booty* resulted in more public construction. New temples were built in the forum, and the shops that had once lined it were pushed out by basilicas*. The Campus Martius became crowded with temples that were built by rival aristocrats* trying to impress both the gods and the voters.

Most of the surviving architectural structures of ancient Rome were built by the emperors, beginning with Augustus. Augustus once boasted that he found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble. A new forum and the Temple of Apollo were among many other magnificent structures built by Augustus. After a great fire destroyed much of the city in A.D. 64, the emperor Nero undertook a massive five-year program to rebuild the city. Under later emperors, huge public baths, triumphal arches, new forums and palaces, and the Colosseum were added.

As the empire declined, so did construction in the city. Except for a few functional buildings on the outskirts of the city, little new construction was undertaken. Rome had become crowded with magnificent buildings and other structures that reflected a grander time in its history. (See also Government, Roman; Rome, History of.)

**THE ORIGINS OF ROME**

The traditional story of Rome's origins—as told by the Roman writers Livy, Vergil, and others—claims that the city was founded by the legendary figure Romulus in 753 B.C. Archaeological evidence, however, reveals that at least one village and probably more existed on the tops of the hills in and around the future city as early as about 1000 B.C. These villages remained small and isolated from one another until around 800 B.C., when they began to grow in size and develop trading contacts with one another as well as with the outside world.

Rome's location on an important river crossing connecting northern and southern Italy made it a crossroads for the movement of people and goods and ensured its future growth. With expansion, the Romans began to develop increasingly complex cultural and political ideas and institutions. These were inspired by contacts with the Etruscans—powerful neighbors in Etruria to the north—as well as with the Greeks, who had founded colonies to the south.

The early Romans inherited many of their social and civic structures from the Etruscans, including a city-state form of political organization that unified the villages of Rome by the 600s B.C. The Romans also borrowed an alphabet from the Etruscans (who probably got it from the Greeks), and...
many aspects of Roman art and religion were greatly influenced by them as well. During the reign of the last three kings of Rome—all of whom were Etruscan by birth—Rome grew from a village of crude huts to the dominant city-state of the Italian region known as Latium.

MONARCHY (753–510 B.C.)

Like the origins of Rome itself, the history of the Roman monarchy is clouded by legend. The earliest existing writings about this period in Roman history were written after 100 B.C.—some 600 to 700 years after the events they recorded. As a result, much of the information they contain may be unreliable.

According to the early sources, Rome was ruled by a series of seven kings, none of whom were native Romans: Romulus, Numa Pompilius, Tullius Hostilius, Ancus Marcius, Lucius Tarquinius Priscus, Servius Tullius, and Lucius Tarquinius Superbus. Modern historians do not know for certain whether this list of rulers is accurate or complete. Nevertheless, most scholars agree that some of the events from the period described by Roman writers no doubt actually took place. Accounts of early Roman conquests in the Tiber valley, for example, undoubtedly reflect an expansion of Roman territory that occurred before 600 B.C.

Political Organization. While dates and details about the reigns of Rome’s early kings are uncertain, many aspects of the Roman monarchy and other political institutions are more clearly understood. Archaeological evidence has been particularly helpful in revealing information about the role of early Roman kings.

The Roman kings were not just heads of state. They also served as the high priests of Rome, with responsibility for determining the will of the gods before making decisions or setting out on any course of action. In most ancient societies, both the kingship and the priesthood were hereditary roles, passed down from one generation of a family to the next. The Roman kings, however, seem to have been elected rulers chosen by the more prominent and powerful families of Roman society. From the beginning, the kings had to consult with the heads of these families, although they were not necessarily required to accept their advice.

The early Romans established two political institutions based on the relationship between the ruler and the people: the Roman Senate and the Comitia Curiata. According to tradition, the Senate was created by Romulus, who is supposed to have appointed the heads of 100 great families to serve as its members. These men—considered the patres (fathers) of the Roman state—became the original patricians, the political and social nobility of Rome. This story of the founding of the Senate is disputed by many scholars, who point out that some early senators came from nonnoble families. Whatever its true origin, the Senate became the most important institution of government after the kingship. The Comitia Curiata was a separate assembly of citizens organized into 30 groups known as curiae, which were areas or wards within the city. This assembly met only when summoned by the king to act on matters submitted by him, such as declarations of war.
The land hunger that affected poor Romans and caused much trouble throughout Rome's history was caused, in part, by Roman law. A law enacted in 218 B.C. prohibited senators from owning ships large enough to carry trade goods across the Mediterranean. As a result, wealthy senators invested in land instead. The law restricted landholdings to about 600 acres, but this limit was largely ignored. Senators accumulated vast estates, leaving little or no land available for small farmers, most of whom were forced into terrible poverty.

Both the Senate and the Comitia Curiata reflected the Roman idea that the power of the king, while supreme, was based on the will of the people. The king's imperium—the right to exercise the powers of state—derived from the people as represented by these assemblies. The imperium included not only the right to rule but also the power of life and death over Roman citizens and command of the armies—an important basis of the king's authority. Under the later kings, a dramatic extension of imperium coincided with an expansion of the Roman army. These kings became very powerful, but their great power contained within it the seeds of the monarchy's destruction.

ETRUSCAN KINGS AND THE FALL OF THE MONARCHY. The Roman army, which ultimately became the most formidable fighting force in the ancient world, remained a small and simple organization during the early years of the monarchy. Despite victories over neighboring peoples in the 600s B.C., the army was no match for the Etruscans or the Greeks, and the early Roman kings did not attempt to challenge them militarily.

Rome began to undergo many changes during the reigns of its last few Etruscan-born kings. Lucius Tarquinius Priscus (616–579 B.C.) began to reorganize the Roman army according to the standards of the time, which included adopting military formations and tactics developed by the Greeks. With an improved military, the Etruscan kings Servius Tullius (578–535 B.C.) and Lucius Tarquinius Superbus (535–510 B.C.) pursued an ambitious foreign policy and negotiated treaties with Carthage, the dominant power in the western Mediterranean at that time.

It was during the reign of the Etruscan kings that Rome evolved into a true city-state. They initiated construction of the first paved roads and public sewers in Rome. The Forum, once the location of Rome's main cemetery, became the city's public meeting place, and the first temples, palaces, and shrines were erected. The Etruscan kings, heavily influenced by contact with the Greeks, brought many elements of Greek culture to Rome, including a taste for Greek art and literature, which provided models for Roman sculptors, painters, potters, and writers.

However, the political mood changed in 510 B.C., when the Roman patricians rose up against the heavy-handed rule of their Etruscan king, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, and drove him from Rome. Determined to prevent the rise of another tyrant*, they abolished the monarchy and established a republican* form of government. Under this new government, supreme power was shared by two elected officials known as consuls. Unlike the Roman kings, who held their positions for life, the consuls served for only one year. Moreover, their power was more closely controlled by the Senate, the Comitia Curiata, and other popular assemblies. With the overthrow of the monarchy and the rise of the republic, the stage was set for Rome's emergence as a great world power.

THE EARLY REPUBLIC (510–264 B.C.)

For the next few centuries, Rome enjoyed a system of government based on popular sovereignty* and Roman laws. With the establishment of the
ROME, HISTORY OF

republic, power passed decisively into the hands of the patricians. Soon, however, the patricians faced a challenge to their authority from the plebeians, or the majority of Roman citizens who were not of the upper class. The struggle between these groups for control of government proved to be as significant in shaping Rome as the wars of conquest that extended Roman rule throughout the Mediterranean world.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION. The patricians who overthrew the monarchy wanted to prevent a concentration of power in the hands of one person. Yet they recognized the need for officials with power to carry out laws passed by the assemblies and to act as Rome's representatives in dealing with foreign powers. To resolve this dilemma, the Romans created a system of government that limited the time individuals could serve in office and that prescribed a sharing of power among officials of equal rank. In this way, no single person would have enough power to gain complete control over the government. The Romans did not reject the idea of one-man rule altogether, however. In times of crisis, one person could be elected to the position of dictator, which gave the individual power to rule alone for a period not longer than six months.

The first, and highest, public office created under the republic was the consulship. Two consuls, elected annually, had responsibility for carrying out all laws passed by the assemblies and for commanding the Roman army. It soon became clear that the consuls, by themselves, could not take care of all the responsibilities of governing. The Romans thus created other positions to relieve the consuls of some of their burdens. Praetors had authority over the judicial system, as well as the right to command armies. Aediles supervised public marketplaces and certain Roman games and had various police duties. Quaestors assisted the consuls in dealing with financial matters. Censors conducted a census every five years and also awarded public contracts.

The election of such public officials, or magistrates, was the responsibility of the assemblies. The assembly known as the Comitia Centuriata elected the higher magistrates, including the consuls and praetors. The Comitia Centuriata, which had represented the Roman army at an early stage of its existence, took its name from the word century, or "military unit." Another assembly, the Comitia Tributa, was named for its 35 tribes, which originally denoted place of residence. The Comitia Tributa elected the lower magistrates, such as plebeian aediles and quaestors, and passed most laws. Roman assemblies never worked by a one-man, one-vote system but rather by voting units (the curia, the century, or the tribe). The wealthy had more units than the poor. In the Comitia Centuriata, Romans were organized into five classes on the basis of wealth. The patricians and other wealthy classes had more votes than other groups, which enabled them to dominate the assembly.

The Roman Senate survived from the monarchy into the republic. Consisting of several hundred patricians, it advised the consuls and other magistrates on most domestic policies and actions. It also allocated financial resources and shaped foreign policy. Laws could only be passed by the assembly.
STRUGGLE FOR POWER. During the early years of the republic, the plebeians had very little say in government. Patricians controlled the Senate and the Comitia Centuriata, and they also held all government offices. Increasingly frustrated by this situation, the plebeians began demanding more power. In 494 B.C. they took matters into their own hands, forming an assembly called the Consilium Plebis and electing officials called tribunes to represent their interests. The plebeians took a solemn oath to protect their tribunes, and they threatened to kill anyone who harmed them. This protection gave the tribunes a great deal of power to pressure the patricians, and they claimed the right to forbid unjust actions on the part of patrician officials. Through their assembly and the tribunes, the plebeians fought for an equal voice in government.

Within 50 years, the plebeians had gained several victories in their struggle for political equality. One great success came in 450 B.C., when they forced the patricians to put Roman law in writing. The resulting code of laws, the Twelve Tables, made the law available to all and helped ensure that it would be applied equally to everyone regardless of wealth or class. In 449 B.C. the patricians granted the Consilium Plebis a limited right to pass resolutions, known as plebiscites, that were binding on all Romans.

Over the next 200 years, plebeians gained an ever-increasing number of political rights. By about 400 B.C. there were plebeian members in the Senate. In 367 B.C. plebeians became eligible for the consulship, and by 342 B.C. at least one consul was required by law to be a plebeian. A similar law was applied to the office of censor in 539 B.C. By 300 B.C. the major priesthoods were divided between patricians and plebeians. Plebiscites gained the force of law in 287 B.C., when a law was passed that made legislation in the Comitia Tributa valid without regard to ratification by the Senate. The Comitia Tributa was indeed the main lawmaking body of Rome, and the plebeians had won their struggle for power.

Plebeian successes did not change the highly upper-class nature of the Roman state, however. Many of the plebeians who entered the Senate, though not of noble birth, were very wealthy, and they readily formed political alliances with patricians. Wealthy plebeians gained access to high government positions, including the consulship. As a result, the wealthy and well connected—whether patrician or plebeian—still controlled power in Rome.

CONQUEST OF ITALY. While the Romans shaped their government and struggled for power within it, they were also engaged in a series of military conquests. By 272 B.C. Rome had conquered all of Italy and had established numerous colonies throughout the Italian peninsula.

After the fall of the Roman monarchy in 510 B.C., the Latin League, a union of other settlements in Latium, tried to take advantage of Rome's political instability. In 493 B.C. Rome signed an agreement with the Latin League, creating a military alliance to defend Latium against attack from neighboring hills people. By 450 B.C. these opponents had been defeated.

Rome now turned its attention to the nearby Etruscan city of Veii and struggled with it for control of the Tiber River crossing into Etruria. Veii finally fell to the Romans in 396 B.C. Rome annexed* its territory and emerged
as the dominant power in central Italy. Roman power, however, was soon tested by the Gauls, a group of Celts who invaded Italy from the north and sacked* Rome in 390 B.C. The Gallic invasion weakened Rome and damaged Roman prestige. The Romans gained revenge against the Gauls in 349 B.C., when they stopped a second invasion and drove the invaders out of Italy south of the Apennines. After this victory, Rome was ready to continue its expansion.

Over the next 70 years, the Romans brought all of Italy under their rule. In 338 B.C. Rome turned against and defeated its allies in the Latin League. It then turned south and came into conflict with the Samnites, a people who lived in the hills of the Campania region. This struggle proved to be a difficult one, and the Samnites handed the Romans a stunning defeat in 321 B.C. Finally, however, the Romans defeated the Samnites and took control of their territory. Throughout their conquest of Italy, the Romans made military alliances with a number of tribal peoples, which greatly enhanced their ability to wage war and contributed to their ultimate conquest of the whole peninsula.

By about 290 B.C., only the Greek colonial cities in the far southern part of Italy remained free of Roman control. In 280 B.C. the Greek city of Tarentum invited King Pyrrhus, ruler of the kingdom of Epirus in Greece, to lead the struggle against Rome. A famous and talented general with a trained professional army, Pyrrhus presented the Romans with a formidable opponent. Although he won a number of victories over the Romans, he was ultimately defeated in 275 B.C. Tarentum fell to the Romans three years later. Pyrrhus's defeat was a shock to the Mediterranean world, and it thrust the Romans, who were little known outside of Italy, into the spotlight as a new world power.

THE MIDDLE REPUBLIC (264–146 B.C.)

The victory over Pyrrhus changed the course of Roman history. In the next few years, Romans were able to gain control of the Greek cities of southern Italy and to draw them into the Italian confederation*. As the champion of her new allies and as the ruling power of the peninsula, Rome now had to deal directly with the great Hellenistic* kingdoms of the east and with the powerful Carthaginians in North Africa. The Romans began a transformation from a land power in Italy into an international power dominating the Mediterranean on land and sea. In the process, Roman culture was transformed as well.

CONQUEST OF THE MEDITERRANEAN. Victory over the Greeks in southern Italy brought Rome into conflict with Carthage, whose empire included the nearby islands of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. Between 264 B.C. and 146 B.C., the Romans and Carthaginians fought a series of three wars—known as the Punic Wars—over control of the western Mediterranean.

The First Punic War began in 264 B.C. over control of Sicily. Carthage had the initial advantage because of its strong navy and the inability of either side to win a decisive victory on land. To counter this advantage, Rome developed a navy of its own. For 20 years, the war raged on both
land and sea. Finally, in 241 B.C., the Romans destroyed the Carthaginian navy, and Carthage agreed to leave Sicily, which became Rome's first province. Within a few years, Rome had seized Sardinia and Corsica as well. At about the same time, the Romans once again fought and defeated the Gauls to the north of Italy (in the present-day region of the Po Valley) and seized a region there known as Cisalpine Gaul.

A fragile peace existed between Rome and Carthage until 218 B.C., when the Carthaginian general Hannibal attacked the city of Saguntum, a Roman ally in Spain. The Second Punic War had begun. Following his victory at Saguntum, Hannibal and his army crossed the Alps and invaded Italy, inflicting several crushing defeats on the Romans. Philip V, king of Macedonia, allied himself with Hannibal, thinking that he could take advantage of Rome's seeming weakness. Rome, fighting on two fronts at once, had its resources stretched to the limit and was in danger of overwhelming defeat.

Fortunately for Rome, most of its Italian allies remained loyal. With their help, the Romans eventually forced Hannibal to withdraw from Italy. The Romans then followed the Carthaginians to their homeland in North Africa. They defeated Hannibal at the Battle of Zama in 202 B.C. and forced the surrender of Carthage a year later. With this victory, Rome gained control of most of Carthage's North African territory as well as of Spain.
Rome next turned east and renewed its war against Macedonia. The Romans defeated the Macedonians in 197 B.C. and freed Greek city-states under their rule. In 192 B.C. Antiochus III, the Seleucid ruler of Syria, invaded Greece hoping to take advantage of the weakness of the Greek city-states. The Romans returned to the region and defeated Antiochus. Two more wars with Macedonia led to its incorporation as a Roman province in 148 B.C., and by 146 B.C. Rome had conquered all of Greece. That same year Rome decisively defeated Carthage in the Third Punic War. The Romans destroyed the city of Carthage and established the Roman province of Africa. In the following years, most of the remainder of the Mediterranean region fell under Roman control.

**IMPACT OF ROMAN CONQUEST.** The growth of the empire produced several benefits for Rome. Landless Roman peasants began colonizing conquered territories, thus reducing pressures to redistribute land in Italy. The conquest of Greece brought Greek culture to the Romans, who readily adopted various elements of Greek civilization. Roman art, architecture, and literature began to flourish, influenced strongly by the Greeks. Military successes strengthened the power of Rome's ruling elite, and the conquest of new lands dramatically increased the wealth of the Roman upper classes.

Not all of the consequences of expansion were positive, however. The Roman elite used its new wealth to create large estates in Italy, which reduced the amount of land available to Roman peasants. Moreover, people captured in war became slaves on these estates, replacing many peasant farmers. Long military service in distant countries made it difficult for peasants who still held farms in Italy to maintain them. As a result, many Roman peasants were forced off the land and into poverty. Because only property owners could serve in the army, landless peasants were unavailable for military service, and the army suffered a shortage of manpower. These conditions led to growing discontent among Rome's lower classes and threatened the stability of the Roman state.

**THE LATE REPUBLIC (146–27 B.C.)**

As foreign conquests brought increasing wealth and power to Rome, growing unrest among poorer Romans led to one crisis after another. These crises threatened the very foundation of the republic—the support of government by all Romans. The rising tide of discontent initially found a political voice in two Roman statesmen, the Gracchus brothers. They tried to address some of the concerns of Roman peasants, but were killed for their efforts.

**THE GRACCHI.** In 133 B.C. a young plebeian tribune named Tiberius Gracchus proposed dividing public land in Italy among landless citizens. This would mean taking land from nobles, who held control over most public land. Although popular with the people, the proposal was opposed vigorously by the nobility. Nevertheless, Tiberius Gracchus forced it through the Tribal Assembly, the body representing all Roman citizens.
Tiberius then appointed a commission to carry out the reform and tried to fund it with foreign revenues, which by tradition (although not by law) the Senate controlled. The Senate was furious at this threat to its customary control of finances and foreign policy. A group of conservative senators—called the Optimates—seized Tiberius and had him killed along with 300 of his supporters.

Ten years later, in 123 B.C., Tiberius's brother Gaius Sempronius Gracchus proposed more sweeping reforms, including strengthening the land law and distributing grain to citizens at affordable, fixed prices. His most controversial proposal was to extend Roman citizenship to all Latins and increase the political status of Rome's Italian allies. The Optimates in the Senate strongly opposed this plan. They blocked it by helping to elect a tribune, Marcus Livius Drusus, who won popular support by promising even greater benefits but denying citizenship to Rome's allies.

The issues and passions stirred up by the Gracchi led to rioting and martial law in 121 B.C. During one of these riots, 250 of Gaius's followers were killed and Gaius himself died. The Gracchi, however, had laid the basis for a group of Senate leaders—the Populares—who acted on behalf of the people in attacking the privileges of the upper classes. The political violence unleashed during the period of the Gracchi would continue to plague the republic.

**Marius and Sulla.** The Senate's inept handling of a war in North Africa led to the rise of a powerful figure named Gaius Marius. Elected consul in 107 B.C., Marius took command of the army and quickly won the war. Upon returning to Rome in 105 B.C., he was reelected consul, even though Romans had traditionally required individuals to wait ten years before reelection to the consulship. After defeating tribes of Germans who threatened to invade Italy, Marius was elected consul every year until 100 B.C.

Marius's military successes were due largely to his reorganization of the army, his introduction of new military tactics, and the loyalty of his troops. He secured their loyalty by recruiting landless volunteers, paying them well, sharing booty* from campaigns, and at discharge giving them grants of land for their service. Such policies led to the creation of an army more loyal to its general than to the state. From this time forward, the Roman army became a political tool to be used by individuals seeking power.

A champion of the people and leader of the Populares, Marius represented a formidable threat to the Optimates, who opposed any type of popular reform. Yet Marius showed little talent for politics. When riots broke out in Rome in 100 B.C., he was forced to arrest many of his own supporters, who were then killed by a mob. This incident temporarily pushed Marius off the political stage, and Rome enjoyed a period of relative calm.

The issue of expanded citizenship arose again in 91 B.C. Resistance to the idea by the Optimates led to the so-called Social War (90–88 B.C.) between Rome and its Italian allies (the Latin word socii means "allies"). Rome won this struggle, largely due to the military efforts of General Lucius Cornelius Sulla, but only by agreeing in the end to extend citizenship to the rebels.

Elected consul in 88 B.C., Sulla was chosen by the Senate to lead an army against the king Mithradates IV of Pontus, who had invaded the Roman
province of Asia Minor. Marius, however, persuaded the plebeian assembly to give him that command instead. Sulla responded by seizing control of Rome with his army, forcing Marius to flee to Africa.

Sulla then went east to fight Mithrades. While he was gone, Marius and his ally Lucius Cornelius Cinna returned and captured Rome. Marius died in 86 B.C., early in his seventh consulship, but Cinna continued to serve as consul. When Sulla returned to Rome in 83 B.C., a civil war broke out. After much bloody fighting, Sulla emerged victorious and became dictator. The new dictator eliminated many of his opponents and took their property. He also changed Roman laws, greatly weakening the powers of the tribunes and giving the Senate almost total control over lawmaking. Sulla resigned as dictator in 79 B.C. and died the following year. His actions had done little to solve Rome’s political problems, and this failure ensured further turmoil for the republic.

The First Triumvirate. New turmoil in the 70s B.C. brought two popular generals to power—Marcus Licinius Crassus and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, also known as Pompey the Great. Pompey and Crassus were elected consuls in 70 B.C. despite the opposition of theOptimates. Once in office, they restored power to the tribunes and limited the Senate’s authority.

Pompey’s popularity increased as a result of military victories over Mediterranean pirates in 67 B.C. and the final defeat of Mithrades. In the meantime, Crassus gained a reputation for his political activities in Rome, including his support of a young patrician named Gaius Julius Caesar.

When Pompey returned to Rome from the east in 62 B.C., he encountered opposition from Senate Optimates over his proposal to give land grants to his troops. Crassus and Caesar also found themselves at odds with the Optimates, who mistrusted the growing power of these men. A showdown seemed inevitable.

In 60 B.C. Caesar approached Pompey and Crassus and invited them to join forces with him to dominate the government. Pompey and Crassus agreed, and the three men formed a powerful political alliance that later became known as the First Triumvirate, an informal agreement between three powerful dynasties*. Caesar now passed land grants for Pompey’s soldiers, and he arranged contracts that allowed Crassus and his friends to collect taxes in the provinces. All of this was done by ignoring the Senate and appealing directly to the people. He gave himself a military command that included the region of Gaul (northern Italy and modern France). In a brilliant military campaign, Caesar conquered all of Gaul between 58 B.C. and 50 B.C. He then prepared for a triumphal return to Rome.

Meanwhile, Pompey and Crassus found cooperation difficult. They never liked each other and served uneasily together as consuls. In 53 B.C. Crassus led a military campaign against the Parthian empire in Asia, but he suffered a humiliating defeat and was killed in battle. Back in Rome, the Optimates persuaded Pompey to abandon his alliance with Caesar, whom they suspected of plotting to seize power. In January of 49 B.C., Pompey accepted responsibility for defending Rome against a possible attack by Caesar’s army. The First Triumvirate had dissolved, and the stage was set for civil war.

* dynasty succession of rulers from the same family or group
CIVIL WAR AND CAESAR'S DICTATORSHIP. On January 11, 49 B.C., Caesar and his army crossed the Rubicon, the river that marked the northern border of Italy, and then quickly seized Rome. Pompey withdrew his forces from Italy and moved eastward. Civil war now raged as Caesar and Pompey met in a series of battles, culminating in the defeat of Pompey at Pharsalus in Greece. After Pompey's death in Egypt in 48 B.C., Caesar continued fighting his supporters.

Arriving in Egypt shortly after Pompey's death, Caesar became involved in a dangerous civil war there. During this time, he established Cleopatra as Egypt's queen. After putting down a rebellion in Asia Minor and ending a mutiny in his own army, Caesar led his troops to Africa to continue the fight against his opponents. Victories in Africa, and later in Spain, destroyed all opposition. Caesar then returned to Rome and became consul and dictator.

During his brief reign as dictator, Caesar accomplished a number of reforms. He ordered a revision of the Roman Calendar, which became the basis of the one commonly used today. He expanded the size of the Senate, promoting many men from the nonnoble equestrian order*, and increased the number of magistrates. To help the landless, he planned new colonies for settlement, required large landowners to use more peasant workers instead of slaves, and reduced debts. Generous in his treatment of defeated opponents, he placed many of them in high public offices. Caesar's policies and dictatorial rule helped restore peace and order after the civil war, but they also led to his downfall. On March 15, 44 B.C., a group of senators led by Marcus Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus assassinated Julius Caesar because they believed he had destroyed the republic and intended to become king.

THE SECOND TRIO MVIRATE. With Caesar's death, a new struggle for control erupted. Caesar had named as his heir his grandnephew Gaius Octavius, also known as Octavian. One of Caesar's friends, Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony), hoping to advance his own political interests, refused to turn over Caesar's money to Octavian. This action offended Octavian, who joined forces with a group of senators led by Cicero who wished to destroy Antony.

The combined forces of Octavian and the Senate defeated Antony in 43 B.C. Octavian now joined forces with Antony who, despite his defeat, still had a formidable army. Together with Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, another friend of Caesar's, Octavian and Antony took control of Rome in 43 B.C. The three men formed the Second Triumvirate, which was given official approval, and began to reorganize the state.

Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus had many of their opponents killed, including Cicero, who was beheaded. They then avenged Caesar's death by defeating Brutus and Cassius at the Battle of Phillipi in Greece in 42 B.C. Like the First Triumvirate, they found cooperation difficult. Octavian and Antony, in particular, never became close. To avoid conflict, the men focused their attentions on different activities. Antony concentrated on an invasion of Parthia in the east, while Octavian formed a navy and seized Sicily, which was under the control of the sons of Pompey. These military adventures kept the triumvirate together for a time. Relations soon became strained,
however. In 36 B.C., Octavian broke with Lepidus, who had joined forces against him with Sextus Pompeius, the son of Pompey the Great. Thereafter, power was divided uneasily between only Octavian and Antony.

While in Egypt preparing for his invasion of Parthia, Antony resumed an earlier relationship with Cleopatra. Octavian used this relationship to stir up anger against Antony, claiming that Antony planned to seize power and subject Rome to the rule of an Egyptian queen. Octavian went to war against Antony and defeated him at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. Antony and Cleopatra escaped but had to surrender their forces. The two committed suicide a year later, and Octavian became undisputed ruler of Rome.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE (31 B.C.–A.D. 312)

The rise of Octavian marked the end of the Roman Republic. Octavian claimed to rule according to republican principles. In reality, however, he held almost absolute power over the Roman state. For the next several hundred years, Rome was ruled by a succession of emperors, some good and some bad, and the Roman Empire became the greatest power in the Western world.

THE REIGN OF AUGUSTUS. Octavian realized that he needed the support of the Senate and the people in order to avoid Caesar's fate. In January of 27 B.C., he announced that he would give up power and turn the government back to the Senate and the people. But this was only part of a plan to make it appear as if he had no intention of establishing a monarchy or dictatorship.

The Senate, led by Octavian's supporters, protested that Rome could not survive without him. With a show of reluctance, Octavian agreed to serve as consul and governor of the provinces of Spain, Gaul, Syria, and Egypt. This also left Octavian in command of the army because most troops were based in those provinces. For his apparent selflessness in declining the role of dictator, the Senate granted him the name Augustus, which means "revered." This is the name by which he has become known to history.

Augustus's authority was complex and far-reaching. He exercised control over every important aspect of government, from declaring war to reorganizing the Senate. To maintain the idea that he was not an absolute ruler, Augustus appointed others to help him run the state. He also preferred to call himself princeps (first citizen) to suggest that he was not above the law, and to claim he was primus inter pares (first among equals).

The Senate granted Augustus various titles and powers, which gradually increased his authority. In 23 B.C., he was granted imperium maius, a power that enabled him to exercise his power over all the provinces of the empire, including those under the Senate's control. He also was given the power of a tribune for life and given authority to oversee debate in the Senate. Although Augustus was clearly the undisputed head of state, his efforts to champion ancient Roman traditions and make his reign seem based on republican principles made his rule acceptable to the Senate and the people.

After years of civil war and unrest, Augustus was concerned primarily with bringing order and stability to Rome. He worked to restore traditional
values that had eroded in the late republic, initiating policies that strengthened religion and the family. He filled vacancies in the priesthood and issued laws that encouraged childbirth and punished adultery. To fight government inefficiency, he established a bureaucracy* that allowed provinces to handle local affairs without constant interference by Rome. He also reformed the Roman system of tax collection, which helped increase revenues.

Augustus brought the army under state control and made it more professional by establishing fixed terms of service and providing regular pay, bonuses, and pensions for soldiers. These changes made the army less dependent upon its generals—and thus less liable to support them in rebellions against the state.

With his reorganized army, Augustus added enormous amounts of territory to the empire. He also signed a treaty with the Parthians that brought peace to the easternmost reaches of the empire for the first time in many years. Colonization accelerated rapidly as thousands of landless Roman peasants relocated to the newly conquered territories. Colonization, along with regular distribution of free grain to the inhabitants of Rome, did much to reduce the suffering and grievances of the poor. These and other policies helped create an unprecedented period of stability and prosperity throughout the Roman world, which became known as the Pax Romana, or “Roman peace.”

By almost every measure, Augustus’s reign was an enormous success. As Augustus grew older, however, the question of succession* became urgent and complicated. Augustus had no sons of his own, and his initial choices as successors all died prematurely. The problem was that, in name, Rome was not a monarchy. Therefore, there was no law or set procedure in selecting a successor. It did not follow that a son or even a member of the family should or would succeed. In A.D. 4 he settled on his serious, hard-working, but unpopular stepson Tiberius. Upon Augustus’s death in A.D. 14, Tiberius took the throne with little turmoil. However, problems of succession would trouble him as well as the emperors who followed him.

THE JULIO-CLAUDIANS AND THE FLAVIANS. For the next several decades, Rome was ruled by two dynasties of emperors: the Julio-Claudians and the Flavians. Tiberius, the second in the Julio-Claudian line after Augustus, was an able administrator. Careful with finances, he produced a large surplus in the treasury and maintained the stability created under Augustus.

Tiberius, however, could also be stubborn, cruel, and indifferent to public sentiment. These qualities ruined his reputation among the Roman people. He also was plagued by the issue of succession. Tiberius’s chosen heir, his nephew Germanicus, died mysteriously in A.D. 19. Lucius Sejanus, the head of the Praetorian Guard (the emperor’s personal bodyguards), saw this as a chance to control the throne after Tiberius was gone. Sejanus became guardian of Tiberius’s grandnephew Caligula and ruthlessly eliminated anyone who stood between Caligula and the throne.

Weary of court intrigues and political rivalries, Tiberius retired to the island of Capri in A.D. 26, leaving Sejanus as his representative in Rome. Sejanus’s influence in Rome steadily increased until Tiberius finally realized just how devious the man had been. In A.D. 31 Tiberius ordered the
execution of Sejanus and had many senators who had collaborated with him killed. A reign of violence and terror marked the last years of Tiberius's reign, and the Roman people rejoiced when he died in A.D. 37.

Tiberius's successor, Caligula, raised the expectations of Romans by putting on lavish public games and entertainments. However, his dark side, and possible insanity, soon surfaced in terrible cruelty. Caligula delighted in humiliating and intimidating senators and other powerful Romans, and he insisted on being worshiped as a god. He was assassinated in A.D. 41.

Upon Caligula's death, the Praetorian Guard proclaimed his uncle Claudius emperor. Crippled from birth, Claudius was considered a fool at the time. Modern historians, however, regard him as a capable ruler who expanded the bureaucracy, extended citizenship to some people in the provinces, and conquered much of Britain. Yet he was manipulated by his wives, and his second wife, Agrippina, is suspected of plotting his death by poisoning in A.D. 54 and arranging the succession of Nero, her son by a previous marriage.

Nero became emperor at age 17, so Rome was ruled by his advisers, including the philosopher Seneca, for several years. Nero assumed full control of the empire in A.D. 62, but he was more interested in poetry, plays, dancing, and chariot racing than in ruling. Because of his lack of leadership, discontent with his rule steadily grew. In A.D. 68 the army finally rebelled, and Nero committed suicide in panic at the rebellion.

The last of the Julio-Claudian emperors, Nero left no heir. Upon his death, a civil war erupted as armies in various provinces sought to put their own candidates on the throne. Within the course of one year, four different emperors held power. Before the year was over, Vespasian, the governor of Judaea, gained the support of Roman armies in the east and crushed his rivals. The Senate proclaimed him emperor, and Vespasian became the first ruler of the Flavian dynasty, the first true hereditary dynasty of Rome.

Vespasian quickly showed his abilities as an administrator, and he became one of Rome's best emperors. During his successful ten-year reign, he restored Rome's finances, strengthened its frontiers, and started a public building program that included construction of the Colosseum. Vespasian died a natural death in A.D. 79 and was succeeded by his son Titus.

The short but popular reign of Titus was marred by several natural disasters, including the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. Titus died mysteriously in A.D. 81, and his younger brother Domitian became emperor. Domitian proved to be a tyrant and was hated by the Roman people. Although he worked hard and made many good decisions, he tolerated no opposition and dealt harshly with his critics. Domitian was murdered in A.D. 96 by a group of conspirators that included members of the Praetorian Guard and his wife. Domitian's killers chose the elderly senator Nerva to succeed him as emperor.

The Five Good Emperors. A series of five excellent leaders—the so-called Five Good Emperors—ruled Rome between A.D. 96 and A.D. 180. Nerva reigned for only 16 months before being succeeded by his adopted son Trajan, who became one of the most popular of all the emperors. Trajan's aggressive foreign policy led to the conquest of Dacia and the defeat of the Parthians. At home, he reduced taxes, sponsored a massive public
building program, and showed great respect for the Senate, which proclaimed him *optimus maximus* (best and greatest) in A.D. 114. While returning from the east in A.D. 117, Trajan suffered a fatal stroke. His cousin and designated heir, *Hadrian*, assumed power.

Hadrian felt that Trajan’s conquests had overextended the empire, so he pulled back from territory won in the east. He developed a policy of strengthening the frontiers of the empire rather than expanding them. Prosperity continued under Hadrian, who also reduced taxes and encouraged public works projects. One of Rome’s hardest-working emperors, Hadrian spent many years traveling from province to province and dealing with local problems. Near the end of his life, he suffered from serious illness and became concerned about the succession when his chosen heir died unexpectedly. Before his death, he adopted the respected senator Antoninus Pius as his heir.

When Hadrian died in A.D. 138, the Senate looked forward to rule by one of its own members. Antoninus Pius had a long, peaceful, and prosperous reign. He ruled with great concern for the welfare of the people and even refused to travel because he did not want to be a burden on the places he might visit. Antoninus had adopted his nephew Marcus *Aurelius* as heir, according to the wishes of Hadrian. Thus, even the issue of succession was not a problem.

When Marcus Aurelius became emperor in A.D. 161, ominous signs of trouble began to arise. Problems in Rome’s eastern provinces and with the Germans along the Danube River rapidly became crises, and the emperor spent much of his time fighting wars. A thoughtful and energetic ruler, Marcus put down most of the uprisings he faced. But his son and successor, Commodus, was the first of many bad or mediocre emperors who presided over Rome’s gradual decline.

**Decline of the Empire.** Commodus was one of Rome’s worst rulers, and much of the work of the Five Good Emperors was undone during his reign. A cruel tyrant and a spendthrift, Commodus showed more interest in gladiatorial games than in government. He neglected the frontier defenses and showed little respect for the people, the Senate, or the armies. He was finally strangled to death by a wrestling companion in A.D. 192.

After the death of Commodus, civil war broke out, and the empire was ruled by a rapid succession of emperors. Out of this chaos a new, strong leader emerged—an army commander from Africa named *Septimius Severus*, who became emperor in A.D. 193. Under Severus and his successors—the so-called Severans—the military grew in importance while the prestige of the Senate declined. The influence of the provinces also increased dramatically, and many of the Severan emperors were born in the provinces. The emperor Caracalla, Septimius Severus’s son and successor, increased provincial power by extending Roman citizenship to virtually all free men in the empire. Despite the increased importance of the military and the provinces, incompetence in foreign affairs under the Severans weakened the empire and left it vulnerable to the growing threat of attack by *barbarians*.

The last Severan ruler was murdered in A.D. 235, beginning a 50-year period of instability during which more than 20 different emperors reigned. Most rose quickly, ruled briefly, and died violently. Rome nearly
collapsed during this period. The Persians attacked from the east, barbarians invaded along the northern frontiers, and several eastern provinces broke away from the empire. Problems with coinage weakened the economy, and plague* swept through parts of the empire, killing thousands.

While Rome’s political and economic fortunes declined, its spiritual life experienced a rebirth as people looked to ancient religious traditions and virtues to help solve problems. At the same time, however, efforts were made to destroy Christianity, which many people believed posed a threat to the state. Christianity survived, but the attacks became stronger and more widespread than ever before.

DIOCLETIAN. In A.D. 284 Diocletian, a prominent military figure, seized power and became emperor. Unlike the many weak rulers who preceded him, Diocletian proved to be a capable administrator and reformer. His policies helped restore much of the stability and power that Rome had lost over the years.

To make ruling the empire easier, Diocletian appointed a co-emperor in A.D. 285 and later chose two assistants to help the emperors with their tasks. His government is sometimes called the tetrarchy (rule of four), but Diocletian always remained the dominant figure. This was an attempt to solve the problem of succession and control of the armies because the four rulers were ranked according to seniority and power. Diocletian divided the empire into four parts, assigning one to each tetrarch. In this way, a ruler would always be close to the scene of any trouble. Diocletian also doubled the number of provinces while reducing their size, thus making them easier to rule and less likely to threaten revolt or for a particular governor to seize power. He increased the bureaucracy in the provinces, giving more authority to local officials. Italy lost its favored status and became just another province. Meanwhile, the Senate lost almost all of its powers, and Diocletian personally determined who became a senator. Under Diocletian, the emperor was no longer princeps (first citizen) but had become dominus (lord and master), and Rome was no longer called a Principate but a Dominate.

Diocletian did much to restore the empire, but not all his policies were successful or constructive. An attempt to strengthen Roman currency failed, as did efforts to establish fixed wages and prices of goods. As a result, the cost of goods rose steadily, causing hardship for many people. Diocletian reorganized the tax system and introduced an annual budget, but these reforms had little impact. He tried to eliminate Christianity through vicious persecution of Christians, but this effort failed.

In A.D. 305, at the height of his reign, Diocletian suddenly gave up the throne and forced his co-rulers to do the same. He then appointed new rulers to succeed them based on merit. He hoped this would end Rome’s recurring problems with succession, but he was disappointed. Within two years, Rome again plunged into civil war. In A.D. 312 Constantine, a son of one of Diocletian’s co-tetrarchs, gained control of the western portion of the empire. Valerius Licinius took over in the eastern part of the empire the next year. The rise of Constantine, a convert to Christianity, marked a turning point in the history of Rome and the Christian church.
THE CHRISTIAN ERA (A.D. 312-476)

From the time of Constantine forward, the history of Rome reflected two main trends: the increasing importance of Christianity and the growing division of the empire into eastern and western halves. The western half of the empire began a steady, irreversible decline, and the balance of power and wealth shifted to the east. The Western Roman Empire fell in A.D. 476, but the eastern empire continued for another thousand years as the Byzantine Empire.

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT. In A.D. 313 the co-emperors Constantine and Licinius issued the Edict of Milan, a law that recognized Christianity as a legal religion and ended the persecution of Christians. Constantine overthrew Licinius in A.D. 324, united the two halves of the empire, and recognized Christianity as a legal religion of the empire.

Constantine built a new Christian capital for the empire at Constantinople, located in the east at the site of the ancient Greek city of Byzantium. Near there, at the city of Nicaea, in A.D. 325 he assembled the first religious council of the Christian church. This council rejected Christian heresy* and adopted an official church doctrine called the Nicene Creed. Many Romans began converting to Christianity at this time.

Constantine’s economic policies proved to be quite successful. He issued a new gold coin, the solidus, that helped stabilize the currency of the empire. He made tax collection more regular and controlled labor shortages in certain industries by encouraging sons to join their fathers’ occupations. Constantine also improved the military. He made the armies more flexible by adding cavalry and other mobile units, which could respond quickly to trouble spots on the frontiers. He also increased the size of the armies, in part by recruiting barbarian mercenaries* and requiring the sons of veterans to serve. By the time of his death in A.D. 337, these and other achievements had earned Constantine the title “the Great.” The same could not be said of the emperors who followed him.

DIVISION AND DECLINE OF THE WEST. After Constantine’s death, the army insisted that his sons take over as co-rulers. Constans I, Constantine II, and Constantius soon fought among themselves, however, and by A.D. 340 the empire was once again divided. Constantius eventually gained control of the entire empire and ruled alone until his death in A.D. 361.

The empire next passed into the hands of Constantius’s cousin Julianus, known as Julian the Apostate because he was raised as a Christian but returned to paganism*. Julian proclaimed toleration for all religions, but he took away some of the privileges Christians had enjoyed. An able ruler, Julian reduced taxes and streamlined the government. His reign was cut short, however, when he was killed during an invasion of Persia in A.D. 363. His successor, Jovian, returned to a pro-Christian policy before dying a few months into his reign.

After the death of Jovian, the empire was again split into two halves—Valentinian I ruled as emperor of the west and his brother Valens was ruler of the east. Frontier problems dominated their reigns. Valentinian struggled
against barbarian invasions in the west, while Valens held the east against the Persians. In A.D. 373 Valens allowed the Visigoths to settle in the province of Thrace in order to escape the Huns. However, the Visigoths soon rebelled against Roman rule. They handed the Romans one of their greatest defeats at the Battle of Hadrianopolis in A.D. 378. Valens was killed in the fighting.

Theodosius I replaced Valens as emperor of the east in A.D. 379. He restored peace to the region by allowing the Visigoths to live under their own kings and laws. He united the eastern and western empires shortly before his death in A.D. 395. But military difficulties continued, and Theodosius was the last emperor to rule effectively over the entire empire.

Upon Theodosius's death, the empire was divided between his two sons. From this point on, the western empire began a steady decline. Two emperors—Theodosius's son Honorius and Valentinian III—ruled the west for nearly 60 years, with only a brief period of unrest between their reigns. Although both were capable rulers, they could not stop the repeated barbarian invasions that threatened the region. The eastern emperors, who cared little for the fate of their western counterparts, actually supported barbarian actions in the west in order to reduce the threat to their own region.

In A.D. 410 the Visigoths sacked Rome, the first time in 800 years that the city had fallen to an enemy. Only a few years before, the emperor Honorius had moved the western capital to the city of Ravenna in northern Italy. From Rome, the Visigoths marched to the provinces of Gaul and Spain and founded strong kingdoms there. Another barbarian group, the Vandals, also established a kingdom in Spain. In A.D. 429 the Vandals attacked the Roman provinces in North Africa and eventually seized the city of Carthage. From there, in A.D. 455 they crossed the Mediterranean, invaded Italy, and occupied Rome. During this same period, various barbarian tribes in the north invaded and seized the Roman province of Britain.

Virtually all of the western empire was now overrun by barbarian tribes. The Romans managed one major victory in A.D. 451, rallying support from some of the barbarian kingdoms to defeat their common enemy, Attila the Hun. But it was too late to save the western empire. During the next 25 years, a rapid succession of weak emperors, puppets of the barbarians, ruled the west. Odoacer, a leader of the Ostrogoths, forced the emperor Romulus Augustulus to give up the throne in A.D. 476, and the Roman Empire in the west ceased to exist.

The Eastern Empire. With the founding of Constantinople in the early 300s, the center of the Roman world had begun to shift to the east. While the western empire experienced political turmoil and the devastation of barbarian invasion, the eastern empire increasingly prospered as a separate empire. Eastern cities such as Constantinople, Antioch, and Ephesus grew dramatically and became important religious and cultural centers. Antioch also served as the headquarters for the Roman military in the east.

The eastern empire prospered for various reasons, including the absence of barbarian invasions, increases in agricultural production, and an economy centered on cities and towns rather than rural estates. The eastern empire also had a strong bureaucracy that helped the government function effectively long after the west had fallen into anarchy*.
As late as A.D. 527, the eastern emperor Justinian I attempted to regain control over portions of the western empire, but his attempt was short-lived. Eventually, the portion of the empire that had survived in the east became known as the Byzantine Empire. However, up until the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in A.D. 1453, the Byzantines continued to refer to themselves as hoi Rhomaioi (the Romans).

The Aftermath of Empire. Some historians have viewed the fall of Rome as a catastrophe that led to a long period of political chaos and cultural decline in Europe. Others, however, have argued that the Roman Empire had become stagnant and that its fall allowed a new, more dynamic civilization to emerge gradually in the west.

The fall of Rome did not mean the end of Roman influence in many aspects of European life. The Latin language and alphabet of the Romans survived, and several modern European languages developed from Latin. Roman law and administrative practices survived as well and influenced later European governments. Roman Christianity helped keep certain ancient traditions alive and spread them throughout Europe. During the Renaissance*, Europeans looked to both ancient Greece and Rome for inspiration. Though the Roman Empire ceased to exist, its traditions and heritage thus had a great impact on the European civilizations that followed. (See also Armies, Roman; Cities, Roman; Citizenship; Civil Wars, Roman; Class Structure, Roman; Colonies, Roman; Economy, Roman; Gallic Wars; Government, Roman; Labor; Land: Ownership, Reform, and Use; Law, Roman; Migrations, Late Roman; Names, Roman System of; Naval Power, Roman; Pyrrhic War; Rome, City of; Slavery; Taxation; Wars and Warfare, Roman.)

According to Roman legend, Romulus founded the city of Rome in 753 B.C. Romulus (whose name means "Roman") and Remus were the twin grandsons of Numitor, the king of Alba Longa and a descendant of Aeneas, a Trojan leader in the legendary war against Greece. Numitor was overthrown by his brother Amulius, who forced Numitor's daughter Rhea Silvia to become a Vestal Virgin. As a Vestal Virgin, Rhea Silvia was not allowed to have children. However, she gave birth to twin boys whom she claimed were fathered by the god Mars. When Amulius learned of the twins' birth, he imprisoned Rhea Silvia and ordered his servants to drown the babies in the Tiber River. Instead, the servants placed the babies in a cradle and released it to float on the river, which was in flood. When the river waters receded, the babies were stranded in the mud. They were rescued by a she-wolf who nursed the infants until they were discovered by Faustulus, a shepherd. Faustulus took the boys home to his wife. The shepherd and his wife named the babies Romulus and Remus and raised them as their own.

When Romulus and Remus became adults, they learned that Numitor was their grandfather. They killed Amulius and restored Numitor to the throne. The young men decided to found their own city at the site where they had been abandoned as infants. They argued over who was to be king...