

Teachers Notes

Rome Part Two

Late Republic to the Fall

of the Roman Empire

121 BC to 476 AD

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Rome from the Late Republic to the fall of the Empire 121BC to 476AD

INTRODUCTION

The government of Rome was faced in 133 BC with the problems of an ever increasing empire. There were major problems over land and the number of independent farmers was diminishing. There was the constant fear of slave uprisings. There were political abuses and problems, with a few powerful families monopolising government offices. The Senate had become too powerful and had more and more control over the tribunes. The government of the colonies was also a serious problem with excessive graft and bribery. The Latin and Italian allies wanted Roman citizenship. Finally it became a problem to feed, entertain and control the masses in Rome. This problem had to be solved, if not by the current political structure, then by some other method.

To oppose the vested interests of the *Optimates*, who were supporters of the Senate, the people elected Tiberius Gracchus tribune for 133 BC. Gracchus was democratic reformer and proposed a land law which limited an individual's holding of state lands, with all excess land distributed to landless farmers. After considerable difficulty the bill was passed. In order to carry out his measure, Tiberius decided to run for re-election but was murdered. The *Populares*, who opposed the *Optimates*, had his brother Gaius Gracchus elected for 123 BC. Gaius proposed numerous laws to solve the difficulties of the time.

Gaius Marius, backed by the *Populares* and *Equites* was elected consul for the year 107 BC. He was named commander of the army and with the aid of his lieutenant Sulla, brought an end to the war with Numidia. In spite of tradition, he was elected consul for five successive years from 104-100 BC. Marius revolutionized the military system by creating a professional army of volunteers enrolled for sixteen years.

The army gave its loyalty to the leader rather than the state. From 88 BC a political rivalry developed between Marius and Lucius Cornelius Sulla. The Mithridatic threat had to be settled and Sulla was given command of the army by the Senate. Marius had also wanted this command and had the decision overturned. Sulla reacted to this by marching on Rome in 88 BC, forcing Marius to flee, before he set off to fight Mithridates. In his absence Marius returned to Rome, annulled Sulla's laws and killed his senatorial supporters. Marius was elected to his seventh term as consul in 86 BC, but died soon after.

Sulla ended the war against Mithridates, concluded the Civil War with the support of Pompey and Crassus and then returned to Rome and executed his opponents. Sulla was made Dictator for three years in 82 BC. He sought to re-establish the power of the Senate and reduce the power of the Tribune. Sulla died in 78 BC.

Understanding the issues

1. Explanation of terms: *Optimates*; *Populares*; *Equites*; Mithridates; Tribune
2. List the problems faced by Rome at the end of the Republic
3. Discussion: In what way were Tiberius Gracchus, Gaius Gracchus and Marius democratic or social reformers?
4. Research: The First Mithradatic War and its impact on political events at the time.
5. What does the film about the conflict between Marius and Sulla? How was this situation resolved?

ROME UNDER JULIUS CAESAR

Upon the death of Sulla, a struggle for power took place over the next two decades. Wars created opportunities for Pompey, Lucullus and Crassus to gain popularity and exert their influence. Gaius Julius Caesar was also ambitious and became the leader of the Marian Party in 67 BC. When Pompey returned to Rome in 62 BC, he disbanded his troops and entered Rome. The Senate no longer fearing Pompey refused to grant his soldiers land. Caesar then joined together with Pompey and Crassus and formed the First Triumvirate. Caesar was elected as consul and forced through the Senate a number of bills for his two colleagues.

At the Conference of Luca in 56 BC, it was agreed that Pompey and Crassus should be consuls in 55 BC and that Caesar should have an extension of five years in Gaul. Conditions in Rome became more chaotic and the Senate in desperation made Pompey sole consul for 52 BC. During the next two years Caesar and Pompey tried to outmanoeuvre each other. Caesar attempted to be re-elected consul for 48, but Pompey blocked his plans, and in January 49 BC, Caesar crossed the Rubicon into Italy with his army. Pompey and his followers fled to Greece. Caesar turned west, defeated Sextus Pompey's army in Spain, and returned to Rome, where he was elected consul for the year 48 BC.

He then advanced into Greece where he defeated Pompey at Pharsalus in 48 BC. Pompey fled to Egypt where he was murdered. Caesar placed Cleopatra on the throne of Egypt and made an alliance with her. He defeated the Parthians at Zela in 47 BC, sending the message to Rome *veni vidi vici*. At Thapsus in Africa he defeated the Republicans under Cato. He then defeated the Pompeians at Munda in Spain in 45 BC.

Caesar held many offices and positions. He was elected dictator for ten years in 45 BC, given power of tribune and made consul for life. He was also made proconsul and given full command of the troops. Caesar was called *imperator* and *pater patria*. In 63 BC he had been elected *pontifex maximus* as well as been given a number of religious honours.

Caesar initiated many reforms. He reformed the law courts, abolished the political clubs, increased the number of magistrates and increased the Senate to 900. He also established colonies and gave land to soldiers. He brought about law and order, thereby aiding commerce. He undertook extensive building projects including the Forum of Caesar in 46 BC. Finally he introduced a more scientific calendar, known as the Julian calendar.

Caesar's acceptance of religious honours convinced many of his desire to be king. His statue was placed in temples, his image struck on coins and a month named after him. Members of the old conservative aristocratic families, feeling that their rights and powers were being weakened, joined in a conspiracy against Caesar. Marcus Brutus, Caius Cassius and Decimus Brutus were key figures among the sixty or so conspirators.

On the Ides of March in 44 BC, the conspirators assassinated Caesar, thus ending a career which might have solved many of the problems of the day.

Understanding the issues

1. Explanation of terms: *Pater patria*; *pontifex maximus*; *veni vidi vici*; triumvirate; conspiracy; assassination
2. Research the background to the assassination of Caesar and the motivation of the conspirators
3. Debate: Caesar reached more prominence in death than his political career deserved

4. Discuss the extent to which both Julius Caesar and Pompey were responsible for the Civil War.
5. From the film, list the methods used by Caesar to advance his political career.

REIGN OF AUGUSTUS

A struggle for power began immediately after Caesar's death, since no provision had been made for a successor. While the conspirators had expected to be hailed as liberators, this did not eventuate as the Roman populace were great admirers of Caesar. Rome was initially ruled by Caesar's allies, Mark Antony, Aemilius Lepidus and Octavian, Caesar's adopted heir, resulting in the Second Triumvirate of 43 BC. The three triumvirs gave themselves supreme powers and decided to attack the republican forces in the East. Antony and Octavian defeated Cassius, Brutus and the republican forces at Philippi in 42 BC. Antony claimed the East and eventually married Cleopatra in 33 BC. Lepidus was given Africa. Octavian received Italy, Gaul and Spain. The ruling triumvirs fought among themselves, with Octavian claiming supreme power after defeating Antony in the naval battle at Actium in 31 BC. Octavian then occupied Egypt and returned to Rome in 29 BC

Octavian, known as Augustus, gained the leadership of the Roman Empire at the age of 32. He claimed that the Republic had been saved, although he only retained the outward forms of the Republic. He resigned his unlimited powers and announced the restoration of the Republic in 27 BC. The Senate in gratitude granted him many offices and titles over the next ten years. He refused any title or office which did not sound republican. He accepted various new powers which he felt were necessary for controlling Rome. Augustus had a great deal of control but allowed the Senate, which he reorganised, to have a theoretical share in government.

Augustus was granted proconsular power in the more important provinces and given *imperium* over the armies. He was elected consul annually until 23 BC, granted *tribunicia potestas*, which gave him the right to initiate or veto legislation, had the right to make war or peace and had the right to call meetings of the Senate. The titles of *imperator* and *augustus* were given him and after the death of Lepidus he was elected *pontifex maximus*.

In 2 AD he was given the title of *paterpatria*. As *princeps*, he voted first in the Senate and was the first consulted on appointments and nominations. Augustus used religious means to unify the empire and strengthen his position in it. Through the office of *pontifex maximus* he greatly influenced Roman religion. He also allowed the provinces to confer divine honours on him as he believed that this would strengthen his power in the East.

Augustus brought peace and prosperity to the empire. He overhauled the financial system, encouraged trade and industry, built roads, helped farmers and carried out a building program. Many fine buildings, aqueducts, theatres and temples were erected in the provinces as well as Rome. Among the finest structures in Rome were the Altar of Augustan Peace and the Pantheon, constructed at the direction of Agrippa. Augustus and his adviser Maecenas, encouraged and subsidised the best writers and artists, including Livy, Horace and Virgil.

Augustus reorganised the army, established a permanent fleet and established a special treasury to pay military pensions. He kept law and order, freed the seas from the threat of pirates and generally gave the people peace. During his rule the only conflict was along the borders. Augustus increased and strengthened his frontiers. He completed the conquest of Gaul and Rome, made Judea a province, defeated the Ethiopians thereby securing the southern frontier of Egypt, made peace with the Parthians and extended Rome's Balkan territory to the Danube River. His only military failure was in Germany

After a century of struggle and civil wars, Augustus in his reign of 45 years from 31 BC to 14 AD, had brought in a period of peace, prosperity and good administration. This along with architecture, buildings, writers, poets and artists created a period known as the glorious Age of Augustus.

Understanding the issues

1. Explanation of terms: *Imperium*; *princeps*; *tribunicia potestas*
2. Map Study: Show the extent of the Roman Empire at the time of Augustus
3. List the honours, titles and positions held by Augustus.
4. Debate the topic that Rome was never a republic at the time of Augustus
5. Research: The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* for Augustus' own account of his achievements.

6. Film study: From the film list the positive contributions that Augustus made to both Rome and the empire

FAMILY LIFE IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

In the Roman household, society was traditionally based on a patriarchal system. The socio-political structure was determined by the *familia*, which included all relatives of the oldest male of the clan, as well as freedmen or slaves. The head of the *familia* is the *pater familias* who has almost unlimited power (*patria potestas*) over its members.

The *pater familias* also has the responsibility to provide for his children. He had to ensure that they were properly educated and taught Roman values and religion. Everyone in the household was expected to respect and obey the *pater familias*.

Closely related to the concept of *familia* was the patronage system where a person of modest wealth and influence, placed himself under the protection of a powerful patron (*patronus*), thereby becoming his client. It was the duty of the patron to assist his clients in legal and business matters, employment or money. In return they gave him political and public support. Clients would come to the patron's house to greet and publicly demonstrate their loyalty to him. This is known as the *salutation* ritual.

Women in Rome were controlled by the *pater familias*. The most important roles for women were being a wife and a mother. They had no real political rights. They ran their households, raised children, supervised slaves and gave support to their husbands. Traditionally marriage had been of great importance to Romans, but changes were taking place. Women had gained more independence and were ready to make their own careers, to sacrifice a family role for a more commercial or influential one. Divorces increased as did the role of the *mater familias*.

Roman children went to school although some children were educated at home. In the time of Augustus, state schools were established. Children recited their times tables and alphabet as well as memorising passages of literature. Most girls were educated in household management, reading and writing.

Household gods brought protection and honour to the household. The gods of the house and family were called the *lares* and *penates*. The *lararium* was a shrine at which the head of the household would worship along with members of his family and slaves.

The head of the household maintained the special relation with the household gods through devotional prayers and rituals, such as the lighting of the sacred hearth fire. The worship of these household gods represented the continuity of family life and reinforced the service and responsibilities of citizens to the state.

Understanding the issues

1. Explanation of terms: *Pater familias*; *mater familias*; *lararium*; *pater potestas*; *salutation*; hearth; client
2. Outline the role of the *pater familias* in Roman society during this period
3. Research the format of Roman schools at this time and the nature of the curriculum
4. Discussion: The role of household gods in the lives of the Romans
5. Using the material from the film, analyse the role and position of women

FROM THE JULIO-CLAUDIANS TO THE FLAVIANS

In the First Century relatives of Augustus ruled the Roman Empire. While they did not have the personality, prominence or ability of Augustus, the basic structure of government was strong enough to outlast the Julio-Claudian emperors.

Tiberius was emperor from 14 to 37 AD. He was well equipped in many ways to continue the work of Augustus. He had proved himself an able general and administrator before the death of his stepfather. He assumed the powers of Augustus but was not diplomatic enough to co-operate with the Senate. In order to cut expenses, he reduced the funds for entertaining the people, which made him unpopular. Although the city of Rome suffered during his reign, Tiberius did aid the provinces.

Tiberius was succeeded in 37 AD by Gaius, more often called Caligula, who was the son of his nephew Germanicus. Caligula initially won over the Senate and the people by his promises, games and donations. However he was not of sound mind and declared himself a god and had his statue placed in temples. He became more tyrannical, killing people he hated or those he felt disliked him. In 41 AD he was assassinated by an officer of the Praetorian Guard. Fortunately many of his provincial officials were able men and the Empire stayed intact.

Claudius, an uncle of Caligula, became emperor in 41 AD. While the Senate was debating the question of a successor, the Praetorian Guard pressured the Senate to elect him. Claudius managed the empire well. He continued the plans of Caesar and Augustus for internal improvements, instituted a permanent bureaucracy and conquered southern Britain. Claudius was poisoned in 54 AD by his wife Agrippina, who wanted to place her son Nero by a former husband, on the throne.

During the first eight years of Nero's rule, Rome and the Empire were well governed. This was largely due to the work of his able minister Seneca and the Praetorian Prefect Burrus. After the death of Burrus and the forced retirement of Seneca, Nero became more tyrannical. He had his former wife Octavia and his mother killed. Many blamed Nero for the burning of Rome in 64 AD. In 68 AD his immoral behaviour, executions and extravagances resulted in a revolt, during which he committed suicide.

After the suicide of the last of the Julio-Claudians, a civil war ensued as one general after another tried to become emperor. Finally a member of the Flavian family acquired the throne and passed it on to his sons. The first Flavian Emperor, Vespasian, was recognised by the Senate and ruled from 69 to 79 AD. He took the name *Imperator*, but respected the Senate. He added some provincials from Gaul and Spain and put down numerous frontier revolts. Vespasian built up the treasury by taxes, tribute and a sound economy. The Colosseum was built in Rome during his reign. Titus the eldest son of Vespasian was a popular and capable leader and ruled briefly from 79 to 81 AD. During his reign Pompeii and Herculean were destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius. Domitian the second son of Vespasian was accepted as emperor by the Praetorian Guard in 81 AD, before he sought the sanction of the Senate. He became censor for life and controlled the Senate. He had his father deified and insisted he be addressed as a god. After numerous attempts on his life, he was assassinated in 96 AD. Overall the government of the first century did not change greatly in structure from that of Augustus.

Understanding the issues

1. Explanation of terms: Praetorian; succession; *princeps*; deified
2. Map study. Map the extension of the Roman Empire during the period of the Julio-Claudians and the Flavians

3. Research: The influence and intrigues of the Praetorian Guard during the period of the Julio-Claudians
4. Discussion: Does Caligula deserve his reputation as an insane and tyrannical ruler?
5. Film study: In what ways does the film highlight building works and entertainment during the Flavian period?

POMPEII AND HERCULANEUM

During the short reign of Titus, Pompeii and Herculaneum were destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius on August 24, 79 AD. Buried by the rain of ash, pumice and volcanic mud, they lay entombed for more than sixteen centuries. The excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum have provided an insight into Roman life, society and politics in the first century.

At the time of the so called Social Wars of 91-88 BC, Pompeii and Herculaneum were made *municipiums*, provincial towns dependent on Rome, with their inhabitants becoming Roman citizens. Pompeii was a fortified town with eight gates that closed every evening. The expansion of the city followed the standard Hellenistic pattern with a strict grid of elongated blocks known as *insulae*. A number of thoroughfares crisscrossed the city. Herculaneum was smaller in size and population than Pompeii and with its position near the sea and its many fine residences, was a popular resort for wealthy Romans.

The Forum was the centre of life in both Pompeii and Herculaneum and was the location of many of the more important buildings. Pompeii's Forum is outstanding both in its architecture and in its grandiose nature. The Basilica, the Temple of Apollo and the Temple of Jupiter are fine examples of the different architectural styles of the period. The theatres in both Pompeii and Herculaneum show the features of Greek models. The Amphitheatre in Pompeii is a large elliptical structure where the citizens could enjoy gladiatorial contests. The Large Palaestra at Pompeii was built at the time of Augustus and had a cross shaped swimming pool and efficient sanitary systems. In Pompeii people had access to a number of baths. The oldest of these was the Stabian Baths, with facilities for both men and women. In Herculaneum, patrons could use the Central Baths, while the Suburban Baths were frequented by the wealthy classes.

In Pompeii there were no separate residential or industrial areas and homes, shops, taverns and workshops were situated alongside each other. In Herculaneum there was a distinct upper class quarter, an elegant waterfront terrace of mansions arranged on different levels.

The House of the Vettii, excavated in Pompeii in 1895 and the House of the Mosaic Atrium in Herculaneum, give a good insight into how wealthy citizens lived.

Understanding the issues

1. Explanation of terms: Pumice, *municipiums*, *insulae*, amphitheatre, palaestra, atrium
2. Map Study: On a map of the region of Campania, locate Herculaneum, Pompeii, Mount Vesuvius, Naples, Misenum
3. Research: The structure and operation of the public baths in Pompeii and Herculaneum
4. List the types of sport and entertainment available to the people of Pompeii and Herculaneum.
5. Read the account by Pliny the Younger on the events of August 24, 79 AD
6. Film Study: What aspects of social and religious life in Pompeii and Herculaneum are revealed in the film? How does this help our understanding of Rome?

FROM NERVA TO MARCUS AURELIUS

The Roman Empire expanded to its greatest size and prosperity during the rule of these emperors. The emperor's powers and responsibilities gradually increased, even though the Senate and elected magistrates continued to function. The emperor continued to hold powers such as *princeps* and *imperator* and to control the army. The first emperor of this period was Nerva, who ruled from 96 to 98 AD. By recognising the Senate, he had their co-operation during his short term. He provided large funds for farm loans, but his most important act was to appoint as his successor the able general and administrator, Trajan. Trajan was reared in Spain and had a good understanding of the problems of the empire. He is regarded as one of the great generals of the Roman Empire.

He conquered Dacia and the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, annexed Armenia and fought against the Parthians. Trajan's Forum was dedicated in 112 AD and Trajan's Column in Rome commemorates his victory in the war against Dacia. Before he died in 117 AD, he chose his cousin Hadrian as his successor.

Hadrian was a Stoic philosopher and was devoted to the wellbeing of Rome and the empire. He was a reformer, a tolerant ruler, a patron of the arts and an admirer of Hellenism. Hadrian spent two thirds of his reign in the provinces. Along the frontiers he built strong fortifications and encouraged the local people to volunteer in the army. He extended the frontier in Britain and built a wall to hold back the barbarians. This wall, part of which remains today, is known as Hadrian's Wall. He defeated and slaughtered the Jews in 134 AD, when they tried to recapture a new city built on the site of Jerusalem. Hadrian also instituted a postal system to communicate with the frontiers of the empire. One of his significant reforms was the collecting and codifying of laws and edicts. Hadrian erected many important buildings in all parts of the empire, one of which was his own tomb in Rome.

He also rebuilt the Pantheon between 118 and 128 AD.

Hadrian died in 138 AD and his successor was the elderly senator, Titus Aurelius Antonius. He continued the policies of his predecessor and his reign was a period of peace and prosperity. When he died in 161 AD he was succeeded by his son in law, Marcus Aurelius. Marcus Aurelius was a Stoic philosopher and genuinely cared about the plight of the poor. During his rule Roman provinces were again invaded by the Parthians in 161 AD, before the Parthian capitals were taken and the enemy defeated in 165 AD. Germanic tribes invaded the Danube region and north eastern Italy in 167 AD but were completely defeated by 180 AD.

Christianity also spread during this period resulting in some persecution of Christians as a perceived result of their activities. Marcus Aurelius died in 180 AD.

Understanding the issues

1. Explanation of terms: Stoic philosopher; Hellenism; Pantheon; codifying laws
2. Map study: Plot the route of Hadrian's Wall in Britain
3. Research: Chose one of the structures built during this period. Describe the structure and its characteristics

4. Discussion: In what ways could this period be the ‘The Age of the Good Emperors?’
5. Film Study: Outline the positive features of the rule of Trajan, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius as shown in the film.

THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Following the end of the rule of Marcus Aurelius in 180, few emperors were capable of ruling the empire. Rome was threatened by corruption at home and military setbacks abroad. In the period from 235-285 some twenty army leaders, in rapid succession, were named emperor by their troops and then deposed. The Emperor Diocletian became emperor in 285 and introduced a series of reforms that halted the military anarchy. With the empire besieged from many directions, he saw the value of having two strong leaders. He divided the empire into east and west and appointed an army officer, Maximian, to rule the western part as co-emperor. In 305 Diocletian and Maximian resigned and were replaced by the son of Maximian and Constantine. Constantine defeated his rivals to become sole emperor in 324. He converted to Christianity and established Constantinople as the new capital of the empire. After his death in 337, dual emperors were again established. The great problem of Constantine’s successors was to hold back the barbarian onslaught. The Goths led by Alaric, looted Rome in 410. Vandals invaded Gaul and Spain, set up a kingdom at Carthage, and sacked Rome in 455. In 476 a Roman army, consisting largely of Germans, overthrew Romulus Augustus, who was regarded as the last Roman emperor.