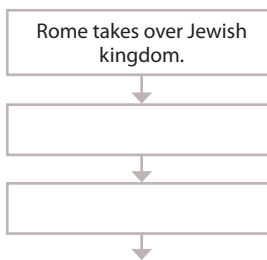
Why were the citizens of the Roman Empire so drawn to Christianity?

The Fathers of the Church Also influential in defining Church teachings were several early writers and scholars who have been called the Fathers of the Church. One of the most important was Augustine, who became bishop of the city of Hippo in North Africa in 396. Augustine taught that humans needed the grace of God to be saved. He further taught that people could not receive God's grace unless they belonged to the Church and received the sacraments.

While Christianity continued its slow but steady rise, the Roman Empire itself was gradually weakening. Under the weight of an increasing number of both foreign and domestic problems, the mighty Roman Empire eventually began to crumble.

Lesson 4 Assessment

- Organize Information** Create a graphic organizer similar to the one shown. Fill it in with at least four events in the history of early Christianity. What event do you think had the biggest impact? Explain.



- Key Terms and People** For each key term or person in the lesson, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Synthesize** What did Jesus emphasize in his early teachings?
- Analyze Causes** Why did the early Christians face persecution from the Romans?
- Evaluate** What was the importance of the Nicene Creed?
- Predict Effects** Do you think Christianity would have developed in the same way if it had arisen outside of the Roman Empire? Explain.
- Form Opinions** Who do you think did more to spread Christianity—Paul or Constantine? Why?
- Analyze Issues** Why do you think Roman leaders strongly opposed the rise of a new religion among their subjects?