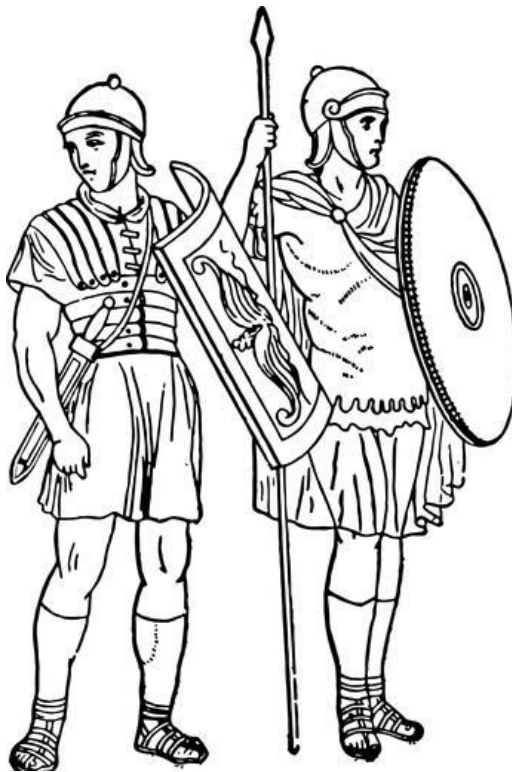


European History

The Roman Empire



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The Roman Empire

The Roman Empire was one of the greatest and most influential civilizations in world history. It began in the city of Rome in 753 BC and lasted for well over 1000 years. During that time Rome grew to rule much of Europe, Western Asia, and Northern Africa.



1. Find the city of Rome on the map above. (Note that place names are in Italian so you are looking for 'Roma'.)
2. In which country is Rome?
3. What is today's capital of Italy?
4. In which countries would the following places be today, using today's English place names? (Use an Atlas to compare this map to a modern-day map of the same region.)
 - a) Palestina
 - b) Aegyptus
 - c) Hispania
 - d) Macedonia
 - e) Phrygia
 - f) Gallia

Timeline of the Roman Empire

753 BC - The city of Rome was founded. Legend says that the twin sons of Mars, the god of war, named Romulus and Remus founded the city. Romulus killed Remus and became ruler of Rome and named the city after himself. Rome was ruled by kings for the next 240 years.

509 BC – The Roman people overthrew the monarchy, forcing the king to leave Rome. The people elected a new government called a republic. A constitution was formed with laws and a complex system of government.

200 BC – Rome established control over the lands around Italy.

100 BC–44 BC – Generals in charge of armies fought one another to gain control of Rome. The general who finally took control of Rome was Julius Caesar. The Romans invaded Palestine in 63 BC. and Palestine was then under Roman rule.

44 BC - Julius Caesar was assassinated and the republic collapsed. Octavian, Caesar's nephew took control, hoping to bring back the republic, but civil war broke out.

27 BC – Octavian was given the name Caesar Augustus, meaning 'the great one'. He was given the title 'emperor'.

2-4 BC – Jesus Christ was born. (The actual year is uncertain but it is somewhere between 2 and 4 BC.) The emperor at the time of Jesus' birth was Caesar Augustus, who ruled until 14 AD.

AD 14 – AD 37 – Tiberius became Emperor. He was the Roman Emperor at the time of Jesus' death. While Tiberius was the emperor, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, was responsible for the execution of Jesus.

AD 41 – Palestine became a Roman province. The Romans were strict and cruel so the people of Palestine revolted against the Romans.

AD 46 – 60 – Paul's missionary journeys

64 AD - Much of Rome burned. Legend says that Emperor Nero watched the city burn while playing a lyre.

AD 70 – The Romans burned Solomon's temple. The Jews continued to rebel against the Romans, so the Romans passed a law to prevent Jews from living in Jerusalem. Nine hundred and sixty Jews lived in the city of Masada. They defended the city for two years while the Romans built a huge ramp up to the city. When the Romans finally broke through the city gates (AD 73), they discovered that the people had killed themselves rather than being captured. Only seven inhabitants survived to tell the story.

79 AD – The volcano, Mount Vesuvius erupted, destroying the city of Pompeii.

80 AD - The Colosseum was built. This is one of the great examples of Roman engineering. It could seat 50,000 spectators.

117 AD – The Roman Empire was at its peak. It extended to England.

121 AD - The Hadrian Wall was built. This was a long wall is built across northern England to keep out 'barbarians'.

AD 135 The Romans finally destroyed Palestine. Many Jews left their country. Those who stayed were captured and sold as slaves.

306 AD - Constantine became Emperor. Constantine converted to Christianity and Rome became a Christian empire. Prior to this Rome persecuted the Christians. Now they were protected.

395 AD - Rome split into two empires – Western and Eastern Empires.

410 AD - The city of Rome was attacked by a wandering tribe called Visigoths. This is the first time in 800 years that the city of Rome had fallen to an enemy.

476 AD – The western Empire was overthrown by German tribes. The Eastern Empire survived for another 1000 years under the name of the Byzantium Empire, with the capital being Constantinople. It was finally overrun by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. This signalled the start of the Dark Ages/Middle Ages in Europe.

Activities

1. When was the city of Rome founded?
2. What happened in 509 BC?
3. Who ruled the country after the king was forced to leave?
4. Who was the governor when Jesus was born?
5. Who was the emperor at the time of Jesus' death? Who was the governor?
6. Why did the people of Palestine revolt?
7. Make a study of Paul's missionary journeys to Rome in Acts chapters 27 and 28. Make a summary of the events. Who was the governor?
8. What happened to the Jews in 70 AD?
9. Where was Hadrian's Wall and why was it built?
10. What happened to the Jews in 135 AD?
11. What significant event happened in 306 AD?
12. When did Rome split into two empires? (east and west)

Palestine under Roman Rule

At the time of Jesus' birth, the land of Israel (called Palestine by the Romans) was ruled by the Romans, who had granted Herod the Great the title of "king" over the region. His domain included most of the land that once belonged to Israel.

Palestine was only a small country, yet it was situated in a strategic position. It was on the edge of the Roman Empire at the cross-roads of three continents:

- Europe to the North
- Africa to the South
- Asia to the East

The Romans knew that whoever controlled Palestine had control of all the roads in and out of those areas.

The Romans invaded the land of Palestine in 63BC. The Roman army marched into Jerusalem and took over the city. Very soon they took control of the entire country. Then the Romans put their own governors in charge to rule the people. Each governor had to make sure that the Jewish people of Palestine obeyed Roman laws and paid Roman taxes. In return the Jews were allowed to follow their own customs, and practice their own religion. However, the Jews did not accept the Romans. They believed Palestine was their land, given to them by God.

Jesus lived in Palestine at a time when it was occupied by a foreign power. The Romans, Roman governors, Roman soldiers and tax collectors, are mentioned several times in the New Testament. Jesus surprised many Jews by the way he treated all these people.

Tax collectors

In Jesus' time ordinary people in Palestine lived very simple lives. They earned just enough money for food, clothes and a small house for their families. Now they had to pay heavy taxes as well. These new taxes paid for the upkeep of the Roman army based in Palestine.

The money was collected by a few Jewish people called tax collectors. Most Jews hated the tax collectors because they worked for the Romans. Some tax collectors were cheats; they kept part of the money for themselves. As a result, many of them became very wealthy.

Activities

Copy and complete the following passage:

1. The Romans took control of P_____ because it was at the crossroads of three continents: E_____, A_____ and A_____.
2. The R_____ invaded Palestine in the year _____.

3. The Jews did not want the Romans in their country. They believed Palestine belonged to the Jewish people because G_____ had given it to them.
4. But the Jews were forced to obey Roman l_____ and pay Roman t_____.
5. People called T_____ C_____ collected money for the upkeep of the Roman army.
6. Most Jewish people h_____ the tax collectors because they worked for the Romans.
7. Why was control of Palestine important for Romans?
8. How did the lives of ordinary people change after the Roman invasion of Palestine?
9. Why did the Jews resent the Roman presence in Palestine?
10. Why do you think the Jews looked down on tax collectors?

The Roman Empire was an occupying power yet it brought many benefits to the countries it occupied. It had a building programme for towns and cities. Public buildings were erected; water systems were installed, and roads laid down.

In 63 BC, the Romans conquered the land and called it Palestine. In 40 BC, they appointed Herod as king. Because Herod was not a Jew, the Jewish people never accepted him.

At the time of Jesus, Palestine (the Holy Land) was still part of the Roman Empire, and Roman law and customs were being imposed on the Jewish people. The Jews didn't like the Romans and there was always a great deal of tension between them.

The Roman Emperor was called Caesar. He allowed Herod to continue as a token leader (i.e. without any real power), but he sent governors to Palestine to take care of his interests and, therefore, the real power was firmly held by Rome. Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor from AD 26 to 36. His job was to keep law and order in Palestine and make sure the Jewish people paid their taxes.

The Romans could not understand the Jewish faith. They were polytheist (i.e. they believed in many different gods) and the Jews were monotheists (i.e. they believed in one God). The Jews called their God 'Yahweh'. (The name 'Yahweh' is so sacred that it is never said out loud.) The Romans allowed the Jewish people to continue to practice their religion. They saw this as a way of keeping the people happy and so making it easier for them to govern Palestine.

The Sanhedrin was the religious governing body located in Jerusalem. It also served as the highest court of Jewish law in Palestine. The High Priest was president of the Sanhedrin and its members were made up of Sadducees and Pharisees, two religious groups who disagreed on many issues.

The Romans allowed the Sanhedrin to:

- act as a law court
- punish Jewish people who broke the Jewish law
- keep its own guards, who maintained order.

This was quite a cunning plan on behalf of the Romans because they now had a situation where the two main Jewish groups were fighting and disagreeing amongst each other and inflicting punishment on their own people for not upholding the strict Jewish laws.

Activities:

1. What religion was Jesus born into?
2. What happened in 63 BC?
3. Who was appointed king in 40 BC?
4. Who was made governor in AD 26?
5. What was the role of the Roman governor?
6. What was the Sanhedrin?
7. Who was the president of the Sanhedrin?
8. Who were the two main Jewish groups that were involved in the Sanhedrin?
9. What powers did the Sanhedrin have?
10. Why were the Romans happy to have a court like the Sanhedrin?
11. How do you think the political and religious structures might have impacted upon (affected) Jesus as he was growing up?

Daily life in Ancient Rome

A Typical Day

A typical Roman day would start off with a light breakfast and then off to work. Work would end in the early afternoon when many Romans would take a quick trip to the baths to bathe and socialize. At around 3pm they would have dinner which was as much of a social event as a meal.

Ancient Roman Jobs

Ancient Rome was a complex society that required a number of different job functions and skills to function. Most of the menial tasks were performed by slaves. Here are some of the jobs a Roman citizen might have:

Farmer - Most of the Romans who lived in the countryside were farmers. The most common crop was wheat which was used to make bread.

Soldier - The Roman Army was large and needed soldiers. The army was a way for the poorer class to earn a regular wage and to gain some valuable land at the end of their service. It was a good way for the poor to move up in status.

Merchant - Merchants of all sorts sold and bought items from around the Empire. They kept the economy rolling and the Empire rich.

Craftsman - From making dishes and pots to crafting fine jewellery and weapons for the army, craftsmen were important to the empire. Some craftsmen worked in individual shops and learned a specific craft, usually from their father. Others were slaves, who worked in large workshops that produced items in large quantities such as dishes or pots.

Entertainers - The people of Ancient Rome liked to be entertained. Just like today, there were a number of entertainers in Rome including musicians, dancers, actors, chariot racers, and gladiators.

Lawyers, Teachers, Engineers - The more educated Romans could become lawyers, teachers, and engineers.

Government - The government of Ancient Rome was huge. There were all sorts of government jobs from tax collectors and clerks to high-ranking positions like Senators. The Senators were the wealthy and the powerful. Senators served in their position for life and at times there were as many as 600 members of the Senate.

Family

The family unit was very important to the Romans. The head of the family was the father called the paterfamilias. Legally, he had all the power in the family. However, usually the wife had a strong say in what went on in the family. She often handled the finances and managed the household.

School

Roman children started school at the age of 7. Wealthy children would be taught by a full-time tutor. Other children went to public school. They studied subjects such as reading, writing, math, literature, and debate. School was mostly for boys; however, some wealthy girls were tutored at home. Poor children did not get to go to school.

Bathing

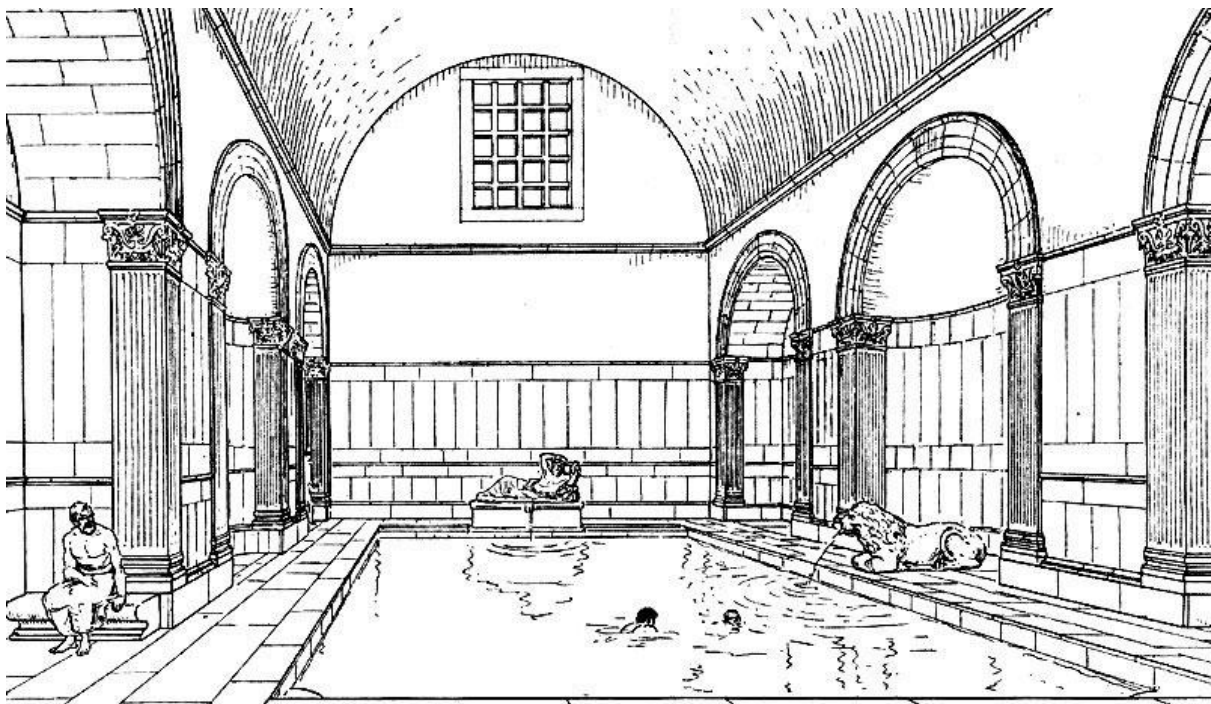
Bathing was an important part of Roman life, although most houses didn't have baths. Instead, people visited public baths or bathhouses every day.

Activity

Make a summary under headings of daily life in Rome. Include drawings.



A Roman Town



Roman baths

Entertainment: The Colosseum



For over two centuries the arena known as the Colosseum was the scene of unbelievable cruelty and violence. Opened in AD 80, it had 80 entrances and 45,000 seats. Fights between gladiators, battles between men and wild animals and other violent public entertainments were held here. People and animals were slaughtered in their thousands to satisfy the Romans' desire for blood-thirsty spectacles. It was here that Christians were fed to the lions and other wild animals.

Gladiators were professional fighters, sometimes forced to fight to the death. Gladiators attended training schools and by the first century AD, gladiator contests were enormously popular. Gladiators often fought opponents who were not properly trained, such as bankrupt citizens who could not pay their debts, slaves or criminals. These unlucky people were armed with only a small shield and dagger.

Emperor's Box

The best seat in the house belonged to the emperor who sat in the Emperor's Box. Of course, a lot of times it was the emperor who was paying for the games. This was one way for the emperor to make the people happy and to keep them liking him.

Underground Passages

Below the Colosseum was a labyrinth of underground passages called the hypogeum. These passages allowed for animals, actors, and gladiators to suddenly appear in the middle of the arena. They would use trap doors to add in special effects such as scenery.

Construction

The walls of the Colosseum were built with stone. They made use of a number of arches in order to keep the weight down, but yet still keep them strong. There were four different levels that could be accessed by stairs. Who could enter each level was carefully controlled. The floor of the Colosseum was wooden and covered with sand.

Outside of the Colosseum was an enormous 9 metre bronze statue of the emperor Nero called the Colossus of Nero. It was later turned into a statue of the Sun god Sol Invictus. Some historians believe that the name for the Colosseum comes from the Colossus.

The Velarium

To keep the hot sun and the rain off of spectators, there was a retractable awning called the velarium. There were 240 wooden masts around the top of the stadium to support the awning. Roman sailors were used to put up the velarium when it was needed.

Activity

Draw the Colosseum and make a summary of its purpose and the construction techniques.

Slaves

As in many ancient civilizations, slavery played a big part in the culture of Rome. Slaves performed much of the labour and hard work that helped to build the Roman Empire and keep it running.

Did they have a lot of slaves?

A fairly large percentage of the people living in Rome and Italy were slaves. Historians aren't sure of an exact percentage but somewhere between 20% and 30% of the people were slaves. During the early parts of the Roman Empire, as many as one third of the people in Rome were slaves.

How did someone become a slave?

Most slaves were people captured in times of war. As the Roman Empire expanded, they often captured slaves from new lands they conquered. Other slaves were bought from slave traders and pirates who captured people from foreign lands and brought them to Rome.

Children of slaves also became slaves. Sometimes criminals were sold into slavery. A few people even sold themselves into slavery in order to pay their debts.

What work did slaves do?

Slaves did all sorts of work throughout the empire. Some slaves worked hard labour in the Roman mines or on a farm. Other slaves worked skilled jobs such as teaching or business

accounting. The type of work generally depended on the previous education and experience of the slave.

There were two main types of slaves: public and private. Public slaves were owned by the Roman government. They might work on public building projects, for a government official, or in the emperor's mines. Private slaves were owned by an individual. They worked jobs such as household servants, labourers on farms, and craftsmen.

Were they treated well?

How a slave was treated depended upon the owner. Some slaves were likely beaten and worked to death, while others were treated almost like family. In general, slaves were considered valuable property and it made sense to treat them well. Sometimes slaves were paid by their owners if they worked hard.

Were slaves set free?

Yes, slaves were sometimes set free by their owner (called "manumission"). Sometimes slaves were able to purchase their own freedom. Freed slaves were called freedmen or freedwomen. Although they were free, they still had the status of a "freed slave." Freed slaves were considered Roman citizens, but couldn't hold public office.

Slave Rebellions

The slaves of Rome banded together and rebelled several times during the history of Ancient Rome. There were three major rebellions called the "Servile Wars." Perhaps the most famous of these was the Third Servile War led by the gladiator Spartacus.

Activity

Imaging that you are a slave in Roman times. Write a story of your life.

Roman Art

Cantered in the city of Rome, the civilization of Ancient Rome ruled much of Europe for over 1000 years. The arts flourished during this time and were often used by the wealthy and powerful to memorialize their deeds and heritage.

Influenced by Greek Art

The Romans admired the Greek culture and arts. After conquering Greece, they brought many Greek artists to Rome to make sculptures for them in the Greek fashion. The art of Ancient Greece had a great influence on the art of Ancient Rome.

Other Influences

Although Greek art had the greatest influence on the Romans, other civilizations that they conquered and encountered over their wide empire also had influence. These included the Ancient Egyptians, eastern art, the Germans, and the Celts.

Roman Sculpture

Roman sculpture played an important part of the Roman daily life. Sculptures took the form of full statues, busts (sculptures of just a person's head), reliefs (sculptures that were part of a wall), and sarcophagi (sculptures on tombs). The Ancient Romans decorated with sculptures in a number of places including public buildings, public parks, and private homes and gardens.

Roman sculpture was heavily influenced by Greek sculpture. In fact, many of the Roman sculptures were just copies of Greek sculptures. The wealthy Romans decorated their large homes with sculptures. A lot of times these sculptures were of themselves or their ancestors. Other popular subjects for sculptures included gods and goddesses, philosophers, famous athletes, and successful generals.

The Roman Bust

One of the most popular types of sculpture in Ancient Rome was the bust. This is a sculpture of just the head. Wealthy Romans would put the busts of their ancestors in the atrium of their homes. This was a way for them to show off their lineage.

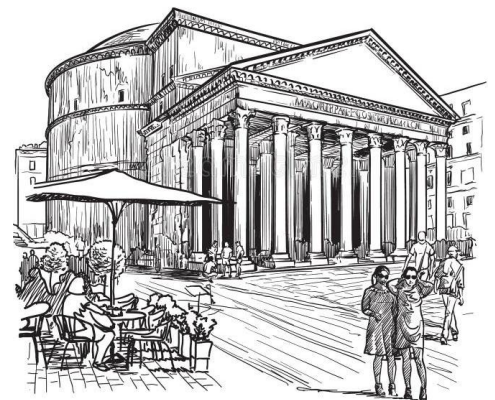


Roman Painting

The walls of the homes of wealthy Romans were often decorated with paintings. These paintings were frescos painted directly on the walls. Most of these paintings have been destroyed over time, but some of them were preserved in the city of Pompeii when it was buried by the eruption of a volcano.

Mosaics

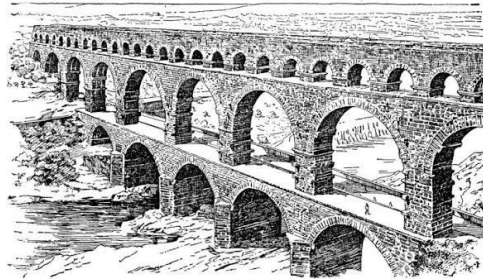
Romans also made pictures from coloured tiles call mosaics. The mosaics have been able to survive the test of time better than the paintings. Sometimes the tiles would be applied direct at the site of the mosaic. Other times the tiles and the base would be made in a workshop and the entire mosaic installed later. Mosaics could be art on a wall, but also worked as decorative flooring.



The Pantheon, Rome, still standing today.

Architecture

Roman architecture continued the legacy left by Greek architects. They used the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian columns, especially the Corinthian. The Romans also used new construction techniques and materials with creative design to produce a whole range of brand-new architectural structures. Typical innovative Roman buildings included the basilica, triumphal arch, the aqueduct, amphitheatre, and residential housing block.



Roman Aqueduct

Roman roads - At the peak of Rome's development, no fewer than 29 great military highways radiated from the capital, and the empire's 113 provinces were interconnected by 372 great roads. These major roads were often stone-paved or gravelled, and were flanked by footpaths, bridleways and drainage ditches.

Activity

Make a summary of Roma art and architecture., under headings. Include drawings.

The City of Pompeii

The city of Pompeii was a major resort city during the times of Ancient Rome. However, in 79 AD, disaster struck the city when it was buried under 20 feet of ash and debris from the eruption of the nearby volcano, Mount Vesuvius.

The City

The port city was in a prime location for trade as well as farming. The rich volcanic soil from earlier eruptions of the volcano Vesuvius created prime farmland for grapes and olive trees.

The city of Pompeii was a popular vacation destination for the Romans. It is estimated that between 10,000 and 20,000 people lived in the city. Many wealthy Romans had summer homes in Pompeii and would live there during the hot summer months.

Pompeii was a typical Roman city. On one side of the city was the forum. It was here that much of the business of the city was carried out. There were also temples to Venus, Jupiter, and Apollo near the forum. An aqueduct carried water into the city to be used in the public baths and fountains. The rich even had running water in their homes.

The people of Pompeii enjoyed their entertainment. There was a large amphitheatre that could seat around 20,000 people for gladiator games. There were also a number of theatres for plays, religious celebrations, and musical concerts.

The Volcano Erupts

On August 24, 79 AD Mount Vesuvius erupted. Scientists estimate that 1.5 million tons of ash and rock shot out of the volcano every second. The ash cloud likely towered over 20 miles high above the mountain. Some people managed to escape, but most didn't. It is estimated that 16,000 people died.

Did they know what was coming?

The days prior to the eruption were recorded by a Roman administrator named Pliny the Younger. Pliny wrote that there had been several earth tremors in the days leading up to the eruption, but Roman science didn't know that earthquakes could signal the start of a volcano erupting. Even when they first saw smoke rising from the top of the mountain, they were merely curious. They had no idea what was coming until it was too late.

A Great Archaeological Find

The city of Pompeii was buried and gone. People eventually forgot about it. It wasn't discovered again until the 1700s when archaeologists began to uncover the city. They found something amazing. Much of the city was preserved under the ashes. Buildings, paintings, houses, and workshops that would never have survived all these years remained intact. As a result, much of what we know about everyday life in the Roman Empire comes from Pompeii.

Archaeologists found holes in the ashes that were once the bodies of people that were buried in the eruption. By pouring plaster into these holes, scientists have been able to make detailed casts of many of the citizens of Pompeii.



Questions

- 1) What two major crops were grown in the rich soil near the city of Pompeii?
- 2) What natural disaster were the people of Pompeii accustomed to experiencing?
- 3) What empire did the city of Pompeii belong to when it was destroyed?
- 4) Why was the city of Pompeii popular among Romans?
- 5) What happened that destroyed the city of Pompeii?
- 6) In what way was Pompeii like many other major Roman cities?
- 7) What year did Mount Vesuvius erupt?
- 8) Around how many people died in the eruption?
- 9) True or False: The people of Pompeii knew that the mountain was going to erupt any day. They were very prepared.
- 10) What did archaeologists find when they dug up the city of Pompeii nearly 2,000 years later?

Check your answers below and give yourself a score.

Answers

1. Grapes and olive trees
2. Earthquakes
3. Roman
4. It was a popular summer vacation destination
5. Nearby Mount Vesuvius erupted burying the city in ash and debris
6. It was a business centre. It had a forum. There were aqueducts, public baths and running water in the homes.
7. 79 AD
8. 16,000
9. FALSE
10. That the city was well preserved under the ash and debris

The Barbarians

Who were the barbarians?

The Romans referred to people groups outside the Roman Empire as barbarians. The barbarians had different cultures than the Romans. They dressed differently, ate different foods, and had different religions. They did not have the same level of government, education, or engineering as the Romans.

The barbarians weren't just one people group. The term "barbarian" was used to describe a wide variety of different peoples that had little to do with each other. Many of the groups that attacked and invaded the Roman Empire were Germanic tribes from Northern Europe.

Goths - One of the most powerful and organized groups of barbarians were the Goths. They were from today's Germany.

Vandals - The Vandals migrated from Northern Europe to Spain, and eventually to North Africa where they established a powerful kingdom.

Huns - The Huns were a nomadic warrior people who came from the east.

Franks - The Franks were a number of Germanic tribes that settled in the region that is today the country of France (France gets its name from the Franks).

Saxons - As Rome began to weaken, the Saxons moved from Western Europe and began to invade Great Britain. They took over many Roman settlements in Great Britain as the Emperor was too weak to send the Romans in Great Britain aid.

Celts – The Celts came from today's Wales, Ireland and Scotland.

Activity

Make a list of the 6 main people groups referred to as 'the Barbarians'. Say where each group came from.



England in the Roman Empire

We often think of the Roman Empire as ruling Italy and the areas around the Mediterranean Sea. However, for nearly 400 years, Rome also ruled much of Britain. They called the land Britannia.

Hadrian's Wall

In 122 AD the Roman Emperor Hadrian had a wall built across the middle of England. This wall created a fortified border between northern and southern Britain. The wall was 117 km long. It varied in size from 3 – 6 metres wide and 3 – 6 metres tall. It is estimated that more than 10,000 troops manned the wall at some point. The wall helped to keep out the northern barbarians and also served as a point for taxation on imports and exports. Sections of Hadrian's Wall still remain, particularly in its hilly central sector. Little remains in lowland regions, where it was used as a source of stone for new buildings.



The End of Roman Rule

The Romans ruled Britain for nearly 400 years from 43 AD to 410 AD. They left Britain because they needed to put their efforts into defending their homeland in Italy, which was being threatened by barbarians such as the Goths and the Vandals. The Western Roman Empire collapsed in 476 AD.

Lasting Culture

The Roman left a lasting legacy on the culture of Britain. Roman construction such as aqueducts, roads, and concrete had a lasting impact on the people of Britain. Other aspects of Roman culture that remained in England included the Julian calendar, Roman laws and government, and many words from the Latin language.

The City of London

The Romans also established the city of Londinium around 50 AD, which later became London. The Romans built a network of roads throughout England many of which went through Londinium making the city an important trade centre.

The Romans built many major structures in Londinium including temples, bathhouses, a basilica for meetings, and a governor's palace. Around 200 AD, they built a defensive wall around the city called London Wall.

Activities

1. Why was Hadrian's Wall built?
2. What evidence can we see today, that Britain was once under Roman rule.

The Fall of the Roman Empire

Rome ruled much of Europe around the Mediterranean for over 1000 years. However, the inner workings of the Roman Empire began to decline starting around 200 AD. By 400 AD Rome was struggling under the weight of its giant empire. The city of Rome finally fell in 476 AD.

The Peak of Roman Power

Rome reached its peak of power in the 2nd century around the year 117 AD under the rule of the great Roman emperor Trajan. Virtually all of the coastline along the Mediterranean Sea was part of the Roman Empire. This included Spain, Italy, France, southern Britain, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, and northern Africa.

Gradual Decline

The Fall of Rome didn't happen in a day; it happened over a long period of time. There are a number of reasons why the empire began to fail. Here are some of the causes of the fall of the Roman Empire:

- The politicians and rulers of Rome became more and more corrupt
- Infighting and civil wars within the Empire
- Attacks from barbarian tribes outside of the empire such as the Visigoths, Huns, Franks, and Vandals.
- The Roman army was no longer a dominant force
- The empire became so large it was difficult to govern

Rome Divides into Two

In 285 AD, Emperor Diocletian decided that the Roman Empire was too big to manage. He divided the Empire into two parts, the Eastern Roman Empire and the Western Roman Empire. Over the next hundred years or so, Rome would be reunited, split into three parts, and split in two again. Finally, in 395 AD, the empire was split into two for good. The Western Empire was ruled by Rome and the Eastern Empire was ruled by Constantinople.

The "fall" of Rome discussed here is referring to the Western Roman Empire which was ruled by Rome. The Eastern Roman Empire became known as the Byzantium Empire and remained in power for another 1000 years.



The City of Rome is Attacked

The city of Rome was thought by many to be unconquerable. However, in 410 AD, a Germanic barbarian tribe called the Visigoths invaded the city. They looted the treasures, killed and enslaved many Romans, and destroyed many buildings. This was the first time in 800 years that the city of Rome had been sacked.

Rome Falls

In 476 AD, a Germanic barbarian by the name of Odoacer took control of Rome. He became king of Italy and forced the last emperor of Rome, Romulus Augustulus, to give up his crown. Many historians consider this to be the end of the Roman Empire.

The Dark Ages Begins

With the fall of Rome, many changes occurred throughout Europe. Rome had provided a strong government, education, and culture. Now much of Europe fell into barbarianism. The next 500 years would be known as the Dark Ages of Europe.

Interesting Facts about the Fall of Rome

- The Eastern Roman Empire fell in 1453 to the Ottoman Empire.
- Many poor people were glad to see Rome fall. They were starving to death while being taxed heavily by Rome.
- Near the end of the Roman Empire, the city of Rome was no longer the capital. The city of Mediolanum (now Milan) was capital for a while. Later, the capital was moved to Ravenna.
- Rome was sacked once again in 455 AD by the Vandals. The Vandals were an Eastern Germanic tribe. The term "vandalism" comes from the Vandals.

Questions

- 1) Under which Roman emperor did the Roman Empire reach its peak?
- 2) Around how long was Rome the major power in Europe and around the Mediterranean Sea?
- 3) When the Roman Empire was split into two separate empires, what city was the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire?
- 4) What is the common name for the Eastern Roman Empire?
- 5) Which group of barbarians sacked Rome in 410 AD signalling the start of the fall of Rome?
- 6) What caused Rome to decline and eventually fall?
- 7) What period of history began after the fall of Rome?
- 8) What year is considered to be the end of the Western Roman Empire and the fall of Rome?
- 9) True or False: The Fall of Rome happened very quickly in a matter of a few years.
- 10) Who was Odoacer?

Check your answers below and give yourself a score.

Answers

1. Trajan
2. 1000 years
3. Constantinople
4. Byzantium Empire
5. Visigoths
6. Corrupt politicians, civil war, barbarian attacks, the empire too large to govern properly
7. The Dark Ages
8. 476 AD
9. FALSE
10. The barbarian who overthrew the last emperor of Rome and brought an end to the Roman Empire

A Roman Emperor

