

Ancient Rome Overview

Early Rome – 700 BC – 509 BC

The Founding: Romulus and Remus – set adrift and rescued by a she-wolf. Romulus became the 1st king of Rome, establishing a Monarchy government during this period of Roman history.

Roman Republic – 509 BC – 27 BC

The Republic is the 2nd form of government that Rome became – power belonged to the citizens of Rome through their vote.

The Senate was an assembly of elected representatives, and was the single most powerful part of the Roman Republic. The senate ruled along with two consuls.

Patricians were people who were members of a wealthy, land-owning family. Most of the people elected to the senate were, in fact, patricians. Just like in our own government, Separation of Powers is a main idea in the Roman Republic.



Rome continued to grow and expand as a result, in part, of a strong military. It soon surrounded the entire Mediterranean Sea and also taking part of present-day United Kingdom. The Soldiers, when not fighting, would build an extensive road network, and grand aqueducts to carry fresh water into cities.

The Romans were good builders, just like the Greeks. Some of the signature features of the Romans were, arches, domes, the road system, and aqueducts. As they conquered other peoples the Romans used what they thought was good from the other people.



Julius Caesar was a successful Roman general who helped expand the empire. Because he was so popular, he wanted to take total control of the government of Rome. He, in fact, did rule Rome for one year as dictator, until he was murdered by senators.



Imperial Rome – 27 BC – AD 476

After a period of civil war, Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, became what Julius wanted to be. In the year 27 BC, Octavian was crowned Rome's first Emperor and took the name Augustus. Augustus started a 200 year time period of peace and prosperity in Rome called the 'Pax Romana'.

Beginning from around 100 BC to 100 AD through around 400 AD, one particular form of entertainment began to gain popularity. It was the gladiator fights at the colosseum. This was bloody combat to the death, wherein the winner could be treated as a celebrity. The fights were, in part, used to take the people's minds off the growing problems within the empire.



A few years after Augustus's death, a new religion began to grow and spread throughout the Empire – Christianity. The religion grew quickly and was, at first tolerated, but soon it became against the law to practice Christianity. Christians were persecuted and often killed for their beliefs. Some early Christians were sent to their deaths in the Roman Colosseum by being fed to wild animals. These Christians became martyrs for their faith.



After years of persecution, Roman officials understood that Christianity would not be destroyed. In AD 306, Constantine became the first Christian Emperor of Rome. In the year AD 313, he passed the Edict of Milan, which stated that Christianity could be allowed in the empire. Less than 80 years later, under Theodosius the Great, Christianity became Rome's official religion.

In the year AD 284, for various reasons Emperor Diocletian thought that the empire was too large to govern effectively. So the Roman Empire was split into two Empires – the Western and the Eastern Roman Empires, each with their separate emperors and capitals.

