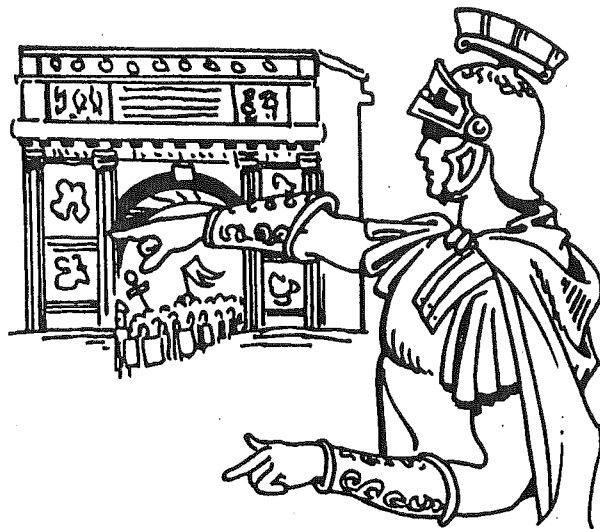


# The Roman Empire in its Glory

Mighty Rome was buckling under the pressure of barbarians in 476 A.D. How could it happen to a nation once so mighty, so rich, and so well organized? In its days of glory, around 117 A.D., the Roman Empire had extended from northern England across to the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, where some of the world's first civilizations were born. The Rhine and Danube Rivers had separated the Romans from the small and primitive Germanic tribes



People could travel in safety in the Roman Empire.

to the north, and the Nile valley was the empire's southern border. The water highway for most of this region was the Mediterranean Sea, which the Romans called *Mare Nostrum* (Our Sea).

But there were land highways as well, and as the saying went, "All roads lead to Rome." The famed Appian Way ran south and east from Rome and connected it with the Adriatic Sea. The Flaminian Way connected Rome with the northeast. Across these water and land highways flowed goods from all over the known world: perfumes and medicines from Arabia, ivory and gold from Africa, furs from the Baltic regions, and food products from all parts of southern Europe. Ships called galleys, powered by wind and slaves, provided goods from exotic places to people hundreds of miles from their source. They also brought people in strange clothing and different shades of skin to the roadways connecting the empire.

Cities were an important part of this vast empire, both as centers of trade and government. Among them (using their modern names) were London in England, Marseille in France, Tarragona in Spain, Carthage in Tunisia, Cyrene in Libya, Alexandria in Egypt, Jerusalem in Israel, Antioch, Tarsus, and Ephesus in Turkey, and Athens in Greece. A new city, which would play an important part in history, developed later. It was Constantinople (now Istanbul), located where the Black Sea connects with the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas.

Much had been gained by having such an empire. People were more secure in what they owned, and as they traveled, they were protected by the Roman army. This period of safety and security became known as the *Pax Romana* (the Peace of Rome). The Roman legions were made up of professional soldiers working under the tight discipline of their commanders. They made fighting a science, and one enemy after another fell to them. However, as the empire increased in size, and serving in the army lost its appeal to Romans, noncitizens were hired to do their fighting for them. These soldiers often had very little loyalty to Rome; they were faithful only to their general.

Another benefit of Roman rule was the common language, Latin, that made it possible for a person from Spain to talk with a person from Turkey. Other languages were also spoken by the common people, but Latin held pretty much the same position in its time as English does today.

Yet, as vast and successful as the Roman Empire was, things were beginning to change. The mighty Rome that once ruled the known world had lost much of its strength by 476 and was easy prey to the barbarians who attacked.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

## CHALLENGES

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1. What two rivers separated the Romans from the Germanic tribes?

2. What African river valley was at the southern tip of the empire?

3. What body of water was called the *Mare Nostrum*?

4. Name two major Roman highways.

5. What modern English city was called "Londonium" by the Romans?

6. What was the leading Greek city in Roman times?

7. How were Roman galleys powered?

8. What does the phrase "*Pax Romana*" mean?

9. Were most of the common soldiers in the army citizens?

10. What language was most often used in the Roman Empire?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. The Roman Empire was about seven tenths (70 percent) as large as the United States. Why was communication within this area such a serious problem?

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2. As a noncitizen who was a merchant in the empire, what would you see as the advantages and disadvantages of the *Pax Romana*?

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~~3. Latin was the common language of that time, and it carried over into English and many other languages. Look in a dictionary that shows the origin of words, and see how many of the first 20 on the page are marked with an "L" for Latin. List them here.~~

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