

# The Radical, Rotten & Repulsive Romans

Were they the greatest empire of all time or the sickest people in memoriam?  
Perhaps they were both.

## *I. Founding of Rome - Born in Blood!*

The legend of Rome's beginning is tied to the fall of Troy. As Troy burned, a Trojan prince named Aeneas led the survivors to the peninsula of Italy where they joined up with the Latin people.

Hundreds of years later a Latin princess was forbidden to have children as a prophecy predicted that these children would overthrow her father. To assure she did not have children her father locked her away. However the Roman god of war – Mars – visited her and voila the princess gave birth to twin boys named Romulus and Remus.



Distressed the princesses' father took the twin boys and left them by the river Tiber to die but for a she-wolf who found the boys and raised them as her own little cubs.

Weeks later a shepherd shot the wolf and found the boys and raised them as his own. Thus Romulus and Remus survived and grew strong.

All grown up the two boys decided to build their own city near where the she-wolf adopted them. But the brothers like all brothers before and since couldn't share. They argued over who should rule the city. They asked the gods for assistance, to choose who should rule.

Standing on nearby hills a flock of twelve vultures flew over Romulus' head. This odd event led Romulus to claim that this was the sign that he should rule. Remus disagreed. The boys fought and Romulus killed Remus. In the blood of

his fallen brother, Romulus built a city and named it after himself calling it Rome.

## *II. Roman Government*

Learning from the Greeks, early Rome was a

**Republic**: form of government in which people chose their rulers.

### **Structure of Roman government**

Two **consuls**: rulers chosen every year. Both had to agree. Each had veto power over the other. **Veto**: “I forbid”

**Senate**: 300 men chosen for life. Daily administration of Rome.

**Tribunes**: officials who protected the rights of the poor (plebians).

## *III. Roman army*

We aren't covering the Romans because of their government, nor for their contributions to the arts and sciences. We are covering Rome because they build an empire. The Romans weren't more creative or ingenious than people before them but they had two great advantages over other civilizations. Two words define Roman success.

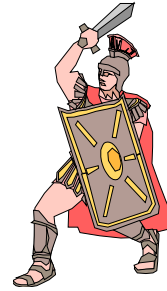
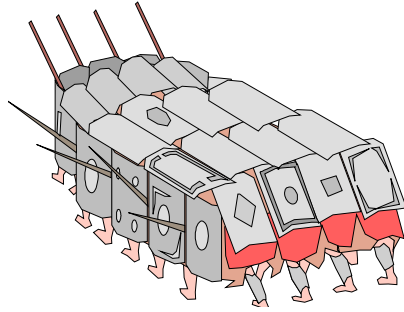
### **ORGANIZATION & DISCIPLINE**

The Romans did things better and more efficiently than anyone before them. This made them nearly unstoppable.

**Legions**: Roman armies in groups of 5,000 men.

- Drilled setting up and breaking down camp for speed

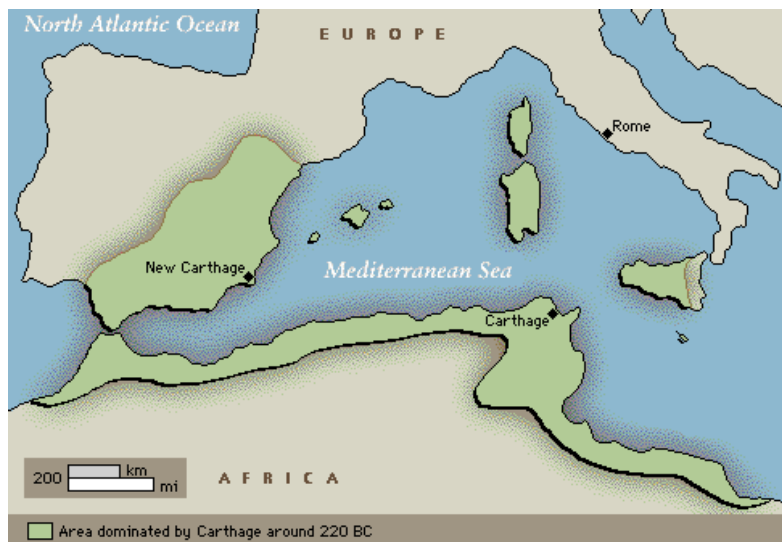
- March 20 miles/day – Roman calf becomes famous
- **Decimation**: if a legion ran in battle every 10<sup>th</sup> man would be killed.
- Napping on guard duty? – penalty execution
- Wore full armor armed with the **gladius** – short sword



## ***IV. The Punic Wars***

Using their skills and military the Romans controlled all of Italy by 275 B.C. It was at this point however that Rome was faced with a new threat across the Mediterranean.

**Carthage**: Phoenician city in North Africa. Great navy and wealthy empire.



Carthage controlled N. Africa and the islands of Sardinia and Corsica and the western half of Sicily. Carthage was moving on the eastern half of Sicily when

the Romans decided that this was too close to Italy for comfort. Thus the Punic Wars began.

**Punic Wars**: series of great wars between Carthage and Rome.

**First Punic War**: 264 -241 B.C. Twenty three years of war. This war was fought mostly at sea which favored the Carthaginians but the Romans adapted.

The Romans at first had disastrous losses at sea then using Roman ingenuity they invented the **corvus**: bridge which slams and hooks onto enemy ships so Roman troops can race across.

Using the corvus the Romans began winning naval battles. Carthage tired and spent sued for peace. The war ended in a DRAW.

**Second Punic War**: 218 – 201 B.C. Carthage regains its strength and wants vengeance against Rome. They have a great general to lead them.



**Hannibal**: brilliant Carthaginian general leads an army 1,000 miles over the Alps invades Italy with war elephants.

Starting from a base in Spain Hannibal invaded Italy from the north. The Romans did not expect an invasion from the north. To assure his invasion would be a surprise Hannibal took a difficult path through the mountains. He began with over 50,000 troops and entered Italy with only about 25,000 left. Many of his men froze, starved, fell from cliffs, or were crushed by boulders hurled by mountainous tribes not pleased at Hannibal's presence. Despite the disastrous crossing the Romans were surprised.

Two separate Roman armies moved north to face Hannibal and both were defeated by Hannibal at Trebbia and Lake Trasimene. The Romans unused to such defeats now gathered a massive army to face Hannibal.

**Battle of Cannae**: Roman army of 80,000 is annihilated by Hannibal's 40,000 troops.

The unthinkable had happened to the Romans. All of their proud armies had been destroyed and no army was left from stopping Hannibal from taking Rome. The Romans resorted to human sacrifice and tried to make criminals and prisoners into a new legion to defend the city walls from Hannibal.

However Hannibal didn't attack. He didn't have the siege equipment and weapons to get past Rome's high and mighty city walls. He also didn't have enough men to surround and starve the city into surrendering. At the same time Rome couldn't defeat him. If only Hannibal could take Rome the war would be over but he can't. For the next fifteen years Hannibal wanders Italy looting, burning and pillaging wherever he went terrorizing the Romans.

Finally after 15 years Rome raised a new army and their generals had been studying Hannibal's tactics and why earlier Roman armies had been destroyed by Hannibal. They take this army and sail for Carthage.

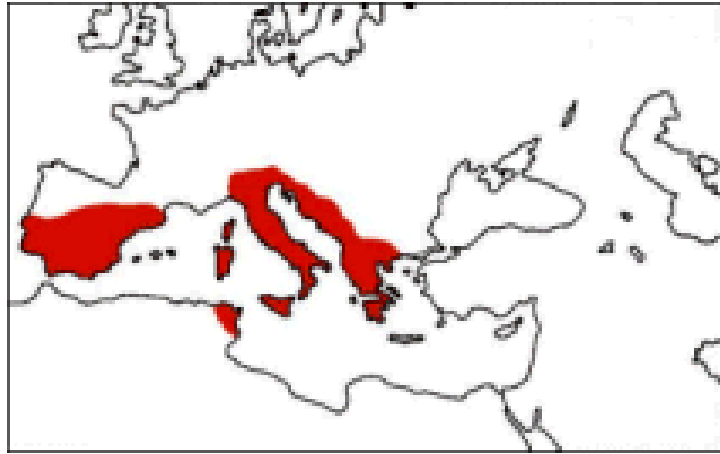
Hannibal catches a small ship and races back to take command of a Carthaginian army outside of Carthage.

**Battle of Zama**: Roman general Scipio Africanus defeats Hannibal thus ending the 2<sup>nd</sup> Punic War.

Carthage is allowed to keep its independence but its territories go to Rome. The Romans never would forget how close they had come to disaster however and thus "Carthage must be destroyed!"

**Third Punic War**: 149 – 146 B.C. Carthage was regaining its strength. The Romans invade, starve the city, dismantle and burn it to the ground. Not content the Romans then plow the fields and spread salt throughout the area to assure Carthage does not return. Carthaginian survivors are enslaved!

In the same year Carthage is destroyed, the Greek city-state of Corinth defies a Roman order and the legions march and conquer Greece. More slaves pour into Rome. Thus the once lonely city-state of Rome now has a growing Empire.



*Areas under Roman control 146 B.C.*

## ***V. End of the Republic – Birth of the Empire.***

Things couldn't be better for the Roman Empire right! Wrong! The growth led to problems, problems which threatened to destroy Rome.

Rome began to have immense problems with **unemployment!** Why? All of the slaves from Carthage and Greece were taking all the jobs throwing Roman citizens out of work. These poor, hungry mouths flocked to Rome threatening to topple the government and causing collapse.

The solution? The poor were recruited by the generals into the growing Roman legions. While easing the unemployment problem this caused another problem. With their growing armies generals were gaining more and more power in Rome. The Senate feared that one of them, if he became popular enough, could take over Rome and make himself dictator! The man the Senate most feared.



**Julius Caesar**: general gaining great power in Rome. The Senate fears him!



Caesar seems to be a threat to the Roman democracy. So loved is he by the people that he could take over. The Senate needs the people of Rome to forget Caesar so the Senate promotes him and makes him governor of Gaul which is modern day France. Only problem is the Romans haven't yet conquered Gaul. The Senate hopes

Caesar will fail in his conquest of Gaul or better yet dies trying!

The Gauls are fearsome warriors but are divided in numerous warring tribes. Some Gaulic tribes spike their hair, dye their skin blue and fight nude to terrify their opponents. The Gauls were also much taller than the average Roman of the day. But no matter Caesar begins his conquest of Gaul.

It takes ten years but Caesar successfully conquers Gaul. In every battle Caesar outnumbers the Gauls, however, Caesar constantly sends reports back to Rome claiming he is the one outnumbered. These exaggerated reports are read all throughout Rome and rather than becoming less popular Caesar is greater than ever! The Senate's plan has backfired.

The Senate orders Caesar to return without his army. They would probably kill him and Caesar knows this so he returns with his army to a hero's welcome. Caesar makes himself consul for life – in other words dictator of Rome and an angry Senate can do nothing to stop him.

Another rival general of Rome, Pompey, rebels against Caesar and Caesar must track him down in Egypt and dispatch him. While in Egypt Caesar makes Cleopatra ruler of Egypt and Rome effectively rules Egypt. It is upon returning from Egypt that Caesar utters his most famous statement.

**Veni, Vidi, Veci - “I came, I saw, I conquered!”**

Caesar seems unstoppable and is on top of the world. But remember the Senate of Rome is not happy that Caesar has destroyed the democracy and replaced it with a dictatorship.

**Ides of March**: March 15<sup>th</sup>, 44 B.C. Caesar is to make a speech before the Senate. Upon entering the doors are closed and a group of senators rise up and stab Caesar to death.

## ***VI. The Roman Empire and the Pax Romana***

After the death of Caesar, Rome did not return to a democracy. Instead rival generals fought to replace Caesar as master of Rome. The eventual winner was

**Octavian – Caesar Augustus:** Julius' adopted son. He changed his name to Caesar Augustus so people would associate him with Julius. He rules for 41 years and this begins Rome's golden age.

- From this point on all emperors no matter their name will be called Caesar. Caesar becomes a title like King or Emperor.
- Jesus of Nazareth is born during the Roman Empire.



**Pax Romana:** “Roman peace” 200 years of peace and prosperity in the Empire.

- Conquests of Britain, Turkey, & Mesopotamia
- Cities are built without walls for the first time
- Libraries, police and fire departments
- Roads, trade, wealth
- Sewage systems



## ***VII. Life in the Empire***

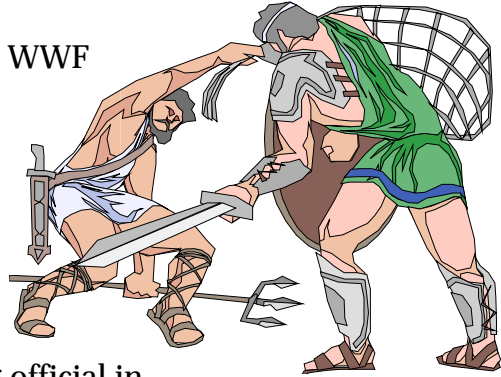
So the Romans have conquered all they care to conquer. Despite this Rome has continual problems with the poor and the unemployed. Rome's strategy was to keep these people happy and too entertained to notice their poor lot in life. Therefore the Roman Caesar's continually distributed free bread and free entertainment. Just imagine it like free cable TV and free fast food.

**Bath Houses:** Free or inexpensive social meeting places. Choice of hot, warm, cool, cold baths plus steam room. You could order snacks, watch a play or enjoy a board game while always keeping up on the latest gossip.

Bath houses not entertaining enough for you? Well how about

**Gladiatorial Games**: fights to the death between men, women, midgets, animals, etc.

- Gladiators were very much like WWF wrestlers of today. Many were slaves, but some were volunteers and even some senators and one crazed Caesar gave it a try.
- Thumbs up meant death for a gladiator. Thumbs down meant life. The highest ranking official in attendance had the final say on whether a combatant lived or died. If they were popular they often lived to fight another day.



Rome loved its gladiatorial matches so much that they built the

**Colosseum**: 50,000 seat sports stadium in Rome. Thousands of animals slaughtered a day here. One Caesar had it filled up with water for a naval battle.



## ***VII. Roman Empire and Early Christianity***

Christianity is born during the Roman Empire and it isn't long before the Roman Caesars take notice of this new religion. Christians are soon singled out for elimination for two reasons.

1. They refused to serve in the army.
2. They refused to worship Caesar as a god.

Because of these two reasons the Roman Empire did all it could to eradicate Christianity. Christians were thrown to the lions for entertainment and even burned alive. Curiously to Roman officials Christians preferred to die another way.

**Crucifixion:** Roman form of execution. A person is tied or nailed to the cross. Die of thirst, hunger or usually suffocation. Horrific way to die. Also the way the Romans killed Jesus of Nazareth.

Obviously Christianity survived and how it did we'll turn to later.

## ***VIII. Slave Revolt of Spartacus***

Rome was built on the backs of slaves. In fact 40% of the Italian population during the Empire were slaves. Why didn't they rebel? Well they did a number of times. Their most famous rebellion is that of Spartacus.

**Spartacus:** gladiator who led a slave rebellion over poor conditions. Defeated two Roman legions. His slave army terrorized Italy for three years. In the end he was defeated and 6,000 men were crucified along the Appian Way as a warning to other slaves.

**“I am Spartacus”**

## ***IX. The Fall of the Empire***

Well the Empire couldn't last forever although it lasted for an awfully long time. The Empire had serious, serious problems which led to its fall.

1. No rule of succession after a Caesar dies. Sometimes it was a son, sometimes a general. Who knows – led to civil war and the murder of emperors.

2. Roman legions abandon the borders to fight over who's the next Caesar.
3. Germanic tribes flooding in faster than could be absorbed.

These problems were pushed to a critical state when a barbaric horse people rode in from the Asia. They were led by

**Attila the Hun**: “Scourge of God” leader of the barbaric Huns from northern China.

- Rumors they were subhuman and a race of centaurs. They rode their horses so much they grew to be bowlegged.
- They deliberately deformed their children's skulls. Fattening their heads and scarring their cheeks.
- Used enemy skulls for drinking cups.
- Composite bows could pierce Roman armor at 100 yards.
- Marched on Rome but Pope Leo the Great talked Attila out of it. Instead Rome paid a huge ransom.
- Fortunately for Rome the Huns were big partiers. On Attila's birthday he had a little too much to drink and passed out. Well alcohol thins the blood and he got a severe nosebleed. Attila on his back drowned in his own blood and the threat of the Huns passed. Gee wonder why this story isn't on a beer commercial.



Despite Attila's death the damage had been done. The Empire was in chaos and the last Caesar was dethroned by invading Germanic tribes in **476 A.D.** This is given as the death of the Roman Empire. Now enters a dark time when learning, the arts and civilization are nonexistent in Europe for about 1,000 years or so but you'll learn about that next year in the Dark and Middle Ages.