

Barbarian Invasions of the Roman Empire

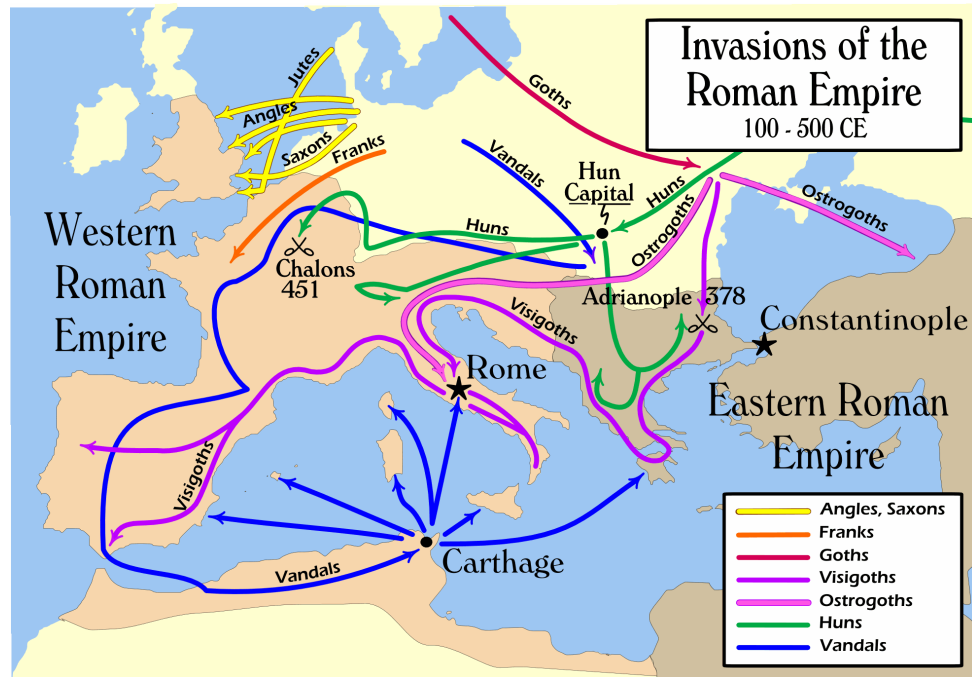
The Fall of the
Western Roman
Empire

Many people ask why the Roman Empire ended, according to the historian, Gibbon, the question should be how did it last.

He wrote:

"The decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate

greatness..... The story of its ruin (downfall) is simple and obvious; and instead of inquiring why the Roman empire was destroyed, we should rather be surprised that it had subsisted so long." -Gibbon, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*



large view
Barbarian Invasion of the Roman Empire

The fall of Rome is an example of the domino effect. The domino effect comes from the idea of placing dominoes on their sides, one next to another, and then intentionally knocking the first one in the line over into its neighboring domino. This creates a chain reaction and all of the dominoes fall down, one after another. For the fall of Rome, it was the Huns invading from the east that caused the domino effect, they invaded (pushed into) the Goths, who then invaded (pushed into) the Roman Empire.

The fall of the Western Roman Empire is a great lesson in cause and effect. A cause leads to an effect.

In the following examples of cause and effect, you can say the word "because" before you read the cause, and then finish the sentence with the effect. Like this: Because Roman legions evacuated Britannia in AD 410, the Anglo-Saxons moved into Britannia. You could also say the word "so" in between the cause and effect, like this: The Huns pushed other groups westward, so the Vandals invaded Spain, north Africa, and sacked Rome.

- Roman legions **evacuate** (leave) Britannia in AD 406. (Cause)

The Anglo-Saxons move into Britannia (Effect)

- The Huns push other groups westward, eventually into Roman territory. (Cause)

Aleric and the Visigoths sack Rome, AD 410 (Effect)

Vandals invade Spain, north Africa, and sack Rome in AD 455 (Effect)

Here is a brief list of Internal Causes for the Fall of Rome (causes from within the Roman Empire):

- The split of the empire into two parts weakened the empire.
- Roman soldiers were loyal to their military leaders, not necessarily the emperor
- A failing economy
- High taxes
- Romans became lazy and comfortable
- Romans hired barbarian mercenaries to guard the borders

The fall of the city of Rome and the Western Empire did not put an end to the entire Roman Empire. The Eastern Empire survived for another thousand years. The Eastern Empire is sometimes called the Byzantine Empire, after the capital city of Byzantium. Greek was the main language in the Byzantine Empire, not Latin.