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The Rise of Rome



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The seeds of magnificent Ancient Rome were scattered on seven peaceful wooded hills along the banks of the Tiber River in central Italia (“calf land”) more than 2700 years ago. From its early days as a modest thatched hut settlement of farmers and shepherds on the Palatine Hill, Rome grew to rule an enormous and architecturally splendid empire that stretched from northern England to North Africa.

Before the Romans conquered the Italian peninsula, it was inhabited by a variety of people of different origins, languages and traditions. Of these, the Etruscans were the most powerful and advanced. The Etruscan civilization flourished in central Italy from about 800-300 BC and reached its peak during the 7th and 6th centuries BC. As Etruscan power expanded

north and south, the Etruscans moved into the city of Rome which had spread from the Palatine Hill, to the Esquiline Hill and then gradually, as the marshy valley floors were drained, to the remaining five hills and surrounding lowlands. The Etruscan kings ruled the growing city from 625-509 BC, expanding its territory and doubling its population. Great public building was undertaken: the 12-foot thick brick Servian Wall, which replaced earlier timber and earth defenses; the magnificent Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill; Rome’s first aqueduct and sewer, the Aqua Appia and the Cloaca Maxima; the city’s main square, the Forum Romanum; and the chariot racing circuit, the Circus Maximus. The Etruscan kings remained in power until 509 BC, when Tarquinius Superbus (Tarquin the Proud) was expelled and Rome became a republic.

The Founding Myth of Rome

Fabulous Facts

When the Etruscans uncovered a human skull during construction of the Temple of Jupiter, they interpreted it as a sign that Rome would become the capital of the world. They were right. By the 1st century AD Rome was the center of an empire that governed 50 million people on three different continents. Rome was the most magnificent city in the world, studded with the opulent buildings of emperors keen to promote their civic generosity and military victories.

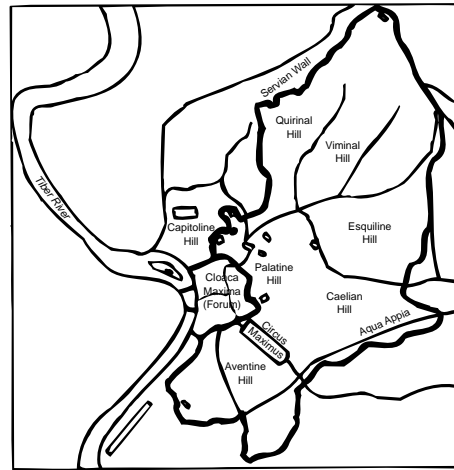
One of the oldest cities in the world and continuously inhabited since its founding more than 2700 years ago, Rome has served as the cultural center of the world twice in its history, first as the capital of the Roman Empire and then as the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church. Today, Rome is a thriving, cosmopolitan city, where residents and visitors move freely in the shadow of a magnificent past.



According to legend, Romulus and Remus, the infant twin sons of Mars (and Rhea Silvia, the daughter of Numitor, rightful king of Alba Longa), were thrown into the Tiber River by their evil great uncle Amulius, the unlawful king. They washed ashore at the base of the Palatine Hill, and were rescued by a she-wolf who fed the boys with her own milk until a shepherd found them and took them home. The boys—strong, natural leaders—grew up among the herdsmen of the hills by the Tiber River. After a chance meeting with their grandfather, they agreed to help Numitor reclaim the throne. Leading the shepherds, they attacked and killed Amulius. Numitor was restored as king. The twins were princes in Alba Longa, but they missed the hills terribly, and decided to return home to establish a city of their own. Remus favored Aventine Hill, but Romulus liked Palatine Hill. As Romulus staked out the boundary of his city, Remus became outraged. He crossed the boundary line and in the ensuing fight, was killed by Romulus. The new city, established in 753 BC, was named Rome, in honor of Romulus. The image of a she-wolf suckling two boys has been a symbol of Rome for more than 2500 years.

Try This

As a class, compare the map of Ancient Rome below to a modern map in an atlas of the same area. What are the similarities? What are the differences?



Construct a Time Line

Construct a time line using some of the important dates in the Detailed Roman Time Line on pages 45-46.

Note: The history of Ancient Rome covers a period of more than 1000 years. At its height, in 117 AD, the Roman Empire extended for thousands of miles in all directions and included peoples from England and northern Europe, Africa, the Mediterranean and the Near East. The empire was so vast that, at the same time, Roman citizens might be shivering under a blanket of snow in northern Britain and sweating beneath the scorching sun on an Egyptian desert. Romans lived differently, according to where and when they were born. Historians divide Rome into nine distinct periods: Early Rome (800BC-500BC), Republican Rome (500BC-50BC), Imperial Rome (50BC-AD300), Early Christian Rome (AD300-AD700), Medieval Rome (AD700-AD1350), Renaissance Rome (AD1350-AD1550), Baroque Rome (AD1550-AD1750), Rome during Unification (AD1750-AD1850) and Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries Rome (AD1900-present). This book focuses on Ancient Rome—Early, Republican and Imperial—and daily life in a typical Italian or southern European town during that time.

Politics & Citizenship



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At no time was Ancient Roman society very fair. In each of its three historical periods a definite social hierarchy existed: the Monarchy, the Republic and the Empire.

The Roman Republic

The Roman Republic emerged after the monarchy and the rule of the seven kings came to an end in 509 BC. It lasted for almost 500 years. Instead of a single individual, Republican Rome was ruled by two elected officials, called consuls. The consuls were chosen from the ranks of the Senate, an assembly of 300 powerful and wealthy citizens who took it upon themselves to represent the Roman people. (Any citizen who wanted his voice heard had to persuade a senator to speak on his behalf.) At first the Senate was dominated by a few rich, aristocratic fami-

lies—the patricians—who had existed under the monarchy as an advisory council to the king and had thus inherited the king’s powers. Eventually, however, a wealthy class of plebeians (common citizens) arose. The power of the plebeians grew, and by 287 BC they shared equally in government. Senators, who were voted into office (they used campaign tactics similar to those today to gain office, including having their names emblazoned on walls in the busiest parts of town), were the Roman lawmakers. They were frequently the subject of corruption charges, however, and made and repealed laws—not to better society—but to solidify their own popularity.

There was a provision that allowed for rulers to take on emergency powers and become dictators in times