

ROME Part 2 FINAL SCRIPT

Over a period of 600 years, Rome developed from a small village to a strong kingdom and, finally, a powerful republic. It conquered the Italian peninsula, and laid claim to most of the lands surrounding the Mediterranean.

Rome was constantly at war, but at the same time, great political, social and economic changes were occurring. Through it all, Rome remained the supreme power in the ancient world.

Social reforms introduced by the Gracchus brothers solved some of the problems of the time. But in turn, constant civil conflict threatened Rome's organization and government. Marius, Sulla, Cicero, Caesar and Augustus would help shape a new era in the history of Rome.

ROME: Part 2 **121BC to 476AD** Main Title

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING Chapter Heading

Rome had become one of the greatest cities in the Ancient world. Located thirty kilometres from the coast, on the Tiber River, the city had spread out between the seven hills, and had become wealthy from the riches of its conquests. Rome was the most powerful city-state in the Mediterranean and all roads led to it.

MARIUS & SULLA Chapter Heading

For ten years following the death of Gaius Gracchus in 121BC, Rome remained politically peaceful. Then, a new senatorial scandal involving bribery and corruption again aroused public indignation. In the popular outcry that followed, **Gaius Marius** an **Equestrian** who supported the Populares, was elected consul. Born the son of a peasant, Marius was a soldier who had risen through the ranks. He was elected consul six times. During this period, he managed to keep domestic peace, but his major triumph was the transformation of the military.

Marius permitted the poorest citizens to enlist and furnished them with weapons. The short, Spanish stabbing sword was made standard, and all legionaries were issued with both a light and a heavy Pila, or javelin, giving the legion far more firepower. A bronze helmet with neck-protecting flange and cheek pieces, plus a mail shirt, were also provided. Soldiers carried food rations, tools for building defences, a basket for moving earth, a pickaxe and stakes for protection around their sleeping ditch.

All this weighed thirty-six kilograms, and they were trained to carry this weight thirty-five kilometres a day. Bridge building, siege works, and the construction of forts, were all part of the legionaries job. Marius revolutionised the military, by creating a professional army of volunteers, who were loyal to their leader rather than to the government in Rome.

From 88BC, Marius' political fortunes began to decline. A bitter rivalry developed between Marius and the aristocratic **Lucius Cornelius Sulla**, who was also elected consul. Marius repeatedly tried to undermine his power. It reached a flash point when Sulla was in Naples preparing to lead an army to war against the Mithridites in Asia. At the same time, Marius had the control of Sulla's troops within Rome transferred to himself. A furious Sulla returned with his army, the first instance of a Roman commander leading his troops against Rome. Marius fled to exile in Africa, and Sulla's forces entered the city almost without resistance. Sulla condemned Marius' supporters to death and strengthened the power of the conservative senate. This was another period of civil conflict within Rome.

While Sulla was away on military campaigns, Marius returned to Rome and murdered many of Sulla's supporters. Marius died during this time but, upon his return, Sulla declared Marius' followers enemies of the state, and had them executed. In a single day, 6,000 were killed and their properties confiscated. In 82BC Sulla had himself elected as "dictator for the purpose of restoring the state", a position he held for two years. Politically, Sulla's dictatorship was the beginning of the end for the Roman Republic.

Upon Sulla's death in 78BC, a new group of leaders would follow his example and seize power.

After a brief period of senatorial rule, another general was elected as Sulla's successor. Gnaeus Pompeius or Pompey the Great, having won favour for his military exploits, was elected as Consul, although he was under age, and had not held the offices of quaestor, aedile or praetor. With Rome in disorder, instead of becoming dictator, he formed a secret alliance, called the **First Triumvirate** (60BC), with two generals, Gaius Julius Caesar and Marcus Licinius Crassus.

The **First Triumvirate's** plan was not to seize the government, but for each member to receive the offices and commands they desired. Pompey controlled the East, Crassus was able to take to the field against the Parthians and Caesar was given command of Gaul.

JULIUS CAESAR Chapter Heading

During his command in Gaul, Caesar proved himself as one of history's great military strategists and tacticians. In course of the Gallic Wars (58 BC to 51BC), he subjugated 300 tribes and 800 cities were destroyed. He became extremely rich and powerful and, when he wished to return with his army to Rome, the senate led by Pompey, ordered him to disband his troops. Also, he could not stand for consulship, thwarting his political aspirations.

There was always friction between Caesar and Pompey, although Caesar had given his daughter Julia to Pompey in marriage. After Julia died in childbirth, the link was broken. Crassus, the third member of the Triumvirate, had died in battle against the Parthians. A civil war broke out and Caesar moved quickly, disposing of Pompey's Spanish allies. Later, in Greece, he routed Pompey at the battle of Pharsalus in 48BC. Pursued by Caesar, Pompey fled to Egypt, but as he came ashore in Alexandria, an agent of the boy-king Ptolemy stabbed him to death. Upon his arrival, Caesar was immediately beguiled by Ptolemy's co-ruler, his sister Cleopatra. Soon installed as Caesar's mistress, Cleopatra dominated Egypt after her brother was killed in battle.

Caesar returned to Rome even more secure in his power. By defeating Pompey who had the support of the senate, he had in fact become the sole ruler of Rome. In 45BC, Caesar appointed himself dictator for ten years and, on the whole, used his power well. Despite the fears of many of his detractors, Caesar instigated a more efficient administrative system, and increased the senate to 900 members. Colonies were established, and land given to soldiers who had faithfully served the Republic. He reconciled with many of his old enemies, including Cicero the lawyer, orator and consul, despite their mutual distrust. Cicero had earlier declined an invitation to join Pompey and Caesar in taking control of the government, believing that their authority would be to the detriment of Rome.

He undertook extensive projects within the Roman Forum, providing work for the poor. In memory of his late daughter, Caesar built the Basilica Julia on the site of the old Basilica Sempronia. The Forum of Caesar was erected on land purchased by him, further expanding the Forum. It became a place for public business relating to the senate, with a temple inside dedicated to **Venus Genetrix**, the goddess of motherhood and domesticity. He gave Rome and western civilisation the Julian calendar, the immediate forerunner to the modern calendar.

Despite Caesar's good works and acts of clemency, many Romans were filled with a sense of foreboding.

It was clear to members of the old conservative families that Caesar wanted to make his power absolute, and a conspiracy formed against him. On the Ides of March 44BC, the conspirators, led by Cassius and Brutus stabbed Caesar to death in the senate, at the foot of Pompey's statue. It has been said that the murder of Caesar was the most senseless act that the Romans ever committed, ending a career that had the potential to solve many problems. Even now, roses are placed on Caesar's tomb within the Forum, an indication of his importance to the history of Rome.

THE EMERGANCE of AUGUSTUS Chapter Heading

Caesar's death provoked another power struggle between the senate and two of Caesar's heirs. One was Octavian, his grandnephew and heir, the other Mark Anthony, Caesar's co-consul. When the senate refused to grant Octavian a consulship, he occupied the city with his army, forcing his election to office. A second triumvirate was formed between Octavian, Mark Anthony and Lepidus, one of Caesar's top lieutenants. Octavian ruled the Western Empire, Anthony the East, and Lepidus, Africa. The three of them shared control of the Italian peninsula, over which they had supreme power.

The first order of business was to punish Caesar's murderers. Prominent among them was Cicero, who was be-headed, and his head later delivered to Anthony. Not surprisingly, the triumvirate soon began to turn on itself. Octavian ousted Lepidus, taking over the African provinces, and at the same time, taking control of the Italian peninsula. Anthony was captivated by Cleopatra, and married her, rejecting his legal wife, Octavia, who was Octavian's sister. The two men were completely alienated.

In 32BC, Octavian produced a document, which he claimed to be Anthony's will, and read it to the senate. It bequeathed all of Rome's Eastern territory to Cleopatra. An angry senate promptly gave Octavian permission to annul Anthony's powers and declare war on Cleopatra. The following year at the battle of Actium, the Roman fleet defeated the Egyptians, and Anthony and Cleopatra fled back to Egypt. In despair they killed themselves. Octavian became the sole ruler of Rome at the age of thirty-two.

Actium ended the civil wars that had plagued Rome for a century. The aristocratic senate had proved corrupt, inefficient and disastrous for the population. Romans rejected the idea of a monarchy, but a strong central authority was needed. Octavian would provide that authority, while maintaining the best ideals of the Republic. Octavian was given the surname **Augustus** by the senate, in recognition of his services to the state. The senate bestowed many titles on him.

When he became Pontifex Maximus, religious leader of Rome in 12BC, legally he had the power of an emperor. It was the start of a new age for Rome, and the beginning of an Empire that would spread further into the ancient world.

THE REIGN OF AUGUSTUS Chapter Heading

The reign of **Augustus** (31BC to 14AD) lasted 45 years, during which Rome experienced a period of peace and prosperity, following one hundred years of civil war. Augustus regarded himself as head of state, maintaining all the popular ideals of the republic. The **Senate** consisted of six hundred members, who assisted the emperor in matters of legislation. Its members were distinguished by a purple stripe on their togas. The **Assemblies of the people** occasionally approved laws and elected magistrates. Magistrates were divided into four levels. The two **Consuls** were the highest-ranking civil and military magistrates, answerable directly to Augustus. **Quaestors** assisted the consuls and controlled the treasury. The four **Aediles** were elected equally from both the plebeian and patrician classes. They were responsible for the safety of roads and buildings, public order, water and grain supplies, and the financing of public festivals and games. The eight **Praetors** were judges elected by the Comitia Tributa, or the assembly of the people. Augustus also took control of foreign affairs, thus further reducing the power of the Senate.

To lessen the burden of maintaining a professional army, Augustus reduced it from fifty to twenty-five legions. These legions were distributed throughout the frontier provinces. To support imperial authority, and to maintain public order at home, the **Praetorian Guard** was established. Comprising nine thousand men, this force was stationed at varying points outside of Rome. A permanent Naval fleet was established, and a special treasury provided military pensions.

Augustus was a great patron of the arts, encouraging the publication of Vergil's epic poem "Aeneid" after its author's death. Ovid and Livy were great writers of the time, with Livy's prose recounting the miraculous origins of Rome, and achievements in war and peace. During this time, the famous works of many Greek writers flourished. A growing spirit of patriotism, and an appreciation of Rome as a great ruler of the world inspired the literature of this period. Augustus wrote his own "Res Gestae", recounting what he accomplished for the Roman state and people. These inscriptions were displayed on two large tablets.

Augustus restored many temples and buildings that had fallen into decay or been destroyed during the civil wars. New temples were erected to Vesta and Apollo, and the Forum of Augustus was built near the old Roman Forum.

With this restoration, Augustus hoped to bring the people back to the old Roman religions. He tried to discourage the introduction of foreign deities, especially the degenerate gods of Greece and Egypt. His wish was to restore the old Roman religions, with their morality and simplicity, disdaining luxurious living and foreign fashions.

The Alter of Augustan Peace is regarded as a masterpiece of ancient Roman art. Decorated in marble, its sculptured figures are more realistic than was typical of the period. The best-preserved monument to the Augustan age is the massive **Pantheon**. Built in 27BC by Agrippa, Augustus' boyhood friend and loyal general, it was the temple of all gods. Agrippa led the Roman fleet at the battle of Actium, but was also a brilliant architect. The monolithic granite columns in the portico were quarried in Egypt, transported across the Mediterranean, and then transferred to barges for the journey up the Tiber River. They were then carried seven hundred metres to the site. The only sources of light are through the entry door and the oculus at the apex of the dome. The oculus also serves to cool and ventilate, and during storms, a drainage system below removes the rainwater. Even by today's standards, the design of the dome is perfect.

It is still the world's largest unreinforced concrete dome; with the height to the oculus and the diameter of its interior circle the same, forty-three point three metres. Since the 7th Century, the Pantheon has been used as a Roman Catholic Church where masses and weddings are still celebrated. The painter Raphael's tomb is located there. It is said Augustus boasted that he had "found Rome of brick and left it of marble".

Augustus died at the age of seventy-five, bringing order to Rome following the confusion of the civil wars. Although not as great as his adopted father Julius Caesar, he was more successful. His task of restoring peace to the world was a difficult one, and he did so without destroying the existing political and social framework of Rome.

COMMERCE & SOCIETY IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE Chapter Heading

Romans had many occupations, with which we are familiar today. The learned professions included priests, lawyers, physicians and teachers. In the commercial classes were merchants, bankers and tax gatherers. Goods produced included glass, pottery, cloth and furniture, as well as articles made from wood, leather, iron, bronze, silver and gold. Artisans were often organised into societies or guilds for their mutual benefit. The agriculturalists of Rome were the largest landowners, who were regarded as highly respectable. Slaves and freedmen did much of the heavy manual labour.

For Romans, family values involved a sense of duty to the gods, to one's parents and ancestors, and to country. The father or **pater familias** was head of the household, and was traditionally all-powerful, ruling the lives of his wife, their children and slaves. Many couples married solely to produce children and heirs. There was no need for a written marriage document, and the event was symbolised by the exchange of rings. Two celebrations were held, one with the bride's family, another with the groom's. A Roman wife was expected to devote herself to tasks such as spinning and weaving, which embodied traditional virtues. An ideal wife was kind, compliant, faithful and fertile.

Most women gave birth at home with the assistance of a midwife, and sometimes a physician. The woman sat in a birthing chair, gripping its arms, while the midwife squatted in front to assist. It was a dangerous business, with one in forty women dying in childbirth or from complications. As soon as the child was born, it was placed on the ground in front of the father, and he would decide whether or not to keep it. If the child was deformed or a girl, which may burden the family, it could be abandoned in the street. In extreme cases, it might be buried under the floorboards of the house.

Education of the children could be undertaken by the father, or delegated to a slave who acted as a tutor or childminder. Many tutors were Greeks, a race much respected by the Romans for their knowledge. Schools consisted of little more than a single room in the home, and often classes were held outside. Girls ceased formal education at the age of 12 or 13. Thereafter, the skills required to be good housewives were more important. At the age of about sixteen, boys attended the Festival of Liberalia in the Forum. Here, a boy was registered in the census, making him eligible a year later for public service, either as a soldier, a lawyer or a priest.

The father conducted his business from home, greeting clients in the mornings in a small room called the tablinum. Clients would greet him with a salutation or **Salutatio** to show respect to their patron. The patron earned the respect of his client by protecting him and his family, providing legal advice, or assisting them financially. In return, the client would vote for their patron, enabling him to be elected to important political positions. The number of clients, and perhaps their status, would confer even more prestige upon the patron.

Romans were very religious and most homes had a small shrine, a **lararium**, as the centre of worship. Depicted in these shrines were the household gods, **Lares**, or the family protectors; the **genius**, or the spirit of the **paterfamilias**, the 'power of the father'; and **Penates**, the protectors of food stores.

The image of a snake wrapping itself around an altar represented fertility and protection. Daily offerings were made to the gods.

Romans wore clothing made from either wool or linen. Local weavers made woollen clothing, while more expensive linen came from Egypt. Men wore a linen shift underneath a tunic, which was belted and reached the knees. The *toga* was worn outdoors by officials and the upper classes, with purple stripes indicating their status, a broad stripe for a senator, and a thin one for an equestrian.

Women often favoured colourful clothing, and wore a shift and a tunic, or *stola*, down to their ankles. Over this, a *palla* covered the head. Both sexes wore sandals or slippers, and jewellery.

TIBERIUS TO NERO – The Julio-Claudian Emperors Chapter Heading

Following the death of Augustus, the next four emperors were from the Julian line. They were often tyrannical, vicious and a disgrace to Rome. **Tiberius** (14 – 37AD), the first Julian emperor, had proved his ability as a general, and was prepared to continue the policies of Augustus. But, he proved to be a cruel despot as he tried to maintain his authority throughout the empire.

Tiberius made no provision for a successor, so the senate elected the popular Gaius Caesar, known as **Caligula** (37- 41AD) by his soldiers. He suffered epileptic fits as a child, and when elevated to the position of emperor, displayed symptoms of insanity. Caligula believed he was a god, and wasted treasury money on senseless projects. He ordered soldiers to collect shells from a beach on the Bay of Naples and carry them to Rome as “the spoils of the ocean”. It is said he even nominated his horse for consul, but his bloodthirsty reign of four years ended with his assassination by an officer of the Praetorian Guard.

Claudius (41-54AD) was the first emperor to be proclaimed by the Praetorian Guard, who then forced the Senate to elect him. Due to his weak and timid nature, his reign was in direct contrast to Tiberius and Caligula. He followed the lead of Augustus in executing many public works, such as the Claudian aqueduct, which carried water ninety kilometres to Rome. Claudius’ most striking military achievement was the invasion and conquest of the southern part of Britain. He was poisoned to death on the order of his wife Agrippina.

The first five years of **Nero’s** (54 – 68AD) reign was marked by wise administration. The young emperor was guided by the advice of the great philosopher Seneca, and Burrhus, a captain of the Praetorian Guard.

However, Nero changed dramatically when his mother, Agrippina, tried to have him removed from power. Under the influence of the beautiful and wicked Poppaea Sabina, he had both his mother and wife murdered. What followed was a career of depravity, extortion and atrocious cruelty. In the tenth year of his reign, a great fire destroyed a large part of Rome. It is said that Nero played a fiddle as Rome burned. Many believed that the fire was started on Nero's instructions, so that the city could be rebuilt. To deflect this suspicion, Nero instead accused the Christians, a new religion from Judea, and punished them severely.

Christian martyrs were crucified on crosses, and burned alive, serving as torches in the night.

When Nero committed suicide, the Imperial line, which had traced its descent from Julius Caesar and Augustus, became extinct.

VESPASIAN and the COLOSSEUM Chapter Heading

After Nero's death, bloody civil wars saw three emperors come and go within two years. Finally, the popular commander **Vespasian** secured his position, becoming the first Flavian emperor. Vespasian rescued Rome from bankruptcy, and restored many public buildings destroyed during the civil wars. His greatest architectural achievement was the building of the Flavian Amphitheatre, or **Colosseum**.

Construction began in 72AD and was completed in 80AD, a year after Vespasian's death. It was built in Nero's huge park in the centre of Rome, next to his colossal statue. Elliptical in shape, the Colosseum is immense, one hundred and eighty by one hundred and fifty six metres, and forty-eight metres high. It has eighty entrances and it could accommodate fifty-five thousand spectators in four levels above ground. The upper storeys contained seating for lower classes and women. The lowest level was reserved for prominent citizens.

Spectators were protected from the sun with an enormous awning known as a velarium, installed by a team of one thousand men. Below ground were rooms and cages containing wild animals. Mechanical devices would hoist animal cages up to the arena.

The games lasted for a whole day or even several days in a row. Comical acts would be followed by animal hunts. On its inauguration day in 80AD, nine thousand wild animals were slaughtered. It is little wonder that perfume was sprayed to cover the stench of death. The most popular event was the gladiatorial combat.

Professional gladiators, prisoners of war, slaves and criminals fought these battles to the death. Gladiators were divided into four types. **Samnites** were heavily armed with a sword and lance, a metal helmet and a rectangular metal shield. **Myrmills** were identified by a fish symbol on their helmet. **Retiarius** had no armour, carried a trident, and trapped opponents in netting. **Specialists** had daggers and lances. Emperors staged the games as a symbol of prestige and power, and as a means to increase their popularity.

Vespasian built up the national treasury through taxation, tribute and by overseeing the running of a sound economy. He further established Roman civilisation in Gaul. The Roman language, literature, law, manners and art were well accepted. Ancient buildings, baths, aqueducts and amphitheatres show how completely the province of Gaul was romanised. The worst aspect of Vespasians rule was the destruction of Jerusalem following a revolt by the Jews.

Barely two months after Titus (79-81AD) succeeded his father Vespasian as emperor, a catastrophic event shook the Roman Empire.

POMPEII & HERCULANEUM Chapter Heading

Located 200 kilometres south of Rome, on the Bay of Naples, were the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Mount Vesuvius lies to the north and east of them. On the 24th of August AD 79, Mount Vesuvius erupted, remaining active for 20 hours. Initially, a dense rain of pumice and ash pounded Pompeii. Within four or five hours, roofs began to collapse under the weight, killing those who remained indoors and prompting survivors to flee the city.

But during the night, the fate of Pompeii and Herculaneum was sealed. The column of ash that had risen 30 kilometres above Vesuvius began to collapse. A series of super-hot pyroclastic surges formed. These surges travelled down the mountain like avalanches, at over 100 kilometres an hour. They consisted of glowing clouds of gas and fine ash with temperatures reaching up to 400 degrees Celsius. In all, there were six of these surges. The following morning, Pompeii, Herculaneum and the surrounding countryside had been completely buried under tonnes of volcanic material. Relief efforts were organised, but nothing could be done to restore the cities. It has been estimated that 10,000 perished, with any memory of them completely lost for centuries.

In the early 1700s, a peasant digging out his well discovered marble near the site of Herculaneum. This discovery led to the initial excavation of its theatre. Over the next 200 years, both Pompeii and Herculaneum have

been excavated and restored, providing a unique and comprehensive view of private and public life during this period of the Roman Empire.

Nowadays, visitors can explore these ancient cities. The Forum at Pompeii is replicated on a smaller scale to the one in Rome. Located there were the senate, government offices, trade halls, markets, law courts and temples dedicated to the gods. Private homes can also be examined. The House of the Faun in Pompeii is entered through the atrium, and then into the tablinum, used for business during the day, and as a dining room at night.

Outside is a small peristyle garden, leading to a famous mosaic depicting the battle between Alexander the Great and Darius.

Located among private homes were many important businesses. These included bakers, launderers and cloth dyers. At Pompeii, 28 bakeries have been found, with this being one of the largest. Bread was purchased daily and, when this bakery was excavated, 81 carbonised loaves were discovered. An incredible number of hot food bars or Thermopoliums served those with no kitchen in their homes, or visitors from surrounding towns. Homes were often converted to operate businesses. The Fullery of Stephanus was a laundry in Pompeii installed in a residence. It contained basins with urine and other liquids used for washing and dyeing fabrics. Slaves pressed the cloth with their bare feet.

Attending the theatre was popular, where Atellan farces, pantomime and musical concerts were performed. The Large theatre in Pompeii accommodated 5,000 people, while the Odeion next door held 1,300 patrons. As in all Roman cities, the Amphitheatre provided the most popular entertainment. The one in Pompeii could accommodate up to 20,000 spectators. As well as gladiatorial combats, civil and religious festivals were also conducted there.

An afternoon visit to the public baths was a typically Roman pleasure enjoyed in Pompeii and Herculaneum. With no class system in the baths, the rich and poor used the facilities together. It was a venue for social networking, chatting with friends and conducting business. The Forum baths in Pompeii was divided into male and female areas, with separate entrances. Clothing was stored in niches provided in the change room. From there, patrons would pass into the **Tepidarium**, containing warm water. Next, they entered the **Caldarium** with its hot water, and finally they plunged into the cold water of the **Frigidarium**, to wash away perspiration and to tone up their bodies. The baths often contained libraries and gardens for reading and poetry recitals. Palaestras and swimming pools allowed for the Romans to exercise and socialise.

All this vanished when Mount Vesuvius erupted. The inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum were burnt to death or suffocated by the ash-saturated air. In some instances, their brains boiled inside their skulls. Plaster casts made of the victims by Giuseppe Fiorelli in the mid 1800s, are a stark reminder of their horrific deaths.

Emperor at the time of the eruption, the popular Titus ruled for only three years, and was succeeded by his younger brother Domitian (81-96AD). The relaxed period beginning with Vespasian and Titus, was interrupted by the exceptional tyranny of Domitian. He became censor for life, controlled the senate and insisted he be addressed as Dominus et Deus, meaning lord and god. Numerous attempts were made on his life, and he was finally assassinated in 96AD, ending the Flavian dynasty. Under the Flavians, the government and social structure of Rome had not changed greatly from the time of Augustus.

THE FIVE GOOD EMPERORS (96 – 180AD)

Chapter Heading

Nerva (96-98) was the first of the five good emperors, and was followed by one of the greatest Roman rulers, Trajan (98-117AD).

Located in the centre of Rome lies Trajan's Market, not far from the Forum, which bears his name. Within this Forum is **Trajan's Column**, standing thirty eight and a half metres high. The column has a spiral bas-relief commemorating Trajan's victory in the Dacian Wars. Under him, the boundaries of Rome reached there furthest.

Trajan was a Spaniard by birth, and the fact he was not native to Italy showed that the distinction between Romans and colonials was diminishing. This also enabled him to view the Roman Empire from a different perspective. He was a brave general, a wise statesman, and a successful administrator. As a humanitarian, Trajan desired to help the poor of Rome, and it is said that five thousand children received their daily allowance of bread because of him.

Following Trajan's death, his stepson **Hadrian** (117 – 138AD) was proclaimed emperor. Initially by the praetorian guards and then formally ratified by the senate. Like his stepfather, Hadrian was a tolerant ruler who cared for the welfare of the people, was a patron of the arts, and contributed to the architectural splendour of Rome. Most notably, he rebuilt the Pantheon to its present grandeur. Hadrian did not believe that Rome's greatness depended on military glory. His policy, like that of Augustus, was to improve the Empire rather than enlarge it.

To accomplish this, he spent two thirds of his reign outside Italy. He extended the frontier in Britain and built a wall to hold back the barbarians.

Perhaps Hadrian's most important accomplishment was to streamline Roman law, allowing for a more universal legal system throughout the Empire. Hadrian had sympathy for the many races and religions making up the empire. He was tolerant of Christians, but was particularly severe on the Jews who revolted against Rome, and he denied them access to their holy city of Jerusalem.

In Roman history, there is no more noble a character than Hadrian's adopted son and successor, **Antoninus Pius** (138-161AD). His long period as emperor has been called the "reign without events". There were no conquests, insurrections or cruelty. His greatest influence would be upon his adopted son.

Marcus Aurelius (161 – 180AD) was a philosopher, who had studied at the school of the **Stoics**. Stoic philosophy advocated the brotherhood of humanity and the natural equality of all human beings. His high ideals, however, were not always in harmony with the welfare of the people. The new religion of Christianity had spread from the provinces into the cities. Secret meetings of Christians gave rise to scandalous stories about their practices, and they were blamed for the calamities the gods inflicted upon the people. Marcus Aurelius sincerely believed that Christianity was dangerous. He issued an order that Christians who denied their faith be spared, while those who refused were put to death.

During his reign, the empire was severely threatened. Aurelius undertook the task of defending Rome's northern borders, and largely succeeded in maintaining this frontier. The Empire had expanded to its greatest size during the second century, and its people seemed happy and prosperous, although wealth was unevenly distributed.

THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE 180 – 476 AD Chapter Heading

The era after the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 until 284 AD has been called "the period of military despotism". It was marked by the army's total control of both government and emperors. However, two important emperors followed after this time.

Diocletian (284 – 305AD) was the first to realise that one man could not manage the affairs of such a great empire, so he divided the Roman world in two, the East and West Empires.

Constantine (313 to 337AD) is generally known as the “first Christian emperor”. He adopted the cross as his battle standard, and credited his victories to God, not himself. Next to the Colosseum in Rome, the senate erected a magnificent triumphal arch to him in 315AD. It celebrated his victory over Maxentius at the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 312AD.

Constantine established a new capital in the Greek colony Byzantium, naming it Constantinople. He created a cumbersome administrative system, financed by heavy taxes. Civil strife followed his death, and weak and ineffectual successors contributed to the eventual decline of Rome.

The empire came under the threat of invasion from Vandals, Goths, Bergundians and Alani. **Alaric**, the leader of the **Visigoths**, invaded the Italian peninsula in 408AD and captured Rome where, for three days, the city was plundered. He then conquered southern Italy to become master of the peninsula.

The next great invasion against Rome came from Asia: the **Huns**. Their leader, **Attila**, was known as “**the scourge of god**”. The Huns invaded Gaul, devastating the provinces, but were defeated by the Roman general Aetius, with the aid of the Visigoths, at a battle near Chalons in 451AD. Attila later invaded Italy, but withdrew without attacking Rome.

The final invasion came from the **Vandals**, led by **Genseric**, who controlled most of the Western Mediterranean. In 455AD, the Vandals took possession of Rome, and pillaged the city for fourteen days. Great riches and many works of art were lost, spawning the word “**vandalism**”.

Roman armies consisted mostly of barbarian soldiers led by their generals. The affairs of the state were in the hands of barbarian chiefs. Finally in 476AD, **Odoacer**, a Germanic chieftain, forced Emperor Romulus Augustulus to resign. Odoacer was given the title of patrician and ruled over Italy. This event is called the “fall of the Western Roman Empire”.