



# Ancient Rome

## MAIN IDEA

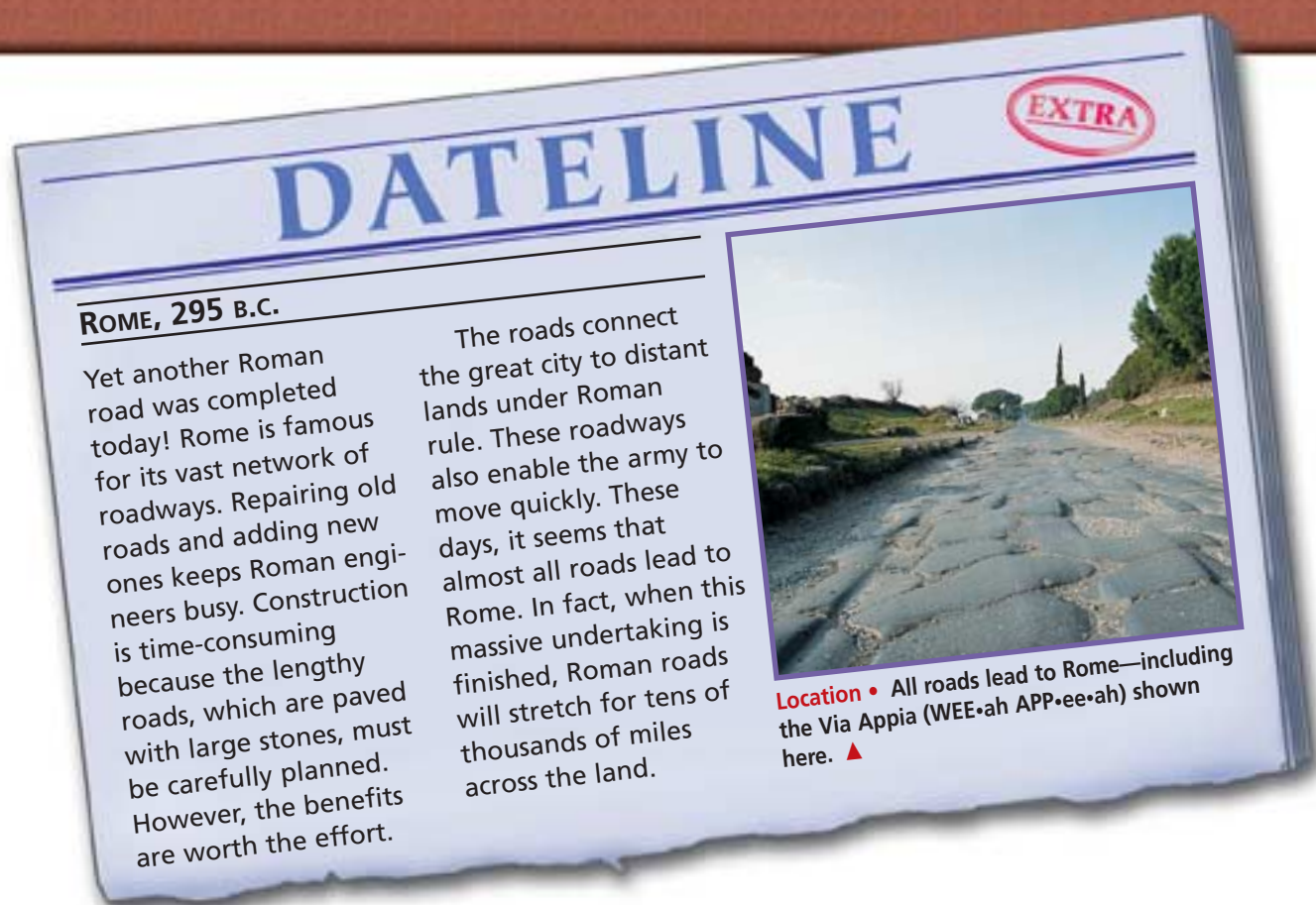
The ancient Romans made important contributions to government, law, and engineering.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The cultural achievements of the Romans continue to influence the art, architecture, and literature of today.

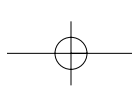
## TERMS & NAMES

republic  
Senate  
patrician  
plebeian  
Julius Caesar  
empire  
Augustus  
Constantine



## The Beginnings of Ancient Rome

Ancient Rome began as a group of villages located along the banks of the Tiber River in what is now Italy. There, early settlers herded sheep and grew wheat, olives, and grapes. Around 750 B.C., these villages united to form the city of Rome.



### BACKGROUND

In ancient Rome, a senator held his position for life.

**The Formation of the Roman Republic** For more than 200 years, kings ruled Rome. Then, in 509 B.C., Rome became a republic. A **republic** is a nation in which power belongs to the citizens, who govern themselves through elected representatives.

**The Senate** The Roman **Senate** was an assembly of elected representatives. It was the single most powerful ruling body of the Roman Republic. Each year, the Senate selected two leaders, called consuls, to head the government and the military.

**Patricians** At first, most of the people elected to the Senate were patricians (puh•TRIHSH•uhns). In ancient Rome, a **patrician** was a member of a wealthy, landowning family who claimed to be able to trace its roots back to the founding of Rome. The patricians also controlled the law, since they were the only citizens who were allowed to be judges.

**Plebeians** An ordinary, working male citizen of ancient Rome—such as a farmer or craftsman—was called a **plebeian** (plih•BEE•uhn). Plebeians had the right to vote, but they could not hold public office until 287 B.C., when they gained equality with patricians.

## The Expansion of the Roman World

Over hundreds of years, Rome grew into a mighty city. By the third century B.C., Rome ruled most of the Italian Peninsula. This gave Rome control of the central Mediterranean.

The city-state of Carthage, which ruled North Africa and southern Spain, controlled the western Mediterranean. To take control over this area as well, Rome fought Carthage and eventually won.

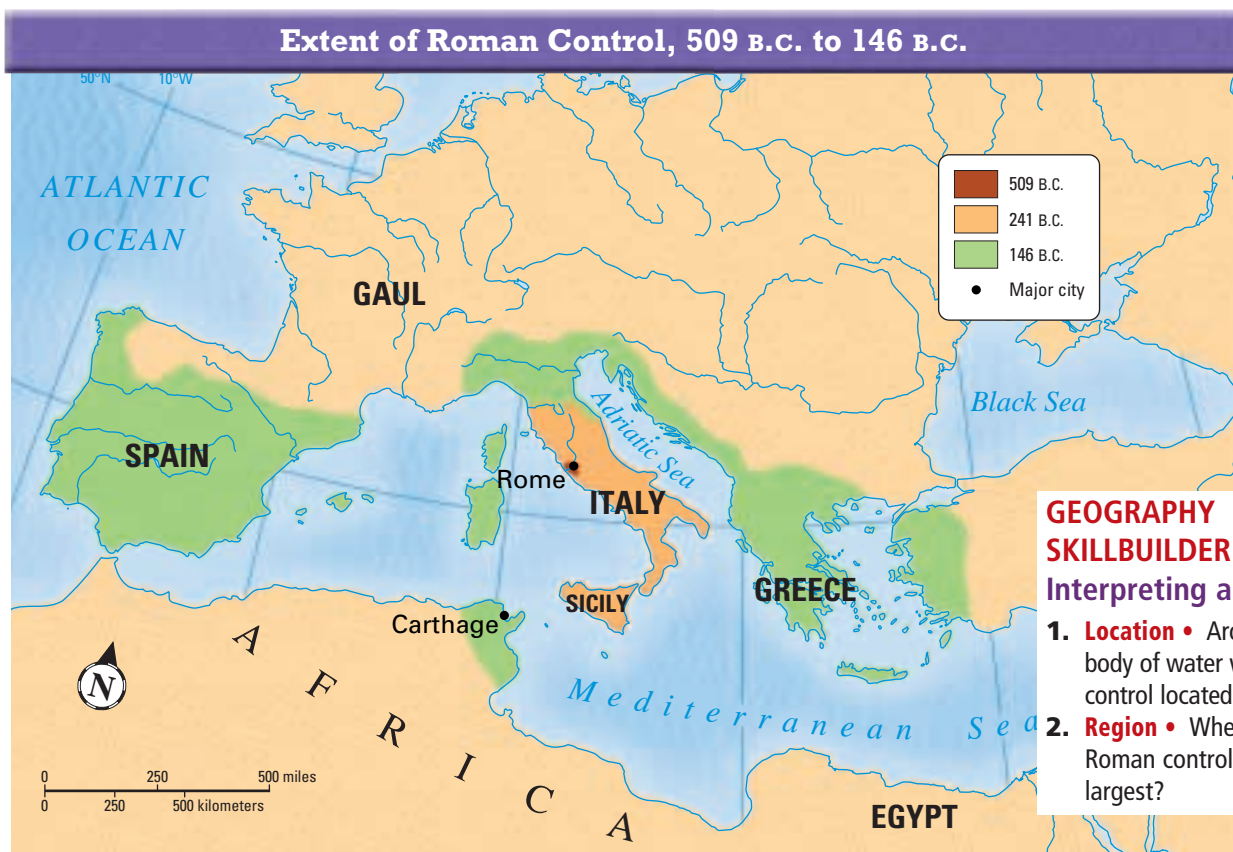
As Rome's population grew, its army also expanded in size and strength. Under the leadership of ambitious generals, Rome's highly trained soldiers set out to conquer new territories one by one.

### Strange but TRUE

**Roman Law** It may be hard to believe, but in the early Roman Republic, laws were not written down. Only the patrician judges knew what the laws were. This meant that judges usually ruled in favor of fellow patricians and against plebeians.

The plebeians grew tired of unfair treatment and demanded that the judges create a written code of laws that applied to all Roman citizens. This code, called the Law of the Twelve Tables, was written around 450 B.C. It formed the foundation of Roman law.





As Rome's control over its neighbors expanded, its culture and language continued to spread into Spain and Greece. By the end of the second century B.C., the Romans ruled most of the land surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The ancient Romans even called the Mediterranean *mare nostrum* (MAH•ray NO•strum), which means "our sea."

**Region** • Once in power, Julius Caesar had his likeness stamped on coins such as this one. ▼

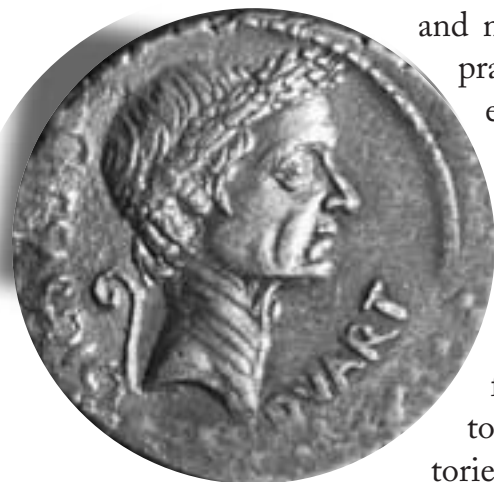
## From Republic to Empire

As the Roman Republic grew, its citizens became a more and more diverse group of people. Many Romans practiced different religions and followed different customs, but they were united by a common system of government and law. In the middle of the first century B.C., however, Rome's form of government changed.

### The End of the Roman Republic Julius Caesar,

a successful Roman general and famous speaker, was the governor of the territory called Gaul. By conquering nearby territories to expand the land under his control, he

increased both his power and his reputation. The Roman Senate feared that Caesar might become too powerful, and they ordered him to resign. Caesar, however, had other ideas.



### BACKGROUND

Ancient Gaul included the lands that are modern-day France, Belgium, and parts of northern Italy.





Rather than resign, Caesar fought a long, fierce battle for control of the Roman Republic. In 45 B.C., he finally triumphed and returned to Rome. Caesar eventually became dictator of the Roman world. A dictator is a person who holds total control over a government. Caesar's rule marked the end of the Roman Republic.

**The Beginning of the Roman Empire** Julius Caesar had great plans to reorganize the way ancient Rome was governed, but his rule was cut short. On March 15, 44 B.C., a group of senators, angered by Caesar's plans and power, stabbed him to death on the floor of the Roman Senate. A civil war then erupted that lasted for several years.

#### Reading Social Studies

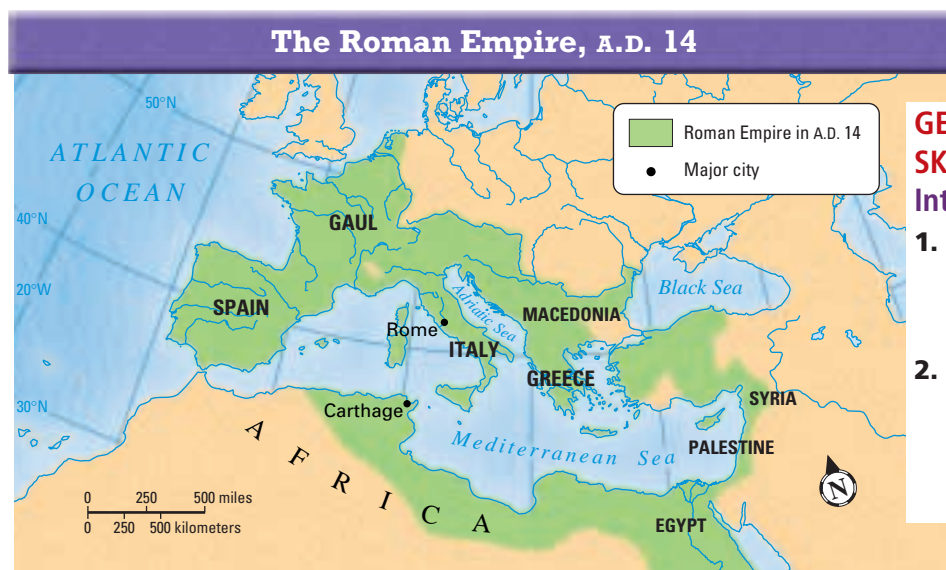
**A. Recognizing Important Details**  
How many years separated the rules of Julius Caesar and Augustus?

In 27 B.C., Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, was named the first emperor of Rome. This marks the official beginning of the Roman Empire. An **empire** is a nation or group of territories ruled by a single, powerful leader, or emperor. As emperor, Octavian took the name **Augustus**.

**The Augustan Age** Augustus ruled the Roman Empire for more than 40 years. During this time, called the Augustan Age, the empire continued to expand. To help protect the enormous amount of land under his control, Augustus sent military forces along its borders, which now extended northward to the Rhine and Danube rivers.

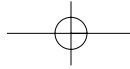


**Region** • Sculptures of Augustus were sent all over the Roman Empire to let people know what their leader looked like. ▲



#### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting a Map

- Location** • Name two continents on which the Roman Empire was located.
- Location** • What was the easternmost territory of the Roman Empire in A.D. 14?



**Region** • A diver holds an artifact from an ancient Roman shipwreck in the Mediterranean Sea. ▲

While the Roman army kept peace, architects and engineers built many new public buildings. Trade increased, with olive oil, wine, pottery, marble, and grain being shipped all across the Mediterranean. Lighthouses were constructed, too, to help ships find their way into port.

### Vocabulary

**marble:**  
a hard, smooth stone, often white in color

The Augustan Age was also a time of great Roman literature. One of the most famous works of the age is the *Aeneid* (ih•NEE•id). This long poem tells the story of Rome's founding. Augustus himself asked the famous poet Virgil to write it. This period of peace and cultural growth that Augustus created in the Roman Empire was called the "Pax Romana" (pahks roh•MAH•nah). The Pax Romana, or Roman Peace, lasted for 200 years.



## Spotlight on CULTURE

**Architecture** Various inventions helped the Roman Empire grow and prosper. In addition to buildings and roads, Roman architects and engineers constructed water systems called aqueducts. Ancient aqueducts were raised tunnels that carried fresh water over long distances.

Built throughout the empire, aqueducts poured millions of gallons of water into Rome and other cities every day. They supplied clean water to private homes, fountains, and public baths. Today, some ancient Roman aqueducts still stand in France, Spain, and even on the outskirts of Rome itself.

### THINKING CRITICALLY



#### 1. Analyzing Motives

Why did Romans want a way to transport water?

#### 2. Hypothesizing

Do you think the Roman Empire would have grown so large and prosperous without the aqueducts?



## The Rise of Christianity

### Reading Social Studies

**B. Making Inferences** How do you think the Roman Empire indirectly helped the spread of Christianity?

**Region •**  
**Constantine**  
(died A.D. 337)  
was the first  
Christian  
emperor of  
Rome. ▼



In the years following the death of Augustus in A.D. 14, a new religion from the Middle East began to take hold in the rest of the Mediterranean world: Christianity. At first, this religion became popular mainly in the eastern half of the Roman Empire. Many followers there preached about its teachings. Christianity spread along the transportation network constructed by the Romans. By the third century A.D., this religion had spread throughout the empire.

Most earlier Roman leaders had tolerated the different religions practiced throughout the empire. Christians, however, were viewed with suspicion and suffered persecution as early as A.D. 64. Roman leaders and people of other religions even blamed the Christians for natural disasters. Many Christians during this time were punished or killed for their beliefs.

## The First Christian Emperor

Things changed when **Constantine** became emperor of Rome in A.D. 306. In A.D. 312, before a battle, Constantine claimed to have had a vision of a cross in the sky. The emperor promised that if he won the battle, he would become a Christian. Constantine was victorious, and the next year he fulfilled his promise. Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. Today, Christianity has nearly two billion followers worldwide.

### SECTION 3 ASSESSMENT

#### Terms & Names

- 1. Identify:** (a) republic (b) Senate (c) patrician (d) plebeian  
(e) Julius Caesar (f) empire (g) Augustus (h) Constantine

#### Taking Notes

- 2.** Use a chart like this one to outline the achievements of ancient Rome's Augustan Age.

Achievement	Effects

#### Main Ideas

- 3. (a)** On what waterway is the city of Rome located?  
**(b)** What helped to unite the many different citizens of the Roman Republic?  
**(c)** How did Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire?

#### Critical Thinking

#### 4. Drawing Conclusions

Why was ancient Rome able to control most of the land surrounding the Mediterranean Sea?

#### Think About

- ♦ the location of the Italian Peninsula
- ♦ Rome's army
- ♦ Rome's wars with Carthage

#### ACTIVITY -OPTION-

Review the information about the beginnings of ancient Rome. Create a **chart** that compares the two important classes of Roman society: patricians and plebeians.