

CHAPTER
6

Ancient Rome and the Rise of Christianity

(509 B.C.–A.D. 476)

SECTION 1

THE ROMAN WORLD TAKES SHAPE

TEXT SUMMARY

THE BIG IDEA

Rome's central location helped the Romans unite Italy and all of the Mediterranean world under their control.

Rome began as a small city-state near the coast of central Italy. Italy is a peninsula that sticks out into the Mediterranean Sea. That location helped Rome to expand. The land itself also helped the Romans. Low mountains presented few natural barriers to expansion. People farmed on the fertile plains to support a growing population.

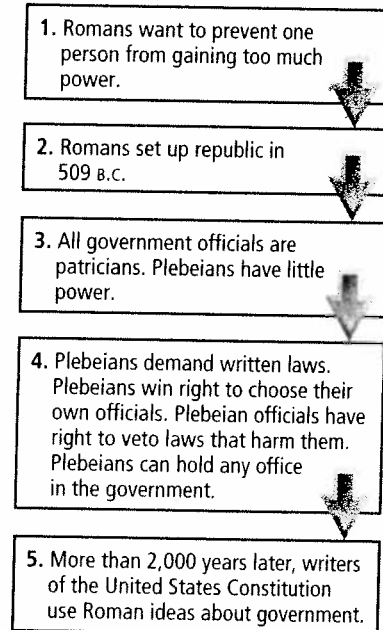
In 509 B.C., the Romans drove out their last king. The Romans did not want a king or a leader with too much power. Thus, they set up a new government called a **republic**. In a republic, officials are chosen by the people. At first, all government officials were **patricians**, or in the landholding upper class. The **plebeians** (farmers, merchants, and traders) had little power. In 450 B.C., the plebeians demanded written laws. Then, they won the right to elect their own officials. Eventually, plebeians served in all government jobs.

By 270 B.C., the Romans had conquered all of Italy. They went on to conquer Carthage, Macedonia, Greece, and parts of Asia Minor. They were able to do so partly because they had a strong, well-disciplined army. The Romans also treated their enemies well. Conquered

peoples were allowed to keep their own government and customs. In return, they had to pay taxes to Rome and supply soldiers for the Roman army. Some conquered people even became Roman citizens.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY:

The Early Republic



Romans created a republican form of government between 509 B.C. and 133 B.C.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Romans set up a republic?
2. **Diagram Skills** What are two rights that the plebeians gained?

FROM REPUBLIC TO EMPIRE

TEXT SUMMARY

Rome added many conquered lands to the republic and gained control of important trade routes. Some Romans became very rich. However, many people were poor and could not find jobs. Government officials became greedy and **corrupt**, or dishonest. Efforts for reform resulted in civil wars that lasted 100 years.

In 48 B.C., Julius Caesar became dictator. Caesar increased Roman power and made reforms. However, his enemies in the Senate killed him because they feared he wanted to be king.

Civil war began again with the death of Caesar. Then, in 31 B.C., Octavian Augustus was sole ruler. Augustus did not call himself a king. However, he ruled

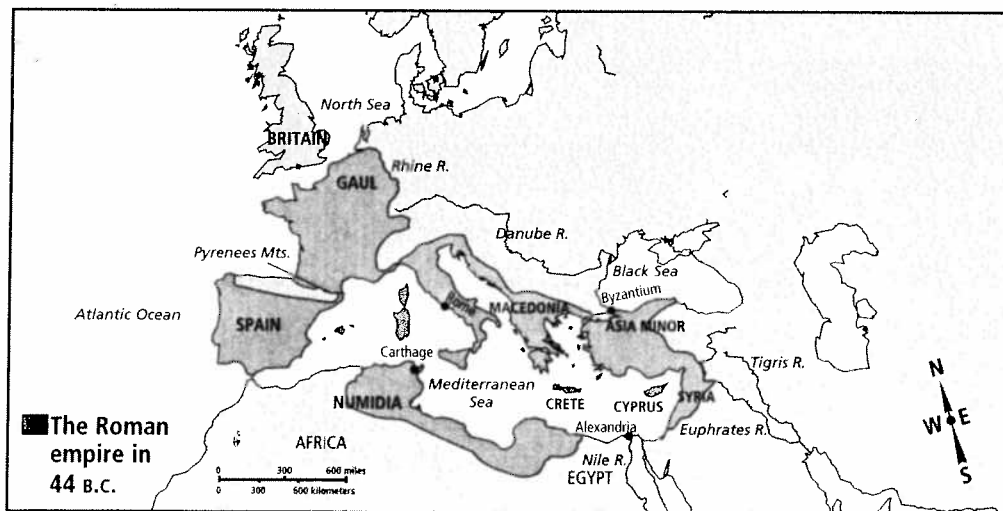
with **absolute**, or complete, power. The Romans did not know it then, but this was the end of the 500-year republic. The age of the Roman empire had begun.

The 200-year period that followed was called the Pax Romana, or Roman Peace. Augustus and later emperors created a strong government. Some reduced taxes and gave people jobs. Ideas and knowledge spread through the empire. Women gained more freedom. However, some emperors were bad. They ignored social and economic problems. They used free food, races, and gladiator fights to control the people.

THE BIG IDEA

When Octavian came to power in 31 B.C., he ended the Roman republic and made Rome an empire.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *The Roman Empire in 44 B.C.*



The Romans built an empire that surrounded the Mediterranean Sea. Thousands of miles of roads united the lands.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did his enemies kill Julius Caesar?
2. **Map Skills** Name three cities that were part of the Roman empire in 44 B.C.

THE ROMAN ACHIEVEMENT

TEXT SUMMARY

Roman civilization spread to faraway lands. Romans also borrowed ideas from other cultures. The blending of Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman cultures is called Greco-Roman civilization.

greatest Roman writers such as Virgil, Horace, and Livy used the Roman language of **Latin** for literature.

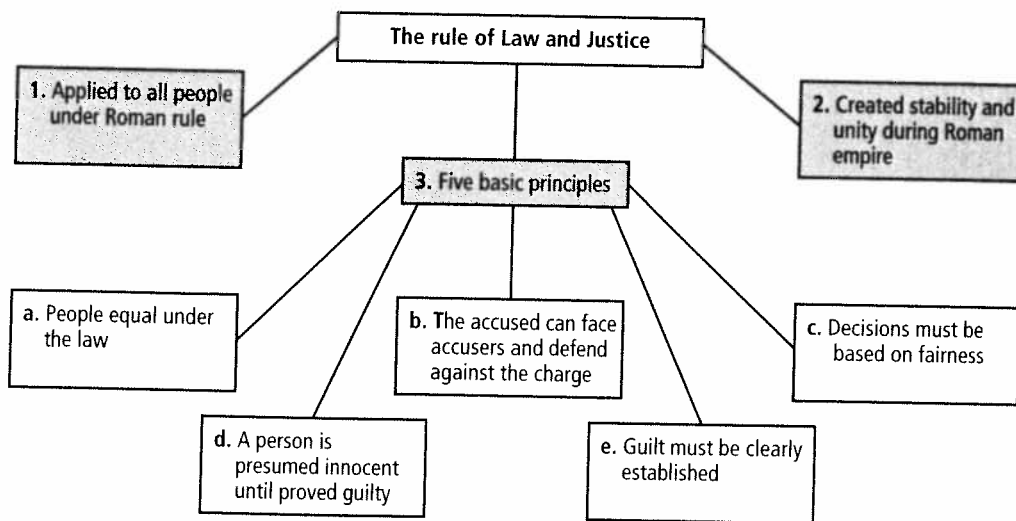
Romans were practical. They built excellent roads, bridges, harbors, and **aqueducts**, or bridgelike stone structures that brought water from the hills to the cities. The Romans did little scientific investigation. They did, however, put science to practical use. They used geography to make maps and medical knowledge to improve public health. The Romans also developed an important system of law. Under this system, people were innocent until proved guilty. Decisions were based on fairness. Roman law influenced the modern legal systems of the Americas and Europe.

THE BIG IDEA

Romans made great advances in architecture, engineering, literature, and law.

Roman artists, architects, and writers borrowed ideas from these different cultures. The Romans used Greek statues in their homes and public buildings. Romans adapted the realistic Hellenistic style. Statues showed every detail of a subject, even warts and veins. Builders used Greek columns. However, Roman buildings were mighty and grand rather than simple and elegant. Many Romans spoke Greek and used Greek writing styles. Still, the

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: The Greatest Achievement of Rome



Rome's greatest achievement was its rule of law and justice. Ideas from Roman law are a part of western civilization today.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Give an example of how Greco-Roman civilization influenced Roman art.

2. **Diagram Skills** What are three important principles of Roman law?

THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY

TEXT SUMMARY

Generally, Rome allowed its citizens to worship as they pleased. However, Jewish reformers called Zealots wanted independence. When the Jews revolted, the Romans drove them out of their homeland.

During these difficult times, a new religion emerged. Its founder was a Jew named Jesus. Jesus was born around 4 B.C. He believed in the Jewish idea of one God and accepted the Ten Commandments. Jesus also preached new ideas. He called himself the Son of God and he claimed his mission was to bring spiritual salvation to everyone. Many Jews and Romans worried that Jesus was dangerous. Arrested by the Romans, he was tried and executed Roman-style—nailed to a cross and left to die.

After Jesus died, his followers spread his teachings. They became the first Christians, and they believed Jesus was the Messiah. At first, Rome persecuted the Christians. Still, Christianity continued to spread. Many people found comfort in the belief that Jesus redeemed them from sin and offered them the possibility of a better life after death. Jesus had welcomed all people, including the poor and the troubled. In A.D. 313, the

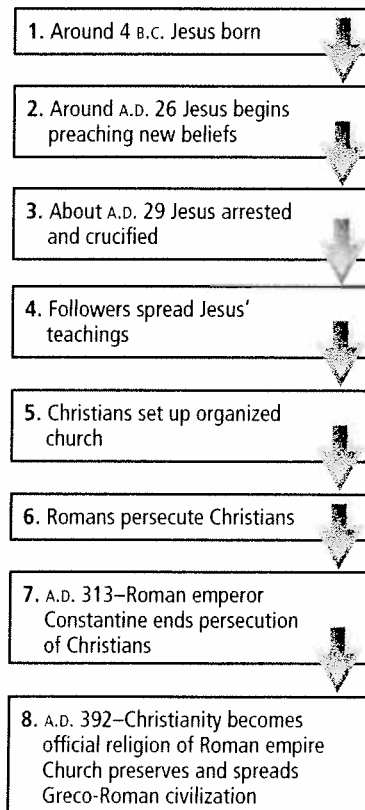
emperor Constantine ended the persecution of Christians. Some eighty years later, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire.

THE BIG IDEA

A new religion, Christianity, arose in the Roman empire. By A.D. 392, it was the official religion of the empire.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY:

Growth of Christianity



Christianity gradually spread throughout the Roman empire. Apostles carried the teachings of Jesus across the region.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What messages did Jesus preach?

2. **Diagram Skills** In which year did Christianity become the official religion of the Roman empire?

TEXT SUMMARY

The Pax Romana ended around A.D. 180. The next 100 years were violent times. Many different rulers came to power. Social and economic problems developed. Taxes were high. Poor farmers left their land and sought protection of stronger landowners. Technically, they were free, but they could not leave their landowner's estate.

in 312. He continued the reforms of Diocletian. Constantine became a Christian and ended the persecution of the Christians. He also built a new capital, Constantinople. As a result, the eastern part of the empire became the center of power. However, these improvements did not last.

THE BIG IDEA

Foreign invasions along with political, social, and economic problems led to the fall of the Roman empire.

Two emperors introduced reforms to stop the decay. Diocletian came to power in 284. He divided the empire into two parts to make it easier to rule. Diocletian controlled prices and forced farmers to stay on their land to help the economy. Constantine came to power

Historians use the year 476 to mark the fall of Rome. In fact, the empire had been declining for many years. Germanic invasions weakened the empire. Romans forgot the values that made Rome great. The government made people unhappy. Officials became corrupt. Taxes were too high. The army grew weak. Gradually, Germanic customs, ideas, and languages replaced Roman culture.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *The Fall of Rome*

Military causes	Economic causes	Political causes	Social causes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visigoths and other Germanic peoples invade the empire. • Roman army lacks training and discipline. • Romans forced to hire foreign soldiers to defend borders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy taxes necessary to support the government. • Farmers leave land. • Middle class disappears. • Romans use too much slave labor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government becomes too strict. • People stop supporting government. • Many corrupt officials. • Divided empire becomes weak. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population declines because of disease and war. • People become selfish and lazy.

Fall of Rome

The fall of Rome was a long, slow process. Historians have identified many causes.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What two changes did Constantine make during his rule?
2. **Diagram Skills** Give one military cause and one social cause for the decline of the Roman empire.