



6.2 Examining the evidence

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pumice lava ejected from a volcano that solidifies into a light, porous rock

6.2.1 How do we know about ancient Rome?

The Romans left many written records of their times. Among ancient Roman writers who are still read today are the historians Seneca (c. 4–65 CE), Tacitus (c. 55–117 CE) and Suetonius (c. 69–140 CE). The former Roman Empire is also rich in archaeological sources. Among the millions of visitors Italy receives each year are many who travel to see traces of ancient Roman civilisation. These traces include columns and arches erected by the Roman emperors, buildings such as the Colosseum and the remains of the ancient Roman Forum.

Pompeii

Many also visit the ruins of Pompeii, which reveal a picture of what life was like for ancient Romans. Pompeii is near the Italian city of Naples. Along with the nearby town of Herculaneum, Pompeii was destroyed when Mount Vesuvius erupted on 24 August, 79 CE. The volcano threw pillars of ash and a soft porous rock called **pumice** into the air. Pompeii, its buildings and people were buried in volcanic ash more than three metres deep. Herculaneum was hit by a blast of superheated gas that killed everyone. The town was then covered in boiling ash, pumice and rocks.

When archaeologists led by Giuseppe Fiorelli excavated Pompeii in the nineteenth century, they unearthed the streets, shops, houses and other structures of the coastal resort town of 15 000 people, along with games, decorations and even graffiti, all of which were as if ‘frozen in time’. They pumped plaster into cavities left by bodies in the hardened ash to create the forms you can see in **SOURCES 1** in **2**. Pompeii provides us with detailed evidence of Roman town life because:

- the town was destroyed very quickly and few people escaped
- those lucky enough to escape had no time to take their belongings
- the town was preserved undisturbed under metres of ash for more than 1700 years.

SOURCE 1 Plaster casts of victims of the volcanic eruption that destroyed Pompeii



SOURCE 2 Plaster cast of a dog that was killed by the volcanic eruption

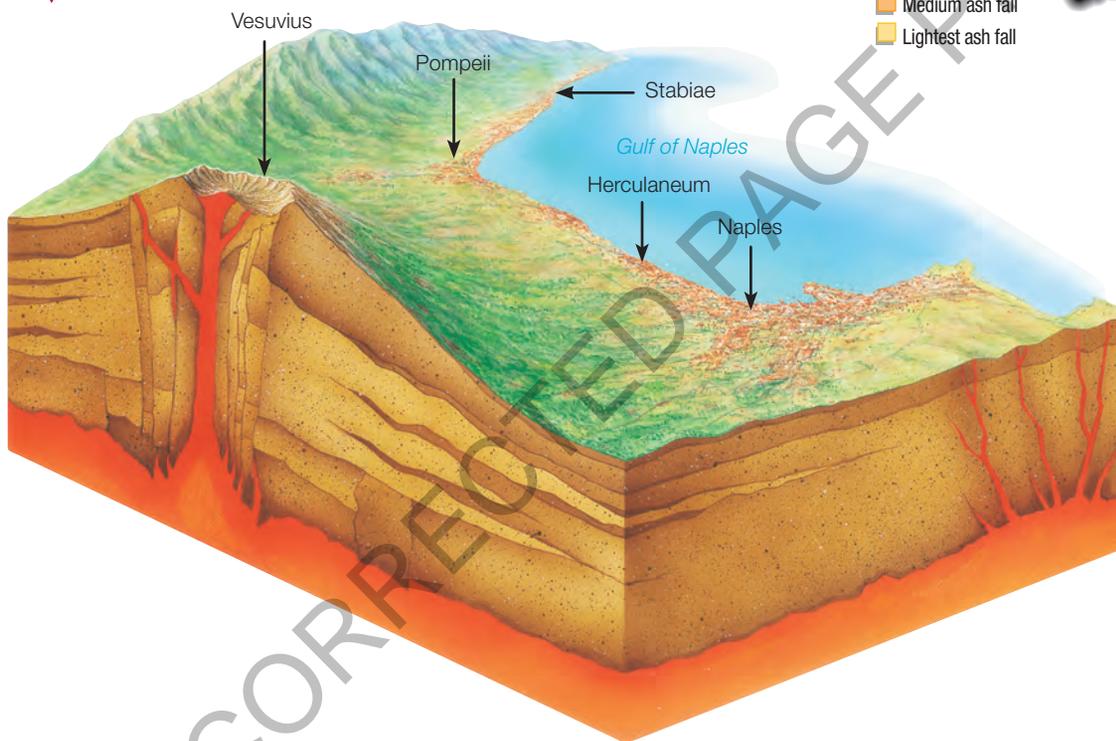
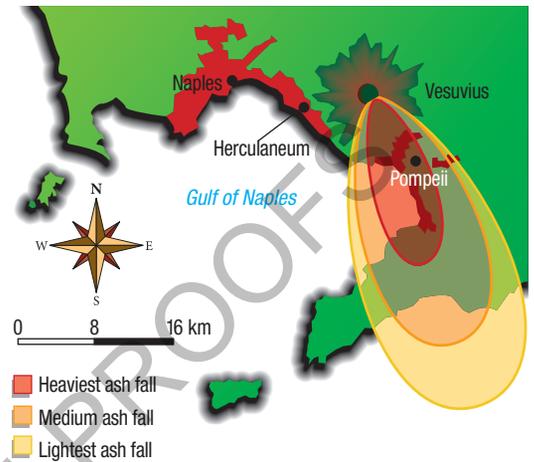


SOURCE 3 From an account by Pliny the Younger, who, as a young man, witnessed the destruction of Pompeii

By now ash, which became hotter and thicker . . . was falling on the boats. This was followed by pieces of tufa [porous rock] and stones blackened, burnt and cracked by the fire . . . Meanwhile sheets of flame and tall columns of fire were belching forth from several parts of Vesuvius, their flashing and intensity heightened by the darkness of the night . . . The buildings were being frequently and violently shaken and seemed as they tottered backwards and forwards to be being moved from their foundations . . .

SOURCE 4 Pompeii and Herculaneum were totally destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius. At first, the volcano spurted a column of ash and pumice high into the air, which fell back like rain. As the energy in the eruption weakened, the column collapsed into a glowing avalanche. Herculaneum, which had escaped the earlier fallout of ash, was covered by about 20 metres of boiling 'mud' — a mixture of hot ash, pumice and rocks.

SOURCE 5 The eruption of Mt Vesuvius. The prevailing winds carried most of the fallout from the explosion south, and Pompeii was soon covered by three to four metres of ash and pumice.



6.2 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

1 Look closely at **SOURCE 1**.

- Using the information in this subtopic, explain how the archaeologists created these forms.
- Describe the positions of the bodies.
- Do you think these people died quickly? Give reasons for your answer.

2 Study **SOURCE 2**. How can you tell that this dog suffered a very different death from the people in **SOURCE 1**?

3 **SOURCE 3** is an eyewitness account.

- What happened to people who tried to escape in boats?
- How do we know that the eruption of Vesuvius was accompanied by earth tremors?

4 List three questions you would ask about each of these three sources if you were using them as evidence for the destruction of Pompeii.

5 Explain why Pompeii is considered one of our most valuable sources for understanding everyday life in the Roman Empire.

6.3 The rise of the Romans

6.3.1 Rome's origins

Rome has a very long history — from at least 753 BCE, and possibly earlier, to the collapse of the Roman Empire in 476 CE. Historians call the period 509–27 BCE the Roman Republic and the following period the Roman Empire, because Rome was then ruled by emperors. However, Rome had been building an empire long before it was ruled by emperors.

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DID YOU KNOW?

In the early Roman Republic most political power was held by the heads of a few powerful families. The most powerful position was consul. There were two consuls, who commanded the military and dealt with legal disputes. The republic lasted for almost 500 years.

republic system of government in which the head of state is not a monarch

The ancient Romans explained their origins through myths. In the myth of Romulus and Remus, twin boys were raised by a she-wolf. When they grew up they decided to establish a town on the site where the she-wolf found them. In 753 BCE, after killing his brother Remus during an argument, Romulus became the first ruler of a collection of villages on the site of present-day Rome. Over the following century these villages grew into a city, and the wolf became its symbol.

The Romans and their neighbouring tribes were Latins. They lived on the plain of Latium, which had a mild climate, fertile soils and a reliable water supply in the Tiber River. The city is located where the Tiber is easy to cross and close to salt flats (salt was a very important commodity in ancient times). Rome's central location in Italy would make it easy for Roman armies to travel in several directions to combat enemies. During the sixth century BCE, Etruscan kings (from Etruria to the north) ruled Rome brutally. In 509 BCE the Romans rebelled. They expelled their last Etruscan king and developed a system of government unlike that of other city-states: Rome became a **republic**. By this time Rome was the most powerful city-state on the plain of Latium.

SOURCE 1 These items were found in a Latin (possibly Roman) tomb of a military commander who was buried about 475 BCE, soon after Rome became a republic. They include his bronze body armour, helmet, axe and spearheads (held in the National Archaeological Museum of Rome).



6.3.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 According to legend, why did the wolf become a symbol of Rome?
- 2 How did Rome become a republic?
- 3 What were Rome's geographical advantages?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Compare **SOURCE 1** with images of Greek soldiers in topic 5. Which items in **SOURCE 1** indicate that the Latins, including Romans, were influenced by the ancient Greeks?

6.3.2 Rome's growing power

Over the next two centuries Rome expanded its power through war. In 493 BCE Rome made a treaty with the other Latin tribes to subdue the Aequi and Volsci, hill tribes that raided the plain of Latium. In 396 BCE Rome captured the powerful Etruscan city of Veii. But a few years later the Gauls from the north defeated the Roman army and destroyed much of Rome. In time the Romans set about rebuilding their power, and by 272 BCE they had inflicted more defeats on the hill tribes and the Etruscans, suppressed revolts by their former Latin allies, crushed the **Samnites** and taken control of the Greek colonies in the south.

Samnites a mountain tribe of central Italy

Tactics of power

By 272 BCE Rome had almost 150 000 inhabitants and controlled most of Italy. It had become wealthy through plundering and taxing those it defeated. To control such a vast area, the Romans:

- used conquered peoples against one another
- made alliances with former rivals
- sold defeated enemies into slavery
- allowed conquered cities to keep their own local government, but forced them to supply troops for Rome
- colonised strategically important places with Roman citizens.

SOURCE 3 From a description by the ancient Roman historian Livy of a Roman victory over the Volscians in 385 BCE

The large enemy forces, relying only on their numbers ... were bold only in battle cry, throwing of missiles and the first onrush of the battle; sword-fighting, holding ground, an enemy's face flashing in its fury they could not stand up to. Their front lines were driven in and panic spread to the supporting troops ... then the ranks were broken in many places ... After that, as the first lines collapsed and everyone saw his own turn to be killed was coming to him, they turned and ran. The Romans followed hard on their heels, and so long as they kept their weapons and fled in a packed crowd, it was the infantry's task to keep up the pursuit. But when the enemy were seen to be throwing away their weapons and scattering widely over the land, then came the moment for the cavalry squadrons to be let loose ... and by riding across their path hold the column until the infantry could catch up and finish the enemy off with a regular massacre.

SOURCE 2 Italy in the sixth century BCE



Source: Map drawn by Spatial Vision.

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Deepen and check your understanding of the topic with the following resources and auto-marked questions:

Republican Rome

6.3.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What caused Rome to be involved in several wars between 493 BCE and 272 BCE?
- 2 What were the effects of these wars on Rome's Power?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Use **SOURCE 2** to make a list of the peoples the Romans defeated to gain control of Italy.
- 4 Read **SOURCE 3**.
 - a According to this source, what were the weaknesses of the Volscians?
 - b When the Volscians fled, what was the task of the Roman infantry?

- c How was the Roman cavalry used?
 - d What hypothesis could you form from this source about Roman attitudes to defeated enemies?
 - e Titus Livy (born in 59 BCE) spent more than forty years in Rome while writing his *History of Rome*. Do you think he could be biased? Give reasons for your answer.
 - f How might a Roman soldier who had been in this battle have felt about Livy's description?
- 5 Create a comic strip to demonstrate the Roman tactics described by Livy.
 - 6 Write an account of this battle as it might have been told by a surviving Volscian.

6.3 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 1 Using the sources and other information in this subtopic, identify the ways in which Rome changed between 509 and 272 BCE.

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

- 2 Explain how Rome achieved the changes that occurred between 509 and 272 BCE.

6.4 The spreading empire

6.4.1 Building the empire through war

Over the following centuries the Romans continued to expand their empire. By 146 BCE Rome was the strongest power in the area around the Mediterranean Sea. Its empire continued to grow, reaching its greatest extent in the late second century CE.

The Punic Wars

In the First Punic War (264–241 BCE), the Romans defeated Carthage, a powerful North African naval and trading city that had colonies around the Mediterranean. Rome's victory gave it control of Sardinia and Sicily and weakened a trading rival.

The Second Punic War (218–202 BCE) began when the Carthaginian general Hannibal led an invading army, including 40 elephants, over the freezing Alps and down into Italy (see **SOURCE 2**). In major battles at Trebia, Lake Trasimene and Cannae, Hannibal's force defeated Roman armies and gained allies in Italy. However, the Romans would not give in. On the advice of the general and consul Fabius Maximus, the Romans avoided further formal battles. When Rome launched counterattacks on Carthaginian Spain and North Africa, Hannibal's army had to return to defend their city. The Second Punic War ended with Hannibal's defeat at Zama in 202 BCE.

At the end of the Third Punic War in 146 BCE, following a long siege, the Romans finally captured Carthage. They destroyed the city totally. Every one of its people was killed or sold into slavery.

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SOURCE 1 Hannibal's route and major battles in the Second Punic War



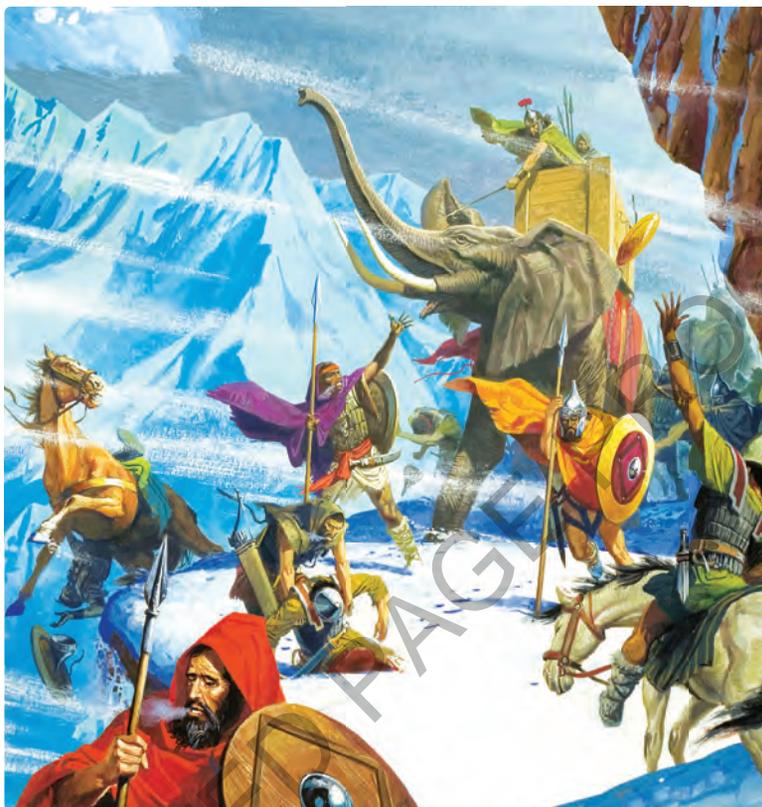
Source: Map drawn by Spatial Vision.

The Social War and the growing empire

In 91 BCE Rome's Italian allies united against it. Their main grievance was that Rome would not allow them to become Roman citizens even though they provided most of the empire's soldiers. This conflict is known as the Social War. The Italian allies lost the war but won the right to be Roman citizens.

By about 30 BCE the Roman Empire had grown to include most lands around the Mediterranean. It was extended far to the north when the Romans invaded Britain in 43 CE. They defeated the British tribes but were unable to defeat the tribes of Scotland. By 96 CE the empire extended to the Rhine and Danube rivers in northern Europe, and to Armenia and Mesopotamia in the east (see the map in 6.6 Citizens and rulers).

SOURCE 2 A modern artist's impression of Hannibal's forces crossing the Alps



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Deepen and check your understanding of the topic with the following resources and auto-marked questions:

Punic Wars

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6.4.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Name the three major battles in which Hannibal defeated the Romans.
- 2 How did Fabius Maximus outmanoeuvre Hannibal?
- 3 What caused the Social War?
- 4 How far north did the Roman Empire extend by 43 CE?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 Use **SOURCES 1** and **2** and an atlas to:
 - a list the modern countries through which Hannibal's forces would have reached Italy
 - b describe the hazards of Hannibal's route
 - c suggest what this strategy might tell us about Hannibal as a military leader.

6.4 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 1 In modern times, how would we describe a power that massacred and enslaved the entire population of a city, as the Romans did the people of Carthage?
- 2 Hold a class discussion on the following question: Should we judge the actions of

people from the ancient past by the moral standards of our own age?

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

- 3 Identify the trade advantages, especially in sea trade, that Rome would have gained as a result of destroying the power of Carthage.

6.5 The Roman army

6.5.1 Roman army weapons and tactics

Until the end of the first century BCE, the Roman army was made up of citizens who owned land. They had to provide their own equipment and armour. The fighting season was from late spring until early autumn, after which the soldiers returned to their lives as farmers. Fighting was popular among Romans, as a successful general could earn much glory and become very wealthy.

As the area under Roman control grew, a bigger and better organised fighting force was needed. In 396 BCE soldiers began to be paid, marking the start of Rome's professional army.

The Roman army was one of the most disciplined military forces that has ever existed. Men between the ages of 17 and 22 enlisted for around 20 years. They had to be fit.

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SOURCE 1 Roman soldiers were very well trained and well equipped.

A Each legion marched into battle behind a standard — a tall pole with a silver eagle at the top. This symbol of the 'king of the birds' represented the legion's power.

B Sandals had to be strong and well ventilated to stand up to long marches. A special pattern of iron studs was hammered into the leather soles to support the weight of the soldier evenly, and help protect the soles.

C The dagger had a double-edged blade.

D These tall, crested helmets helped soldiers see their leaders in battle.



E Roman forts were often protected against attack by palisades — sharp stakes of wood dug into the ground (some with barbs attached).

F Soldiers often stood side by side and overlapped their shields to form a protective cover called a testudo. The word 'testudo' comes from the Latin word for tortoise.

6.5.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why did the Roman army originally fight only between spring and autumn?
- 2 What began to change in the Roman army from 396 BCE and why?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Use **SOURCE 1** to do the following.
 - a Sketch and label a diagram of a testudo.
 - b Explain what was meant to happen when a Roman javelin pierced an enemy's shield.
 - c Discuss why the tactics and weapons shown in **SOURCE 1** made the Romans formidable enemies.

G The head of the heavy javelin was connected to the shaft by a long, thin strip of soft iron. When the point penetrated an enemy's shield, this strip would bend, making the javelin impossible to remove.

H The decorated leather strips on these belts showed the rank of a soldier. They also helped to protect against a groin injury.

I The short sword, about 60 cm long, was used to stab rather than slash. It was a very effective killing device at close quarters.



J The upper body armour was made up of metal strips held together by leather straps. It was very heavy.

auxiliaries soldiers in the Roman army drawn from areas conquered by Rome and made part of its empire

aqueduct structure built to carry water long distances

loot goods or property taken from a defeated enemy after a battle

DID YOU KNOW?

The harshest punishment in the Roman army was decimation. It means 'removal of a tenth'. If a unit of the army was considered guilty of mutiny or cowardice, its soldiers were divided into groups of ten. Each group drew lots to decide which one would be killed. The remaining nine soldiers then had to kill their unfortunate comrade, usually by clubbing or stoning him.

6.5.2 A Roman soldier's harsh life

Soldiers were not supposed to marry, although many did in secret. As well, their food and equipment had to be paid for from their wages. Extra soldiers, called **auxiliaries**, were provided by countries Rome had conquered.

When not marching or fighting, the soldiers, called legionaries, built camps, roads, walls and **aqueducts**. Sometimes camps were temporary; at other times, they became permanent forts that often developed into towns. They were always laid out the same way. This meant that soldiers knew how to build them and find their way around them.

SOURCE 2 The Roman historian Polybius reports that discipline in the army was harsh, with penalties that included death.

A court martial composed of the tribunes is convened at once to try [a soldier for being careless on patrol duty]. If he is found guilty he is punished by the bastinado. This is inflicted as follows: the tribune takes a cudgel [short, heavy stick] and just touches the condemned man with it, after which all in the camp beat or stone him, in most cases dispatching [killing] him in the camp itself.

Soldiers were often allowed to share the **loot** from a battle. Many were also given land when they retired. Such rewards helped to win support for military leaders who sought political power.

Organisation of the Roman army

Unit	Composition
Century	About 80–100 men
Cohort	Six centuries
Legion	Ten cohorts

6.5.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What did Roman soldiers have to pay for out of their wages?
- 2 How were Roman soldiers employed when not fighting?
- 3 What benefits could soldiers receive and what was one motive of military leaders who provided such benefits?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 According to Polybius in **SOURCE 2**, what punishment was given to a Roman soldier who was careless on patrol duty?
- 5 Why do you think such brutal discipline was used?

6.5 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 1 Imagine you are a new legionary. Using **SOURCES 1** and **2** as a reference, write a letter to your family describing what you see as the good and bad aspects of life as a Roman soldier.
- 2 Use the internet to research and create an illustrated report on Roman siege engines and forts.

6.6 Citizens and rulers

6.6.1 Social divisions

After the Romans had expelled the last Etruscan king (c. 509 BCE), they introduced a system of government called a republic. In theory, all Roman citizens had a say in how the city was to be run. In practice, power was controlled by the rich upper classes. Over the next 500 years, however, more of the people got a say, although women and slaves still had no voice at all.

To qualify as a Roman citizen you had to be 25 or older, a male and freeborn (not born a slave). Whether or not you were classed as a slave depended on the status of your mother: if she was freeborn, so were you. Citizens could vote on the way Rome was ruled. They were also protected by Roman laws.

Roman citizens were divided into two classes — **patricians** and **plebeians** (see **SOURCE 2** in 6.6.2). Patricians came from the small number of aristocratic families that had founded the Republic and tended to have both wealth and influence. Everyone else was a plebeian. This didn't stop some plebeians becoming very rich, but they rarely won the same influence as patricians.

There were many more plebeians than patricians, though, and in the fourth century the plebeians even went on strike to force the patricians to surrender some of their power!

One thing the plebeians won from this strike was the right to elect 10 men every year as tribunes, or 'protectors of the people'. The tribunes could *veto* (Latin for 'I forbid') what any other politician was trying to do. In theory, this veto was used to protect the interests of the ordinary people.

patricians members of the aristocratic families that founded the Republic

plebeians all non-patrician citizens of Rome

SOURCE 1 Romans from the first century CE, depicted on an altar held in the National Museum of Rome



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6.6.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Who could be a Roman citizen?
- 2 In theory, who had a say in how the Roman Republic was run?
- 3 In practice, which social class really ran Rome?

- 4 How did some of the ordinary people gain a share of power in the fourth century BCE?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 To which social class do you think the Romans in **SOURCE 1** would have belonged? Give the reasons for your answer.

6.6.2 Ruling the Roman Republic

Every year, Rome would elect more than 50 men to run the city. These men were known as **magistrates**, but they held office for only one year and they always had one or more colleague with the same degree of power. Roman politicians competed to get elected as more and more powerful magistrates. Once a man had held office as a magistrate, he became a member of the **Senate**. (The word *Senate* derives from the Latin *senex*, meaning 'old man'.) In theory, the Senate acted as a council of advisers to the consuls, but in reality they held much direct power. Meetings of the Senate were controlled by the consuls, the most senior magistrates (see **SOURCE 2**).

magistrates men elected by the citizens to run Rome for a year

Senate governing body in ancient Rome, (in theory) an advisory body of ex-magistrates

Voting in the Roman Republic

All citizens had the right to express their opinion by voting in one of several assemblies (similar to a modern parliament). These assemblies also elected the magistrates every year. Originally voting was by a show of hands, but eventually this public expression was replaced by a secret ballot. Citizens carved either 'V' (disagree) or 'A' (agree) on a small piece of wax. The pieces were then put in a container to be counted.

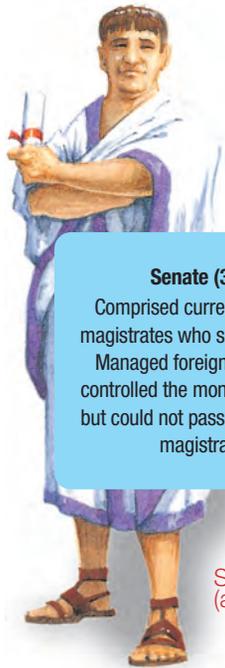
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Democracy or not?

Although it might seem that the Roman Republic was a democracy, this was not so. When the republic first started, the plebeians, although citizens, had no real say, as their votes did not count as much as those of the patricians. This made the plebeians angry. In time, they set up their own assembly. The patricians were worried by this, as they knew that the plebeians (who had far greater numbers) could revolt and overrun them. So, eventually, the patricians let them elect tribunes to put forward their views. In 366 BCE a tribune became a consul for the first time; consul was the highest rank in the Republic. By 287 BCE all decisions of the plebeians' assembly were seen as lawful. Even so, the plebeians only ever had limited power compared with that of the patricians.

SOURCE 2 Magistrates would try to move up through the ranks as this increased their wealth and power.



Senator (also a patrician)

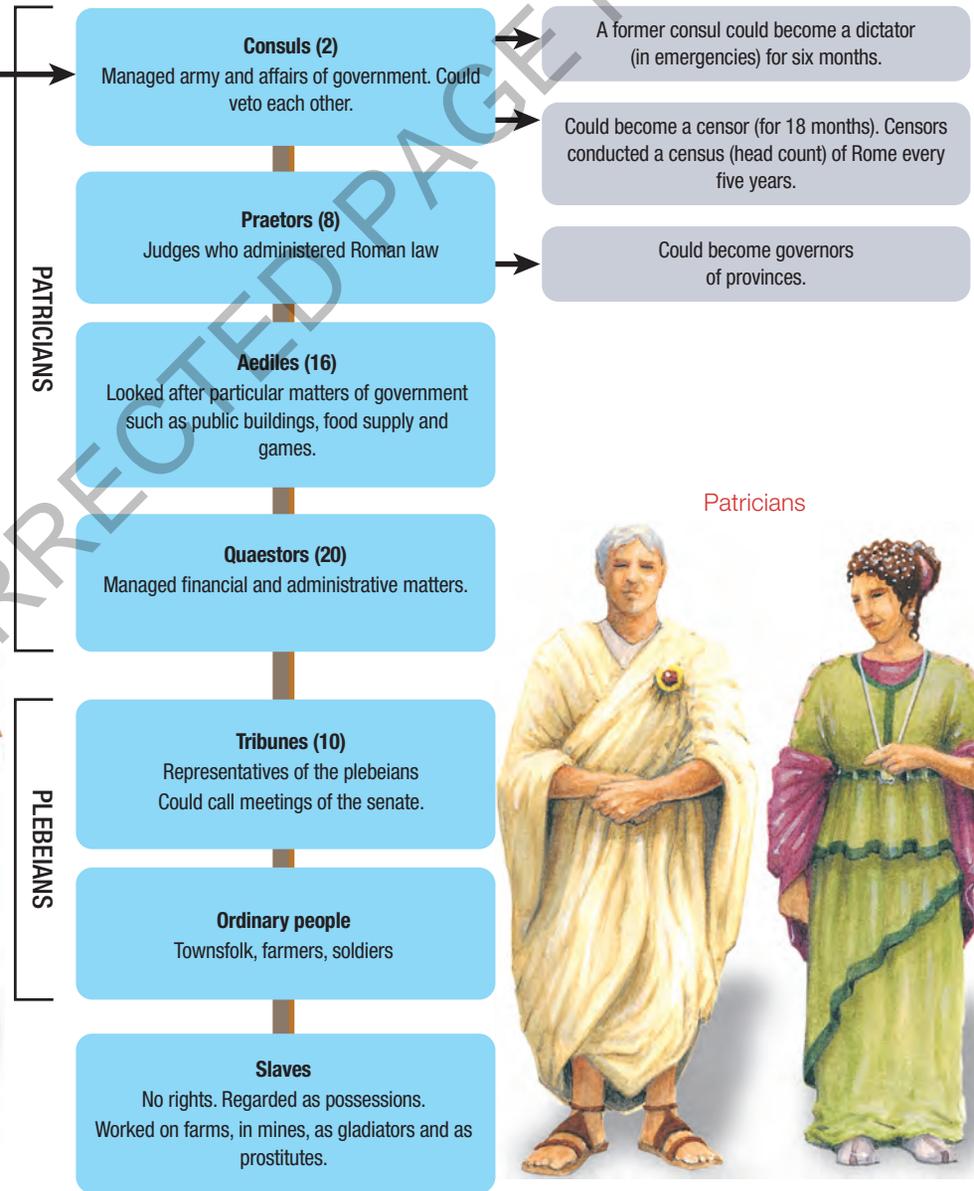


Plebeian

Plebeian



Patricians



6.6.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was a magistrate in ancient Rome?
- 2 How did a Roman become a member of the Senate?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Using **SOURCE 2**, describe the roles and powers of: consuls, praetors, aediles, quaestors and tribunes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Every Roman province had to pay taxes to the Roman authorities. In 212 CE Roman citizenship was granted to all free subjects of the empire. The empire's growth meant slavery for many. On the other hand, conquered people often adopted Roman ways, including styles of housing and dress, and many benefited from peace and increased trade. This peace imposed by the conquerors was called the Pax Romana.

DID YOU KNOW?

By contrast, Australia today is a true representative democracy. All its citizens now have the same rights and privileges, no matter what their gender, race or wealth. One of their rights is the right to vote. Australian citizens can have their own opinions and may express them without fear of being punished. Citizens aged over 18 can vote for politicians to represent them in government by marking a ballot paper issued during an election. Elections for Federal Parliament are usually held every three years. Federal Parliament consists of two houses — the House of Representatives and the Senate.

6.6.3 From republic to empire

With increased wealth and opportunity, competition for power among the patricians also intensified, plunging the city into chaos. In 27 BCE the Republic collapsed. So began the age of the emperors (a single ruler, often chosen by the Senate, but ruling much like a king). Although Julius Caesar (100–44 BCE) was not an emperor, his career marks the turning point from republic to empire (see **SOURCE 3**).

Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar outsmarted his political rivals and proved himself to be a brilliant general. His willingness to share the hardships of war, as well as the loot of battle, made him very popular with his soldiers. Using his loyal troops, Caesar seized power in 49 BCE by attacking the most powerful man in Rome, his great rival (and former friend) Pompey. In the ensuing civil war Caesar won control of Rome, and in 44 BCE he had himself appointed Dictator for Life.

SOURCE 3 Profile of Gaius Julius Caesar (based on the writings of the Roman historian Suetonius)

Born 100 BCE; died 44 BCE. Class: patrician

Well built, tall, fair hair, balding (combed his hair forward), dark brown eyes

Very fit, but sometimes had epileptic fits

Ambitious, but fair man who judged men on their fighting record

Good at sword fighting, horse riding, public speaking, writing

Often wore a wreath of laurel leaves on his head (as a sign of victory)

Introduced the Julian Calendar, used for more than 1500 years

Introduced a number of land, law, tax and social justice reforms



Caesar or rex?

Rex is the Latin word for king. Romans had hated kings since before they had thrown out their Etruscan rulers in 509 BCE. After Caesar's defeat of Pompey and seizure of power, some senators accused him of acting like a king. Perhaps this is why he chose not to take the title of *rex*.

SOURCE 4 Suetonius's description of Caesar's assassination (Suetonius lived about 69–140 CE)

As soon as Caesar took his seat [in the Senate House], the conspirators crowded around him as if to pay their respects. Tillius Cimber ... came up close, pretending to ask a question ... caught hold of [Caesar's] shoulders. 'This is violence!' Caesar cried, and at that moment one of the Casca brothers slipped behind and with a sweep of the dagger stabbed him just below the throat. Caesar grasped Casca's arm and ran it through with his stylus; he was leaping away when another dagger caught him in the breast. Confronted by a ring of drawn daggers, he drew the top of his gown over his face ... Twenty-three dagger thrusts went home as he stood there.

civil war war between rival factions within one state or country

Some of the senators who had survived the **civil war** decided they could not permit Caesar's power grab. They arranged for his murder on 15 March, 44 BCE. Among those involved in stabbing him to death were old and trusted friends such as Marcus Brutus.

The Roman Empire

After Caesar's assassination, his great-nephew Octavian (later called Augustus) took control of Rome. Eventually, following a period spent eliminating his rivals, he declared himself emperor. As Augustus, he founded a dynasty (family of leaders) that ruled the empire until 68 CE.

The Roman Empire endured until 476 CE under a series of emperors who either were given the title by the Senate or simply seized power.

SOURCE 5 The Roman Empire at its peak. The empire consisted of a number of provinces, each ruled by a governor.

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Source: Map drawn by Spatial Vision.

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Deepen and check your understanding of the topic with the following resources and auto-marked questions:
Roman Civil Wars **Roman Empire**

6.6.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 When did the Roman Republic collapse?
- 2 How did Julius Caesar seize power?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Using **SOURCE 3**, identify and describe characteristics of Julius Caesar that would have helped his quest for power.
- 4 According to Suetonius in **SOURCE 4**, how many Romans must have taken part in the assassination of Caesar?
- 5 How would you test the reliability of **SOURCE 4**?

6.6 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 1 Using the sources and information in this subtopic, what features of Rome's society, political system and growth of its empire could have made it difficult for Rome to remain a republic?

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

- 2 In small groups discuss whether Caesar's ambition and method of seizing power was the cause of his assassination.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- 3 Evaluate the significance of Julius Caesar in changing the history of Rome.
- 4 Do you think the concerns of the senators would have been shared by the common people? Why or why not?

6.7 Spartacus and Nero: two significant individuals

6.7.1 Spartacus: leader of the great slave uprising

No two leaders could have been less alike, nor could they have played more different roles in Rome's history, than Spartacus the slave and Nero the emperor. Spartacus was a gladiator who led a massive slave rebellion that spread fear through Rome. Nero has long been regarded as a cruel and wasteful tyrant who became a symbol of the worst aspects of Roman power.

As the Roman Empire grew, so did the number of captives who were sold into slavery. Rome's wealth was built on slavery, and slaves usually had the most miserable lives of all people in its empire. Many slaves worked on the estates of rich Romans. Others were servants. For the slightest act of rebellion a slave could be killed by **crucifixion**.

Those who suffered most were miners, prostitutes and gladiators. Mineworkers rarely lived past the age of 21. Prostitutes often died young from abuse or disease. Few gladiators lived for long, as they were trained to fight to the death for the amusement of Roman crowds (see **SOURCES 2** and **3**). Unlike many slaves, however, gladiators knew how to fight.

At Capua, south of Rome, in 73 BCE an event took place that started a rebellion that shook the Roman Empire. It began when a group of gladiators overpowered their guards and escaped. Their main leader was a **Thracian** gladiator called Spartacus. Their numbers soon grew to thousands as they freed other slaves and taught them how to fight. They defeated each Roman legion that was sent to crush them, and by the following year the rebel force numbered about 10 000 and was growing fast as it raided Roman towns and freed more slaves. Panic spread through Rome.

The rebels were finally defeated. Two of their groups were wiped out by Roman legions. The main rebel force under Spartacus was at last defeated in a pitched battle in which as many as 60 000 rebels may have died fighting (see **SOURCES 4** and **5**). Six thousand were taken prisoner. As an example to others who might consider rebellion, the entire 6000 were crucified along the road from Capua to Rome.

SOURCE 1 A Roman stele (funerary monument) of a freedman (former slave), dressed in a toga, and his freedwoman wife



crucifixion slow, painful execution by being nailed or bound to a cross or pole

Thracian a native of the Roman province of Thracia (see **SOURCE 5** in 6.6.3 From republic to empire)

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DID YOU KNOW?

Slaves had no rights at all until a law of the Emperor Claudius banned the practice of torturing or killing them. In reality, however, this law often failed to protect them. A few educated slaves had fairly comfortable lives and some slaves were granted their freedom or were able to save enough money to buy it, but for most slaves life was harsh.

SOURCE 2 From an account of gladiators in combat by the Roman historian Seneca (4–65 CE)

I arrived at the Colosseum in the middle of the day ... No sooner has a man killed his rival than the crowd shout for him to kill another, or be killed. In the end every fighter dies ... why watch their sufferings?

SOURCE 4 From an account of the slave revolt by the Greek historian Plutarch (c. 46–120 CE)

Spartacus ... was a Thracian from the nomadic tribes and not only had a great spirit and great physical strength, but was ... most intelligent and cultured ... Spartacus had grown to be a great and formidable power but ... could not expect to prove superior to the whole power of Rome, and so he began to lead his army towards the Alps ... His men, however, would not listen to him. They were strong in numbers and full of confidence ...
... both consuls were sent out to deal with what was considered a major war and a most difficult one to fight ...

SOURCE 5 From Plutarch's description of the final battles of the revolt

Crassus's troops killed 12 300 men, but he found only two of them who were wounded in the back. All the rest died ... fighting back against the Romans.
... Spartacus ... surrounded by enemies, still stood his ground and died fighting to the last.

SOURCE 3 A fragment of a relief sculpture depicting two gladiators named Scholasticus and Damascenus. It is from the third century CE. The sign θ indicates that Damascenus died in the fight. Most gladiators' lives ended this way, although a few very successful fighters were able to buy their freedom.



6.7.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Which group in Roman society benefited most from slavery?
- 2 What do you think would have been the worst jobs for slaves?
- 3 Why were the gladiators able to launch a slave revolt?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Freedmen and freedwomen were former slaves. The toga was a sign of Roman citizenship. How does **SOURCE 1** provide evidence that some slaves were able to advance in Roman society?
- 5 Read **SOURCE 2**.
 - a How can you tell that not all Romans approved of gladiatorial combats?
 - b Do you think many Romans would have shared Seneca's perspective? Why do you think this?
- 6 Using **SOURCE 3** as your evidence, how long do you think a gladiator's career would be likely to last?
- 7 Read **SOURCES 4** and **5**. Explain what these sources say about:
 - a how big a threat the slave revolt posed to the power of Rome
 - b why Spartacus was finally defeated
 - c the courage of Spartacus and the other rebels.
- 8 Imagine you are a slave who has joined Spartacus. Write a letter to your fellow slaves telling them your reasons.

6.7.2 Nero: emperor, party-thrower and murderer

Nero Claudius Caesar Drusus Germanicus was the adopted son of Emperor Claudius. Nero was just 17 when he became emperor in 54 CE after his mother, Agrippina, had Claudius poisoned. At first Nero behaved like a competent and fair ruler but within five years he had murdered his step-brother and his mother and divorced his wife and step-sister Octavia, who he later murdered.

Nero sought popularity by spending vast sums of money raised by taxes on parties and public spectacles. Among the many terrible things attributed to him, Nero had high-ranking senators tortured and killed for treason so that he could confiscate their property to fund his wasteful lifestyle. By 68 CE, Rome's provinces rebelled against him. Fearing execution, Nero committed suicide.

SOURCE 6 An account of Nero's lifestyle by the ancient Roman writer Suetonius (c. 69–140 CE)

He gave an immense variety of entertainments . . . parties, chariot races in the Circus, stage plays, a gladiatorial show . . . and actually raced four-camel chariots! At the Great Festival, as he called the series of plays devoted to the eternity of the Empire . . . all kinds of gifts were scattered to the people . . .

Nero practiced every kind of obscenity, and . . . finally invented a novel game: he was released from a cage dressed in the skins of wild animals, and attacked the private parts of men and women who stood bound to stakes.

SOURCE 7 An extract from Alexander Canduci, *Triumph and Tragedy: the rise and fall of Rome's immortal emperors*, published in 2010

Nero was a conundrum [riddle]. His creative and artistic side sat uneasily next to his bloodthirsty paranoia [mental illness marked by fear of being persecuted] and . . . disregard for others . . . In the aftermath of the fire [the Great fire of Rome in 64 CE], rumours spread that Nero was the culprit who had started it. In order to throw suspicion off himself . . . Nero . . . began a campaign against the Christians . . . feeding them to the beasts at the great games, crucifying them and setting them alight.

SOURCE 8 An extract from an article written by Robert Draper 'Rethinking Nero', published in *National Geographic* in 2014

The case against Nero . . . would appear to be open and shut. And yet . . . his death was followed by outpourings of public grief . . . mourners long continued to bring flowers to his tomb . . .

The dead do not write their own history. Nero's first two biographers, Suetonius and Tacitus, had ties to the elite Senate and would memorialise his reign with lavish contempt . . .

Nero's early reign was golden. He banished Claudius's secret trials, issued pardons, and when asked for his signature on a death warrant, moaned, 'How I wish I had never learned to write!'

SOURCE 9 The site of Rome's Circus Maximus, where, according to Suetonius, Nero drove a chariot in a race



6.7.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How did Nero become emperor of Rome?
- 2 What crimes did he commit against his own family?
- 3 How did he gain popularity?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 For what two sides of Nero's character does **SOURCE 6** provide evidence?
- 5 Does **SOURCE 7** accept or support the view of Suetonius?
- 6 **SOURCE 8** questions the accepted view of Nero.
 - a How does it cast doubt on the reliability of Suetonius?
 - b What does it suggest about how the common people of Rome regarded the changes brought about by Nero?
 - c How does this interpretation differ from that of **SOURCE 7**?
- 7 Look at **SOURCE 9**, the site of the Circus Maximus, where Nero took part in a chariot race.
 - a Use the internet to discover what it looked like in Nero's time.
 - b Working in small groups, write a racing commentary on Nero's chariot race in a style that would have won favour with him.

6.7 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 1 Identify and describe ways in which people's lives were changed by Nero.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- 2 Explain why Spartacus should be regarded as a significant individual in Roman history.

6.8 Living in the Roman Empire

6.8.1 Changing Roman society

Around 90 per cent of people in the Roman Empire were peasants who lived on farms or in villages. Far fewer lived in towns and cities. Wherever they were, the poor lived very differently from wealthy Romans. Some plebeians became wealthy through trade but most were skilled or unskilled workers, shopkeepers or **tenant farmers**. As more slaves were used, increasing numbers of poor citizens became unemployed. By contrast, wealthy Romans usually did no physical work and lived in luxurious villas with baths and even underfloor heating. As the empire grew, so did the gap between the rich and the vast numbers of the poor.

Large Roman towns were well planned, with government buildings and a **forum** where the citizens could gather. The city of Rome had expensive villas for the rich and fine government buildings. The rich feasted at banquets where they ate lying on their sides on couches while being entertained by dancers and musicians. Some made it a habit to overeat then vomit so they could continue to feast.

Meanwhile, the poor survived on bread and porridge and lived in rented slums without kitchens, toilets, heating or running water (see **SOURCE 1**). Their drinking water came from public fountains and they washed in public baths. To keep the poor from rebelling, the ruling classes provided free grain, public baths and toilets and cruel forms of entertainment. They also encouraged the poor to live in colonies in conquered lands.

The impact of slavery on social change

The main reason for the existence of large numbers of poor citizens in Roman towns was the vast number of conquered peoples who became slaves. The increased use of slave labour changed Rome from a society based mainly on small farmers to one based more on large agricultural estates owned by the very rich and worked by slaves. Many of the city-dwelling poor Roman citizens were displaced people who moved from the countryside to towns and survived on casual work or on the dole.

tenant farmers poor farmers who rented small plots of land

forum open meeting place of a town or city

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SOURCE 1 From a description of housing conditions of the poor by the Roman writer Juvenal, first century CE.

We live in a city shored up with slender props . . . for that is how the landlords stop the houses from falling down.

6.8.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What occupations were most plebeians engaged in?
- 2 Why did large numbers of plebeians become unemployed?

- 3 Draw a mind map to compare the lives of rich and poor in the Roman Empire?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 What evidence does **SOURCE 1** provide about the housing of the poor in Rome?

DID YOU KNOW?

Public entertainments included executions, live animal hunts, fights between tormented animals and contests between gladiators and animals. So many lions were captured for wild animal shows that the species disappeared in the Middle East.

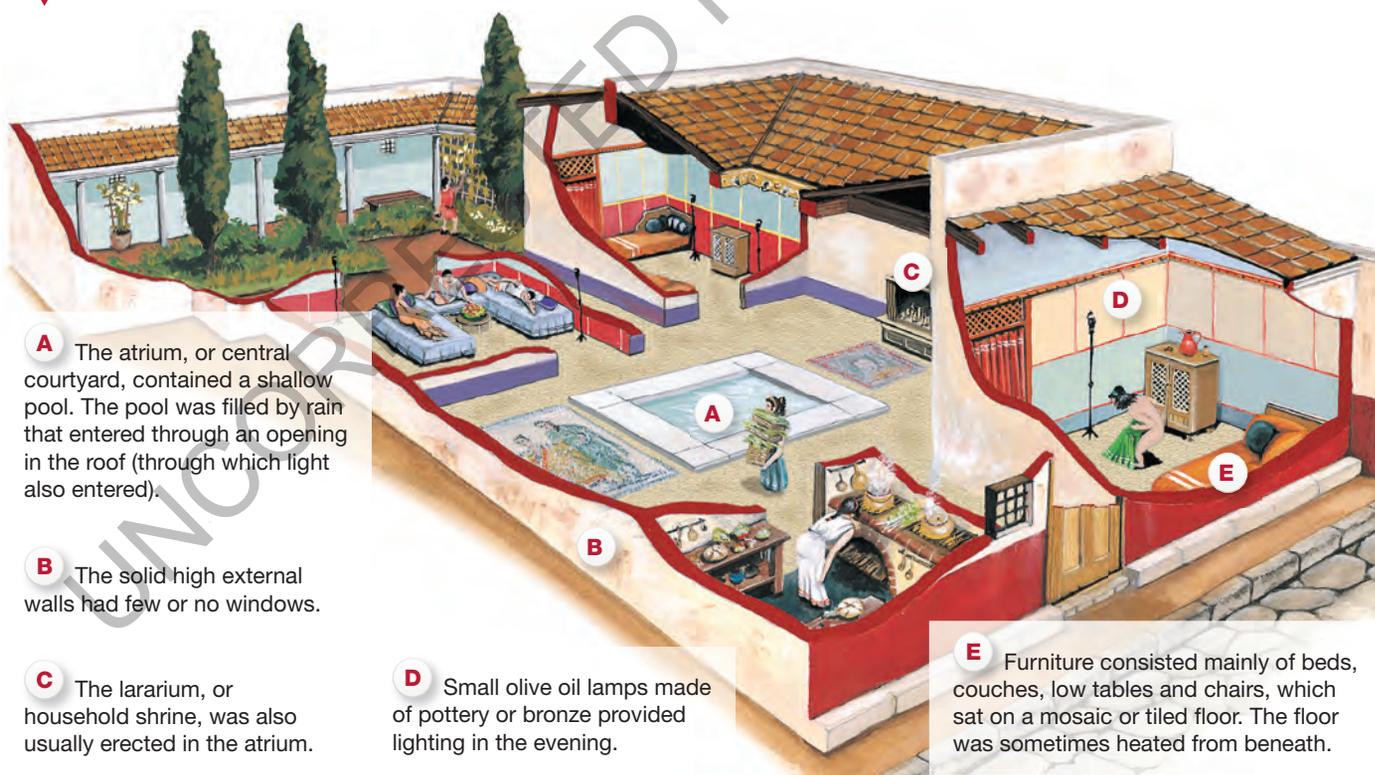
6.8.2 Roman culture

Rome produced a rich culture, but it was probably enjoyed by less than five per cent of the population. These Romans were influenced by the cultures of some of the peoples they conquered, especially the Greeks. From Greece, the Roman armies brought back paintings and statues. Rich Romans used Greek slaves to educate their children and to decorate their homes and public buildings with paintings, sculptures and statues. Many Roman statues of Roman leaders and gods were copies of Greek statues.

The Romans adopted and imitated Greek literature. Homer's *Odyssey* was translated into Latin and plays were performed at festivals. Many of these plays were comedies that ridiculed everyday events. Roman writers produced histories, poetry and books on military tactics, law and medicine. Among the most famous was the poet Virgil. His greatest work was the *Aeneid*, which tells the story of Aeneas, who according to legend fled from the destruction of Troy and founded Rome. Virgil's success showed that some Romans could rise from poor backgrounds. He was the son of a peasant. Horace, another great Roman poet, was the son of an ex-slave. Both were encouraged by Augustus and benefited from the tradition of noble **patronage**.

patronage supporting and encouraging authors and artists

SOURCE 2 A typical villa of the type occupied by wealthy Romans



Virtues

Among the ideas of the ancient Romans, **virtue** was considered very important. Roman writers and philosophers praised such virtues as family values, patriotism and justice. In schools, boys were taught to read, write and use Roman numerals. They also learned **rhetoric** and logical thinking and studied the works of great classical writers.

virtue moral standard or value

rhetoric the art of public speaking

DID YOU KNOW?

Roman fathers had total power over their families, including the power to kill their children or sell them into slavery. Girls received little schooling other than in household skills. Married women had few rights and could be killed if they committed adultery.

6.8.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Describe some ways in which privileged Romans were influenced by Greek culture.
- 2 What virtues were praised by Roman writers and philosophers?
- 3 What powers did Roman fathers have within their families?
- 4 How was the education of boys different from that of girls?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 Imagine you are a member of the wealthy Roman family who own the villa depicted in **SOURCE 2**. Describe how you would furnish and decorate your house and what preparations you would make for your first banquet.

6.8.3 Roman technology

The Romans built some 84 000 kilometres of roads, as well as countless bridges, walls, aqueducts, temples and public buildings, including baths. They had no earthmoving equipment, steel cranes, power tools or computer-aided design, yet the way they built many of these structures was not bettered for nearly 2000 years.

SOURCE 3 The general layout of cities throughout the Roman Empire followed the pattern set for the city of Rome.

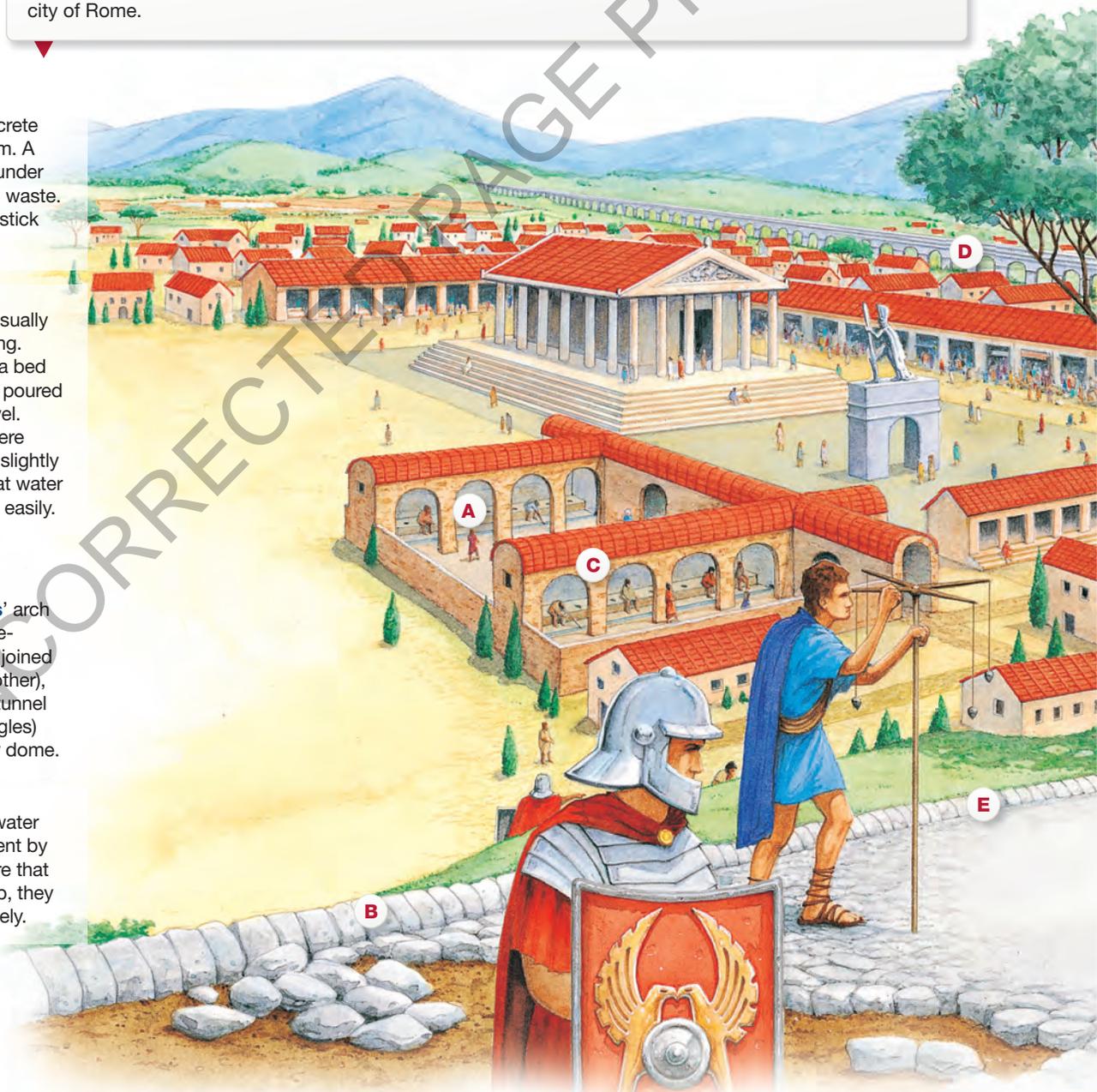
A Roman public toilets consisted of stone or concrete benches with holes in them. A channel of running water under the holes removed human waste. A sponge on the end of a stick was used for cleaning.

B Roman roads were usually straight, and often very long. They were usually laid on a bed of rubble, over which was poured a layer of concrete or gravel. Sometimes stone slabs were placed on top. They were slightly higher in the middle so that water and debris could wash off easily.

C The Romans further developed the **Etruscans'** arch to produce, first, the single-tunnel vault (many arches joined together, one behind the other), then the cross-vault (two tunnel vaults crossing at right angles) and then the revolutionary dome.

D Aqueducts allowed water to flow down to a settlement by means of gravity. To ensure that the water flow did not stop, they had to be built very precisely.

Etruscans advanced, civilised people who dominated early Rome from about 575 BCE to about 396 BCE



As the Roman Empire expanded, it became important to master the skills needed to build it, protect it and connect and service its various parts. Roads, walls and towns had to be built, and towns needed facilities such as water supply, toilets and **public baths**. Much of the work was done by the army. The Romans became so good at engineering and construction that many of their structures are still used today.

public baths public building complexes containing baths of varying temperatures, and sports and beauty facilities; a popular meeting place for Roman citizens

6.8.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What facilities were needed in a Roman town?
- 2 What did the Romans do about the risk of fires?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Examine **SOURCE 3**.
 - a Describe a Roman public toilet.

- b Explain how aqueducts worked.
 - c Explain how public baths were heated.
 - d Draw and label a diagram to explain how Roman roads were built.
- 4 Use the internet to research the construction and features of one famous Roman structure. You could choose, for example, the Pantheon, the Colosseum, the buildings of the Roman Forum or the Baths of Diocletian.

E The Romans were also able to fire bricks, and to use building tools such as rulers, chisels, squares (to measure angles) and a surveying instrument called a groma. By lining up the two weighted strings on the end of each bar of the groma with landmarks, engineers were able to build roads that were straight and level.

F Domes were used on many public buildings, including some baths. The most spectacular example is the dome on the Pantheon, a temple built to all the gods in around 120 CE. Spanning 43 metres in diameter, it is still the second biggest in the world.

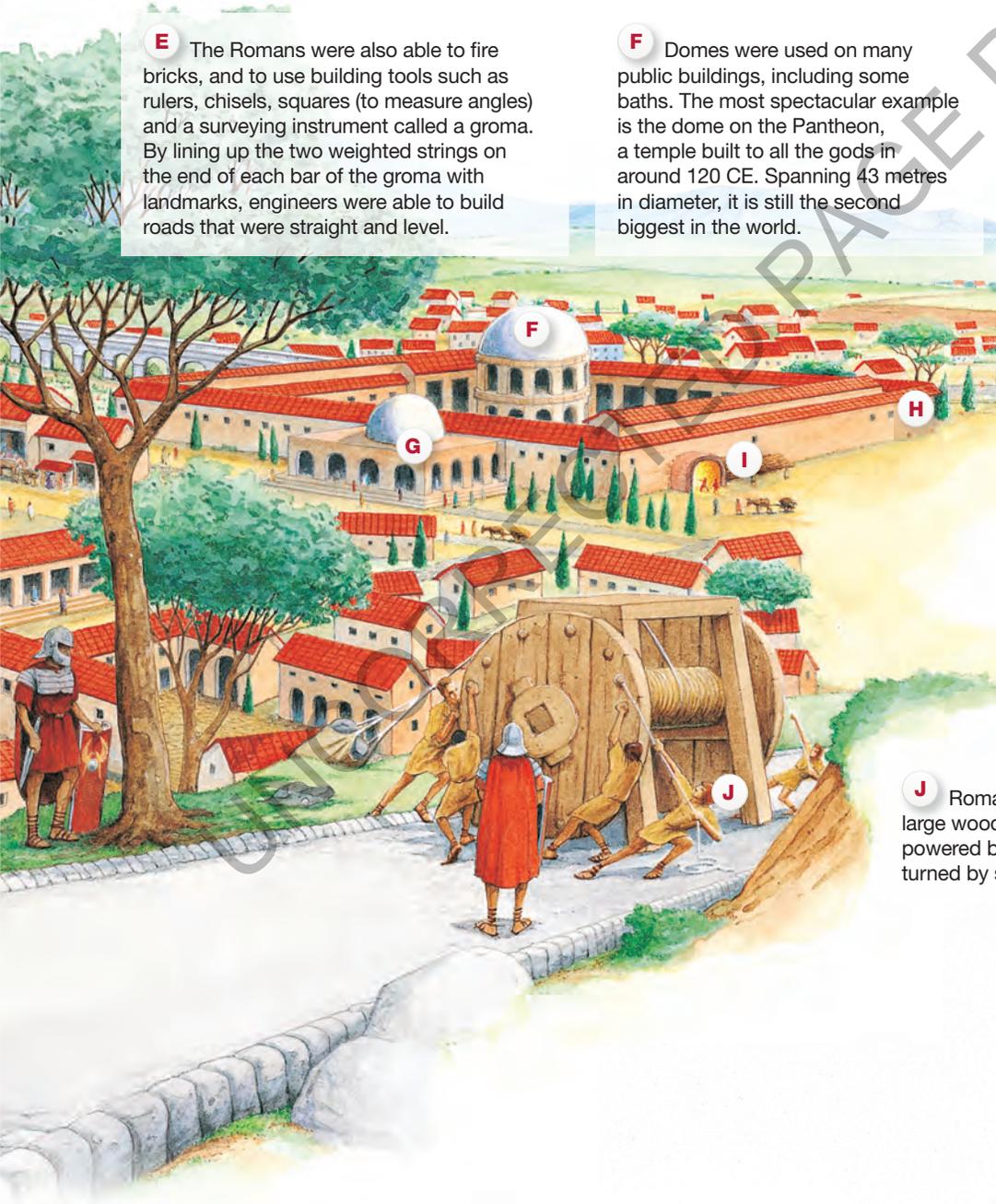
G Building was revolutionised when the Romans found out how to make concrete. It was discovered that when a volcanic dust called pozzolana was mixed with lime and water, it set into a hard material.

H People went to the public baths every day to wash and to socialise. The complexes contained hot and cold pools, saunas, reading rooms, hair salons, dressing rooms, exercise yards and shops. Some of them held thousands of people.

I The water in the public baths was heated by a **hypocaust**. Slaves kept large fires burning in the basements of buildings or outside them. The hot air was fed under the floors and up through a series of tunnels to heat some of the pools.

J Roman cranes were large wooden structures, powered by a big wheel turned by slaves.

hypocaust under-floor and water heating system used in Roman villas and public baths



DID YOU KNOW?

Roman engineering was so good that many Roman public buildings still stand. They supplied running water and sewerage to the homes of wealthy people who could afford pipes, taps and flushing toilets. Some blocks of flats for the poor, on the other hand, were so badly built that they fell down within a few years. Fires were such a problem in Rome that in AD 6 a fire-fighting force, called the Cohortes Vigiliam, was set up.

6.8 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 1 How would you account for the housing of the poor being so inferior, as described in **SOURCE 1**, when the Romans had the excellent building skills shown in **SOURCES 2** and **3**?
- 2 Imagine you are one of the plebeians driven from the countryside to the city and with no choice but to live in a slum like those described in **SOURCE 1**.
 - a How would you feel about the social changes that had brought this about?
 - b How would you regard those who could live in a villa like that shown in **SOURCE 2**?

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 3 Using the sources and information in this subtopic, explain how the growth of the Roman Empire changed Roman society.

6.9 Death and the Romans

6.9.1 Beliefs and funeral customs

Death and the customs associated with funerals provide an enormous amount of primary source evidence for ancient Roman society and its values and beliefs. Roman cemeteries were located outside the boundaries of cities and the inscriptions and sculptures on tombs and altars along with writings about death reveal a lot of what Romans believed about honouring the dead and about souls and an afterlife.

On Roman ideas about life after death, we have the writings of just a few highly educated Romans and they expressed various different beliefs. However, at least some and possibly many Romans appear to have believed that souls went on living after the death of a body and that they might be judged in the afterlife. Sometimes a coin was placed in or over the dead person's mouth. This custom appears to have been adopted from the Greeks, who believed a coin was

needed to pay the ferryman who transported souls of the newly dead across a river that separated the underworld from the world of the living.

Regardless of beliefs about an afterlife, Romans thought that they had a duty to care for their dead ancestors. When a family member died, their closest relative would close the eyes of the deceased and all family members would mourn, calling out the dead person's name. After the deceased person's body was washed and anointed it would be dressed in clothes that reflected their position in Roman society, for example, a deceased male citizen would be dressed in a toga.

Funeral processions took place between the deceased's home and the cemetery. Ceremonies were held at both places. They included chanting and a eulogy, which was a formal speech honouring the deceased. Families who could afford it would also sacrifice an animal in the presence of the dead body.

SOURCE 1 This stele (upright stone slab) served as the grave marker of a Roman family group of former slaves with a male child.



6.9.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Describe what family members did at home and at the cemetery following a family member's death.
- 2 What does the custom of placing a coin on or in a dead person's mouth reveal about:
 - a the influence of Greek myths on Roman ideas
 - b the belief, held by at least some Romans, in an afterlife?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 The child in **SOURCE 1** is wearing a toga, a symbol of Roman citizenship. Explain what this tells you about the possibility of moving up in Roman society.

6.9.2 Tombs and commemorations

Throughout most of the period of the Roman Empire, dead bodies were usually cremated and the ashes were kept in urns. But this was later mostly replaced by burial. If they could afford it, people would have the body of a dead family member placed in a sarcophagus (a stone coffin). Wealthy Romans often had very grand tombs that had several chambers for family visits. Poorer Romans had small, simple tombs. In the city of Rome, those who could not afford tombs used the Catacombs. These were large networks of tunnels cut into soft rock below the city.

Following funerals, the dead continued to be commemorated in several ways. An epitaph would be inscribed on the tomb, often recording the deceased's span of life and information about their family relationships, occupations and any public offices they held. Each year, the dead were honoured during the nine-day festival called the Parentalia. In addition, portrait busts of a dead family member were often made of bronze or stone to be displayed in homes of wealthy families.

SOURCE 2 An inscription on this sarcophagus reveals that it was donated by two Roman citizens to their friend. The figures on the sarcophagus are a cobbler (shoemaker) and a spinner (a maker of thread for cloth). It is probable that one of these occupations was that of the deceased and the other was that of the donors.



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6.9.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was a sarcophagus?
- 2 How different were the tombs and burial places of the rich and the poor?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Form a hypothesis that might explain the gift of the sarcophagus in **SOURCE 2**.

6.9 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 1 In a style that would appeal to their families, write a eulogy for any one of the figures in **SOURCE 1** or **SOURCE 2**.

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 2 Use the sources and other information in this subtopic to explain some things about Roman society that we could discover from evidence about funeral customs. Use the following headings: attitudes to the dead, beliefs about an afterlife, occupations, social classes, changes enabling movement between social classes.

6.10 Roman law and religion

6.10.1 Roman law

In the period of over 1200 years between Rome's foundation in 753 BCE and the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE there were many changes that affected Roman society. None were more important than changes in law and religion.

It is probable that when Rome was ruled by Etruscan kings there were no laws other than a king's decisions. However, the system of government in the Roman Republic created the need for written laws to prevent the patrician class from always dominating matters of law and magistrates from interpreting the law unfairly. According to ancient Roman historians, in 451 BCE ten Roman citizens were given the job of recording the laws that were in practice. These laws were approved and adopted in 450 BCE as the Twelve Tables (see **SOURCE 1**). These dealt mostly with the rights of citizens because women, children and slaves came under the authority of the male head of the family.

As Rome's society and economy became more complicated, new laws were added as the need arose. Roman law came to cover a huge range of matters that affected everyday life. These included crime and punishment, property, trade, industries, sex, slavery and politics. Although all Roman citizens were supposed to have the same rights under the law, the rich could often use bribery to get an advantage (see **SOURCE 2**).

SOURCE 1 Three laws from the Twelve Tables

Table IV, law 2: If a father sell his son three times, the son shall be free from his father.

Table V, law 1: Females shall remain in guardianship [under the control of their fathers] even when they have attained their majority [became adults].

Table XI, law 1: Marriages should not take place between plebeians and patricians.

SOURCE 2 From the Roman writer Petronius, who lived in the first century CE

What use are laws when money calls the tunes and people without a gentleman's income have no real rights at all?

Changing laws

Over the many centuries of the Roman Empire, Roman law changed by many means. These included magistrates' decisions, decrees of the Senate, votes in the assembly, decisions of the jurists (a small group who were responsible for giving expert legal opinions) and edicts (orders) of emperors. Emperors increasingly assumed powers to create completely new laws. For example, in 212 CE, Emperor Caracalla issued an edict giving Roman citizenship to all free people within the Roman Empire. During the age of the emperors, Roman law even became less harsh. New laws gave some protection to women, children and the poor.

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6.10.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What were the Twelve Tables?
- 2 Why did the Roman Republic need written laws?
- 3 How did the nature of law-making change under the emperors?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 In **SOURCE 1**, what do Table IV, law 2 and Table V, law 1 reveal about the powers of fathers over their children?

- 5 Why would the patricians have supported Table XI, law 1?
- 6 In 445 BCE, a new law allowed marriages between patricians and plebeians. What does this suggest about the growing influence of the plebeians and the ability of Roman law to change?
- 7 In **SOURCE 2**, what did Petronius think about the fairness of the Roman legal system?

divination the skill of reading omens

astrology interpreting the influence of the stars on human affairs

6.10.2 Roman religion

The Romans had hundreds of gods and goddesses. They usually tolerated the religions of people they conquered as long as those people were willing to pay homage to the Roman emperor. Romans believed that religion was closely related to government and that other religions were a danger only if they threatened Rome's authority. Roman religion did not tell people how to live better lives and there was no fixed belief about an afterlife. It was more concerned with performing rituals in return for protection from misfortune.

Roman state religion

The Roman authorities built temples to the gods, conducted regular rituals to please them, and organised religious festivals with processions, music and animal sacrifices. Roman homes also had shrines at which families sacrificed to their household gods.

Romans believed that it was important to know the will of the gods before political decisions were taken.

They believed that the gods sent signs, or omens; the skill of reading them was called **divination**. Methods of divination included studying the entrails of sacrificed animals, rolling dice, **astrology** and consulting oracles. Some oracles were inscriptions written on tablets.

SOURCE 3 Some Roman gods and goddesses and their Greek equivalents

Jupiter

(Greek equivalent: Zeus)
King of the gods
Symbols: eagle, thunderbolt



Juno

(Greek equivalent: Hera)
Wife of Jupiter
Goddess of women, marriage and childbirth

Mars

(Greek equivalent: Ares)
God of war



Vesta

(Greek equivalent: Hestia)
Goddess of the hearth or fireplace



Venus

(Greek equivalent: Aphrodite)
Goddess of love and beauty



Neptune

(Greek equivalent: Poseidon)
God of the sea



Mercury

(Greek equivalent: Hermes)
Jupiter's messenger
God of trade and thieves



These were shuffled like cards by a child, who then gave one to the person seeking to discover the will of the gods.

SOURCE 4 The Pantheon, the largest Roman temple. It was built between 118 and 128 CE.



Adopted gods

As the empire expanded, Romans adopted more gods from the people they conquered, especially the Greeks. The Greek sea god Poseidon was identified with Neptune, the Roman god of water. The Greek god Zeus was identified with Jupiter, the most important of all Roman gods. Several Egyptian and Persian gods were also adopted. Mithraism, the cult of Mithras, the Persian god of light, held that there was life after death. Mithras was especially popular among Roman soldiers. When the Romans decided to worship Sulis, a goddess of the Celts, they equated her with the Roman goddess Minerva and changed her name to Sulis Minerva.

6.10.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What were the purposes of Roman religious rituals and festivals?
- 2 How did Roman religion change as the empire expanded?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Using **SOURCE 3**, list three Greek gods and/or goddesses and their Roman equivalents.
- 4 The Pantheon (**SOURCE 4**) is considered an architectural wonder. What does the construction of such a building suggest about the importance of religion to the Romans?

6.10.3 The spread of Christianity

Christianity arose in Roman Palestine (Judea) in the first century CE. It was based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, a Jew who preached that he was the son of God and that through faith people could receive forgiveness for their sins and gain eternal life. Jewish religious leaders saw Jesus as a threat, so they had him arrested and condemned to death. When Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, approved the sentence, Jesus was executed by crucifixion.

SOURCE 5 Account by the Roman historian Tacitus (c. 56–117 CE) of the persecution of Christians by the Emperor Nero

Dressed in wild animals' skins [the Christians] were torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or made into torches to be ignited after dark. Nero provided his Gardens for the spectacle, and . . . mingled with the crowd . . . Despite their guilt as Christians, and the ruthless punishment it deserved, the victims were pitied. For it was felt that they were being sacrificed to one man's brutality rather than to the nation's interest.

SOURCE 6 From the Edict of Milan, in which Emperor Constantine granted religious freedom. An edict is a formal command.

. . . no one whatsoever should be denied freedom to devote himself either to the cult of the Christians or to such religion as he deems best suited for himself . . .

Jesus' followers continued to spread his teachings, which offered hope especially to slaves and the poor. Christianity did not encourage rebellion, but the Romans saw it as a threat because Christians refused to worship the emperor, recognising only the Christian god. Several emperors ordered persecutions of the Christians, including mass executions. This persecution ended when, in 313 CE, Emperor Constantine legalised Christianity. It became the state religion of the Roman Empire in 391 CE.

DID YOU KNOW?

Roman priests and priestesses were state officials who performed rituals to maintain the good will of the gods towards the Roman state. The most important priestesses were the Vestal Virgins, who kept the fire burning on the altar of the goddess Vesta. Vestal Virgins could be executed if they were found to have had sexual relationships.

6.10.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Where and when did Christianity begin?
- 2 Why did Christianity have a special appeal for slaves and the poor?
- 3 The Romans were tolerant of other religions, so why did they persecute the Christians?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Using **SOURCE 5**, describe types of punishments that were dealt out to Christians.
- 5 How can you tell that Tacitus disapproved of these punishments but also disapproved of Christians?
- 6 Read the extract from the Edict of Milan in **SOURCE 6** and explain why it was a turning point in Roman history.

6.10 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 1 What would you identify as the most significant changes in Roman law and religion over the history of the Roman Empire?
- 2 How would key groups in Roman society (patricians, plebeians, slaves, Christians and non-Christians) have regarded these changes? For example, how would a Christian in 313 CE have felt upon reading the Edict of Milan?
- 3 When Roman law was changed to make Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire, persecution of Christians ended but it was replaced by persecution by Christians of those who followed the old Roman religion. What conclusions about continuity and change in religion and law can you draw from this?

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- 4 Use the internet and your library to find out how Emperor Constantine came to legalise Christianity and why he is considered to be a significant individual in Roman and religious history.

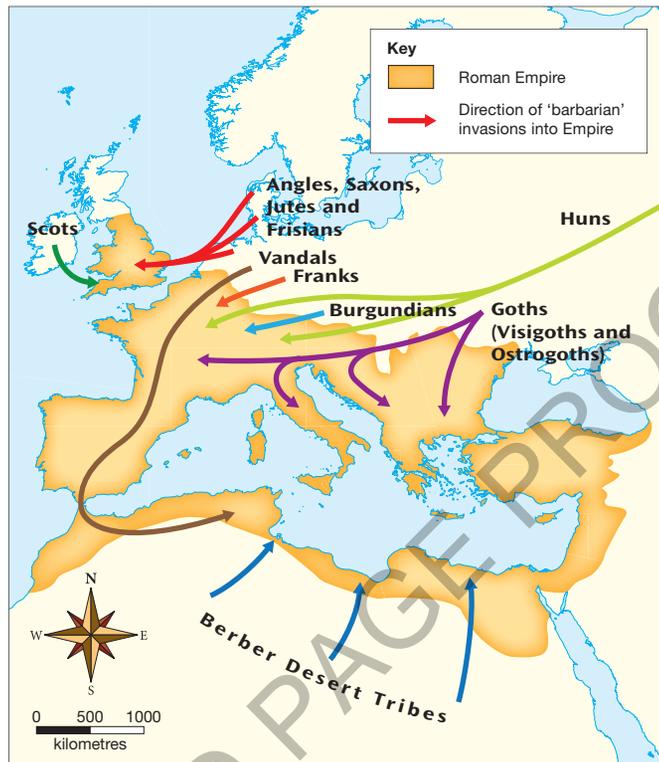
6.11 Decline and fall

6.11.1 A weakening empire

The Roman Empire began to weaken from about 180 CE as rival Roman army generals fought each other for power. Trade that had enriched the empire began to decline as transport over long distances became more dangerous and tribes of **barbarians** increased their raids into the empire's lands.

barbarians the Roman term for all peoples who lived beyond the borders of the empire

SOURCE 1 The weakening of the Western Roman Empire. The arrows show the directions from which different barbarian groups invaded the empire.



Source: Map drawn by Spatial Vision.

In 284 CE Emperor Diocletian, a Roman general who had won power through his soldiers, divided Rome into Eastern and Western empires under two separate emperors. Diocletian believed this would create stronger government, but the problems remained. From 307 to 310 CE civil war raged as six rival emperors competed for power. The victor, Constantine, ordered the building of a new capital, to be called New Rome, on the site of the old Greek city of Byzantium. The city was soon renamed Constantinople (Istanbul in modern Turkey).

In 378 CE the Visigoths defeated Rome's armies. Emperor Theodosius (379–395 CE) agreed to allow them to form a separate state within the Roman Empire, while the Visigoths pledged to defend the empire's frontiers. Theodosius was more successful in reuniting the empire in 394 CE after the Western Empire broke away under a rival emperor. However, following the death of Theodosius the split into Eastern and Western empires became permanent.

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6.11.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why did Diocletian divide the Roman Empire?
- 2 What event in 378 CE showed Rome's weakness?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Study **SOURCE 1**.
 - a Who were the peoples who threatened the empire?
 - b Which part of the empire did each group threaten?

6.11.2 The empire falls

There were vast movements of peoples through Europe in the fifth century CE. Burgundians and other 'barbarian' tribes invaded Gaul, while Angles, Saxons and Jutes from Germany and Denmark attacked Britain and Vandals, another Germanic tribe, invaded Spain. The Roman armies left Britain in 410 to defend the city of Rome, which was sacked by the Visigoths that same year.

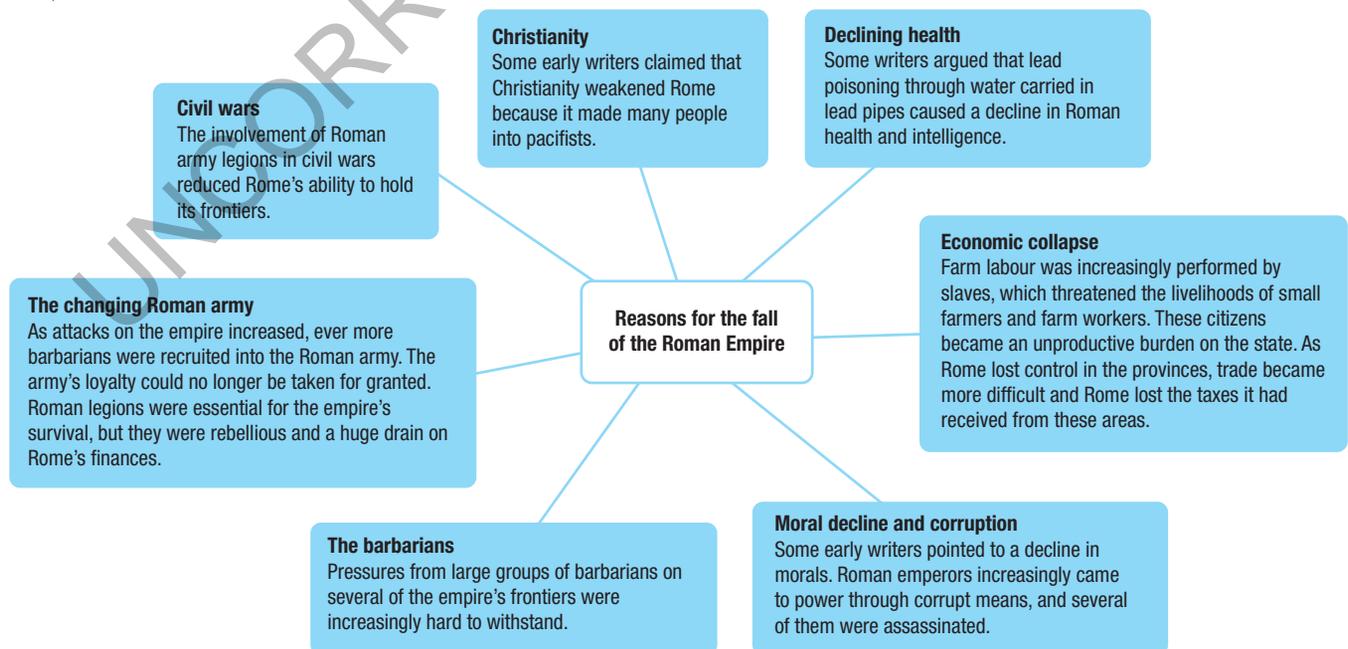
These invasions were not part of any general plan. Several barbarian groups who swept into the Roman Empire were fleeing other hostile tribes. For example, the Ostrogoths from eastern Europe were retreating before the Huns, who had overrun their homelands. This made it possible for Rome to form alliances with some groups against others. In 451 an alliance of Romans, Visigoths and Burgundians defeated the Huns. However, in 455 Rome was pillaged by the Vandals, and in 476 the last Western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed by Odoacer, a German chief.

Historians past and present have suggested several reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire. The following mind map outlines some of them. War and economic collapse stand out as the key reasons.

SOURCE 2 Detail from The Big Game Hunt, a mosaic of the third to fourth century CE found at the Villa dei Casale, Piazza Armerina, Sicily



SOURCE 3 Reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire



6.11.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why did Rome abandon Britain in 410 CE?
- 2 What made it possible for Rome to form alliances with some barbarian groups against others?

SEQUENCING CHRONOLOGY

- 3 Create a timeline of developments that led to the fall of the Western Roman Empire.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 **SOURCE 2** depicts traders loading ships. Explain why declining trade would have been both a cause and a result of the weakening of the Roman Empire.
- 5 Identify reasons in **SOURCE 3** that you think would have contributed most to the decline of the Roman Empire.

6.11 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 1 Conduct research and present a report to the class on one of the barbarian groups that contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire.

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

- 2 Examine **SOURCE 3**. What reasons do you think would have contributed the most to the fall of the Roman Empire?

6.12 Heritage of Rome

6.12.1 The Eastern Roman Empire and Christianity

As the Western Roman Empire collapsed, it broke up into kingdoms ruled by non-Romans, although many people in these states continued to see themselves as Roman. Europe was entering what have been called the Dark Ages. Wars were frequent, population levels fell and cities almost disappeared, along with long-distance trade and literacy. However, the Eastern Roman Empire lived on for almost another thousand years and Roman legacies survived to influence later ages.

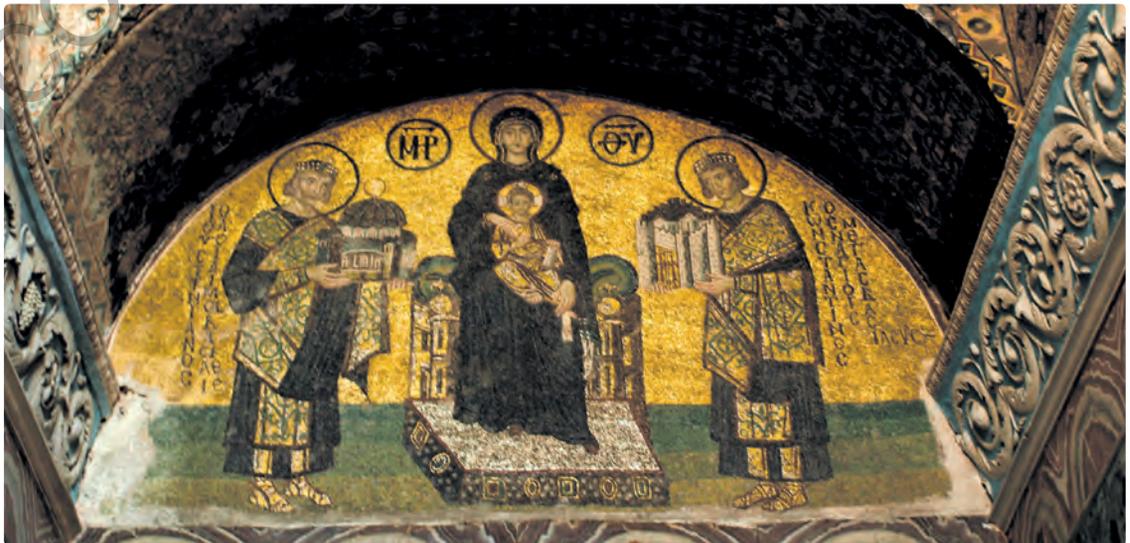
When Odoacer deposed Romulus Augustulus, he had no wish to become emperor. Rather, he recognised the authority of the Eastern Roman emperor in Constantinople. The Eastern Roman Empire maintained Roman law along with its heritage of Greek and Roman culture. It kept Latin as the language of its court. In the sixth century the Eastern emperor Justinian tried to restore the Western Empire. He was successful, but only briefly. As the **medieval** Byzantine Empire, the Eastern Roman Empire lasted until 1453 CE, when Constantinople was overrun by the Ottoman Turks.

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medieval of the Middle Ages

SOURCE 1 A mosaic in Hagia Sophia, in Istanbul. This church was built on the orders of the great Eastern Roman emperor Justinian I (527–565 CE). The mosaic shows Emperor Constantine presenting the Virgin Mary with the city of Constantinople and Justinian presenting her with the Church.



Roman Christianity

The adoption of Christianity as the Roman state religion changed the Christian Church more than it changed the Roman Empire. The power of Roman Christianity was now supported by the power of Christian Roman emperors. Until the late fourth century, many Romans continued to hold **pagan** beliefs, and there were several different sets of beliefs within the Christian Church. Church leaders used the support of emperors to suppress rival interpretations of the Christian gospels, which were declared to be **heresy**. The continuing power of the Roman Christian Church was secured when Clovis, king of the Germanic Franks, gained control of Gaul and converted to Roman Christianity in the 490s. As the Christian Church outlived the Roman Empire, it helped to conserve Roman culture, which continued to be an important influence on ideas in medieval Europe.

SOURCE 2 From Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Rise of Christian Europe*, 1966

In . . . some respects . . . the barbarians preserved rather than destroyed the Empire . . . The barbarian Christian kings who rule over Italy, France and Spain in the fifth and sixth centuries still regard themselves as Roman . . . they still acknowledge themselves subject to the emperor in the East; they still respect Roman traditions, Roman methods.

6.12.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How did the Eastern Roman Empire maintain Roman civilisation after the fall of the Western Roman Empire?
- 2 How was the power of the Roman Christian Church maintained?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCE AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Describe ways in which **SOURCES 1** and **2** provide evidence of the continuation of Roman culture after the fall of Rome.

6.12.2 Passing on the culture

The classical books of ancient Roman writers influenced later writers. In the **Middle Ages**, Christian monks toiled at copying these books by hand. Many of these ancient writers are still widely read today. As Greek learning had been adopted by the Romans, the ideas of ancient Greece were also passed on. Latin, the language of the Roman Christian Church, became the language of the Church and of scholars in the Middle Ages. Despite the barriers caused by differing national languages, all educated writers and thinkers could communicate in Latin. Even today some sciences use Latin terms. For example, botany uses them to classify plants.

In the fifteenth century the Renaissance brought a revival of interest in Roman ideas, arts and architecture. Roman influences can be seen in many buildings constructed from that time until the twentieth century. In the eighteenth century, ideas and institutions from the ancient Roman republic influenced leaders who adopted new republican forms of government.

SOURCE 3 When the Pantheon was given to the Christians in 608, it was preserved with few changes apart from additions like this Christian altar.



pagan name used to refer to people who believed in non-Christian gods

heresy an opinion or belief that contradicts orthodox beliefs, especially in religion

DID YOU KNOW?

Roman law continued to form the basis of law codes in much of Europe in the Middle Ages and even in modern times. The Roman language, Latin, is the basis of modern Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese. There are also many Latin words in English.

Middle Ages between ancient and modern historical periods (generally between the fifth and fifteenth centuries)

DID YOU KNOW?

In the Roman calendar, the year was divided into 12 months, named after gods, emperors and numbers. The names we use for the months are based on theirs. For example, August is named after the emperor Augustus.

European unity

The Roman Empire was replaced by many different states. However, the idea of some kind of European unity was a legacy of the Romans. Around 800 CE a powerful king called Charlemagne united much of Europe in a huge empire that he tried to base on the Roman model. This empire fell apart soon after his death but in the twentieth century Europe was again unified through the European Community (EC).

6.12.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Describe the roles in preserving Rome's cultural heritage played by:
 - a Christian monks and scholars in the Middle Ages
 - b the fifteenth century Renaissance.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 2 Look closely at **SOURCE 3** and explain how it provides an example of ways in which Rome's heritage has been preserved.

6.12 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 1 Conduct research to prepare a report on Roman numerals, why they still have some uses and why they are no longer used in mathematics.

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 2 Using the sources and information in this subtopic, create a mind map to show what big changes took place with the fall of Rome and what Roman influences continued.

6.13 SkillBuilder: Analysing and corroborating sources

online only

How do we analyse and corroborate ancient Roman sources?

Ancient Roman sources include temples, amphitheatres, houses, fortifications, roads, aqueducts, weapons, tools, coins and many written records. They also include artworks such as mosaics, paintings, statues and other sculptures in terracotta, stone and bronze. Almost all our knowledge of ancient Rome comes from such sources.



Go to your learnON course to access:

- An explanation of the skill (Tell me)
- A step-by-step process to develop the skill, with an example (Show me)
- An activity to allow you to practise the skill (Let me do it)
- Questions to test your application of the skill (Applying skills)

6.14 Review

online only

This final subtopic provides a range of opportunities for you to review and respond through:

- i revising and checking your historical knowledge
- ii demonstrating your ability to apply historical concepts and skills.

Go to your learnON course to access:

- A key chronology of events relevant to the topic
- A summary of the key knowledge presented in the topic
- A 'Big Questions' activity
- A multiple choice topic test
- Short answer or extended writing responses



on Resources

Interactivity

Ancient Roman timeline

Create a visual timeline of key events in ancient Rome.

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