

Rome: Citizens and Slaves

When you think about life in Canada, do you see great promise or serious problems? Perhaps you see both.

When we look at the past, we see that life has always been full of **contradictions** [kon-truh-DIK-shuns]—things that seem to tell us two different stories at the same time. Wealth and poverty, laws and chaos, freedom and oppression—all these seem to occur at the same time in societies everywhere.

In this chapter, you can learn about the contradictions in the powerful Roman Empire. Historians often talk about the “grandeur of Rome” because of the great achievements of the energetic and practical Roman people. But ancient Rome was an empire built on slave labour and the conquest of nations. When you study this great civilization, you’ll find the best and worst of what humans have accomplished. You might also find that the Roman civilization seems familiar. That’s because our own civilization has so much in common—both good and bad—with Rome.

The Romans and Their Empire

Today you can find remains of Roman forts, roads, and bridges scattered across a vast region. You could visit the huge wall they built across northern England, a market in Turkey, or the ancient roads in Tunisia. The map on this page

shows the many lands that were part of the Roman Empire between 100 and 200 CE. About 60 million people lived within this region—about one-fifth of the world's population at that time.

The Romans conquered much of the ancient world in Europe, northern Africa, and Asia, and then connected it all with a huge network of roads. These roads joined hundreds of cultures that had been isolated from one another. How did Roman roads “shrink” the world, just as the Internet is “shrinking” our world today?



Today 500 million people live in the lands once ruled by Rome. Though the number of people is much greater, it's only one-twelfth of the current world population.

In Roman times, Europeans knew few of the world's peoples, so it seemed that Rome ruled the world.

How did the people of one ancient city come to be so powerful? The story is a long one, covering almost a thousand years. It begins in a group of villages occupied by a people known as the "Latins." Over hundreds of years, the Latins

gradually conquered all the other peoples in their area. Taking advantage of the skills they had acquired as warriors, they then pushed beyond the lands they knew well. Eventually they controlled the greatest empire of the ancient world.

Try This

1. Work in a small group to compare the map of the Roman Empire with a current world map. Find and list the modern countries that were once part of the Roman Empire. Describe the extent of the empire.
2. Make a bar graph to compare the population of the Roman Empire in 150 CE (60 million) with the world population of the time (300 million). Describe the ratio.
3. Speculate on possible long-term effects of such a large portion of the world's population living under one rule.

A Safe and Abundant Land

The early Latins lived on the plain south of the Tiber [TY-bur] River. The land here is flat and fertile, unlike the land in other parts of Italy. The climate of the region is warm, with plentiful rainfall. It is ideal for farming. The people found it easy to produce enough to feed a large population.

Rome began as one of many Latin villages along the Tiber River. This village offered an excellent site for a large settlement because it sat among seven hills. The hills made it hard for invaders to approach the city unseen. The hillsides could be seen from the city, and the hilltops served as lookout points. At the same time, Rome's location on the banks of the Tiber River meant that

people could travel easily to and from the sea. People traded along the river and with sea-going traders from other parts of the Mediterranean. Over time, Rome became the centre for government and trade for all the Latin villages. It became so central to Latin society that the Latins eventually became known as the Romans.

An Ambitious People

Rome's location was important not just for its natural advantages. It also placed the Romans between two ancient civilizations: the Etruscan civilization to the north and the Greek civilization to the south and southeast. The Romans saw the value of taking the best ideas from these and other peoples and adapting them to their own use.

Reading Hint

Rome had many advantages that allowed it to become an empire. As you read this chapter, note Rome's natural advantages and the advantages the people themselves created, such as a huge army.

Try This

Three natural features made Rome ideal as a site for a city. These included the fertile, flat land nearby, the river that ran beside it, and the hills that surrounded it. In a three-column chart, make jot-notes describing how each feature made life easier for the Romans, and added to their growing power.

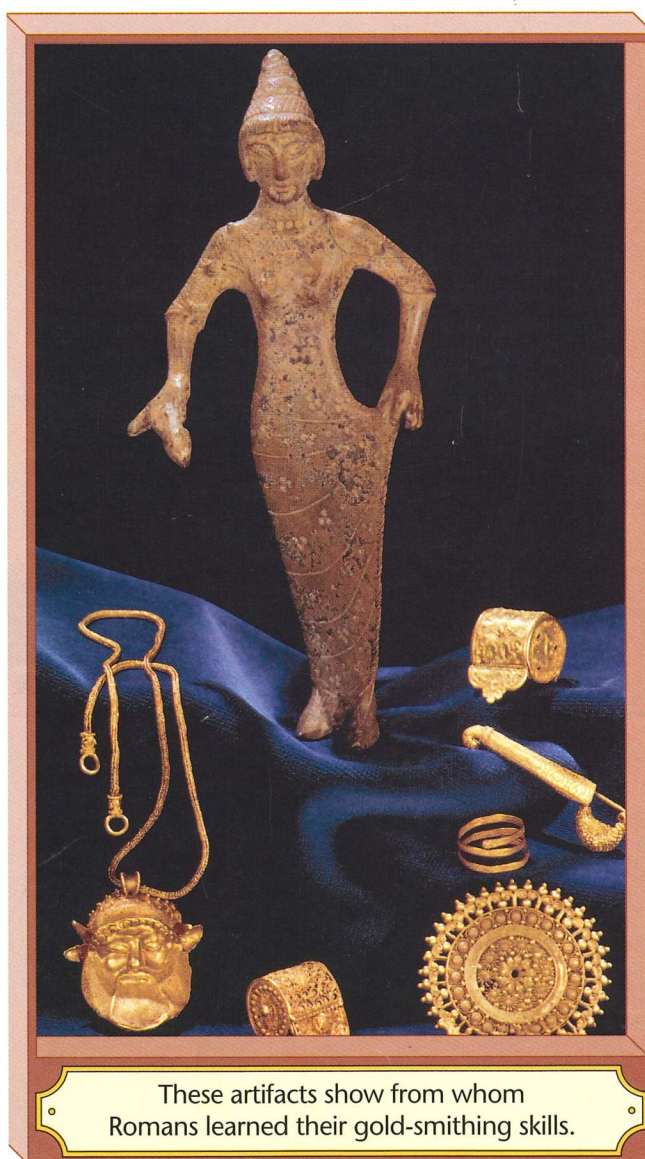
Fertile flat land	River location	Surrounding hills

The Etruscans were the wealthy trading people who had cleared the forests and begun farming in the area north of Rome. The Romans copied and developed their great engineering and artistic skills. In very early times, the Etruscans had ruled the Romans. They taught the Romans their techniques for making everything from wine and olive oil to ships and **aqueducts** [AK-wuh-dukts]. The Roman people despised their Etruscan rulers, however, for being cruel and greedy. They finally overthrew these rulers in 509 BCE.

The Romans also learned from the Greeks, who had many settlements south of Rome on the Italian Peninsula. The Romans used many Greek innovations, including Greek art and architecture, and even the Greek alphabet. They admired the Greeks' love of knowledge and excellence, and often brought Greeks to Rome to work as teachers. Most important, the Romans modelled their system of government and law on the democratic ideas of the Greeks.

The Romans learned many things from the Etruscans who ruled over them for so many centuries. For example, they learned how to make beautiful objects out of gold like the Etruscan jewellery shown here.

Aqueducts are a type of bridge for supporting a water pipe over a river or valley.



These artifacts show from whom Romans learned their gold-smithing skills.

From Village to Empire

Rome's story, from its beginnings as a collection of villages to its height as the centre of the European world, and then to the collapse of its great

empire, took about 1000 years. During that time, the ancient Romans had three different forms of government: a monarchy, a democracy, and a dictatorship.

800–509 BCE

The Kingdom

Etruscan monarchs rule Rome. In a **monarchy**, kings or queens rule. The right to rule is inherited.

509 BCE–27 BCE

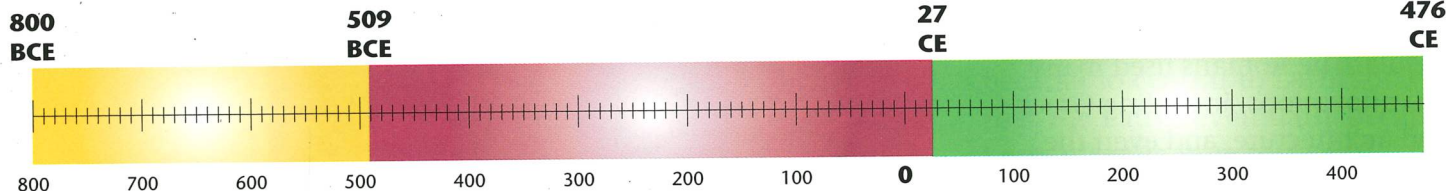
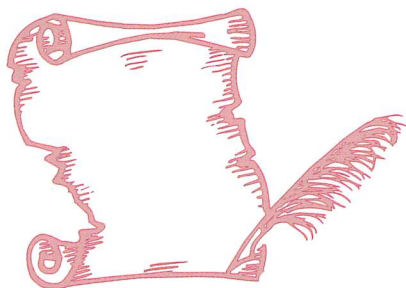
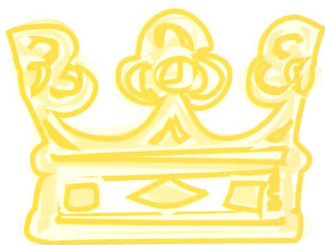
The Roman Republic

The Romans overthrow the Etruscans in 509 BCE. They set up a **republic**, which is a form of democratic government in which the people hold the power. Male citizens have the right to vote. The first laws are established.

27 CE–476 CE

The Roman Empire

In a series of wars, Roman generals fight for control of Rome. The republic is overthrown, and Rome becomes a dictatorship. In a **dictatorship**, one person—in this case, an emperor—holds all the power.



Important Events in the History of Rome

753 BCE	According to legend, twins named Romulus and Remus, who were brought up by a she-wolf, founded Rome.
450 BCE	Rome creates a code of laws called the Twelve Tables.
219 BCE	Hannibal crosses the Alps with elephants and attacks Rome.
146 BCE	Rome destroys Carthage.
49 BCE	Julius Caesar seizes control of Rome.
117 CE	The Roman Empire reaches its greatest extent.
410 CE	The Visigoths [VIZ-ih-goths], a Germanic people, sack Rome.
476 CE	Odoacer [oh-doh-AY-sur], a German, overthrows the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus [ROM-yuh-lus uh-GUST-yuh-lus].

Try This

1. With a partner, research one of the events listed in the table above. Together, create an illustration of your event. Then, as a class, use your pictures to create an illustrated time line as a classroom display.
2. Take turns using your class time line to tell or dramatize the story of Rome.

Building an Empire

In the city of Rome, the temple of the god Janus [JANE-us] could be closed only in peacetime. In almost 500 years, its gates were closed only twice.



Strength of an Army

The Roman Empire expanded because its backbone—the army—was strong. By the time the Romans had conquered their neighbouring enemies, they had become expert warriors. Then, for almost 500 years, from around 300 BCE until 200 CE, Rome waged war. Rome's army first conquered all of Italy, and then defeated the Greeks. It spread west and east, capturing one land after another.

At first, the army was made up of Roman citizens. Most served for 20–25 years. Soldiers were trained not only to fight but also to build forts and roads. These were needed to control the **provinces**, as Rome's conquered lands were known. Many soldiers served as police officers, keeping the peace in the provinces. Even when assigned to work far from Rome, they built settlements with all the comforts of a Roman town.

While on the march, every Roman soldier carried a heavy load of tools, arms, and shield, as well as personal possessions. What advantages would this practice bring the army?

As the empire grew, the army hired soldiers from other lands.

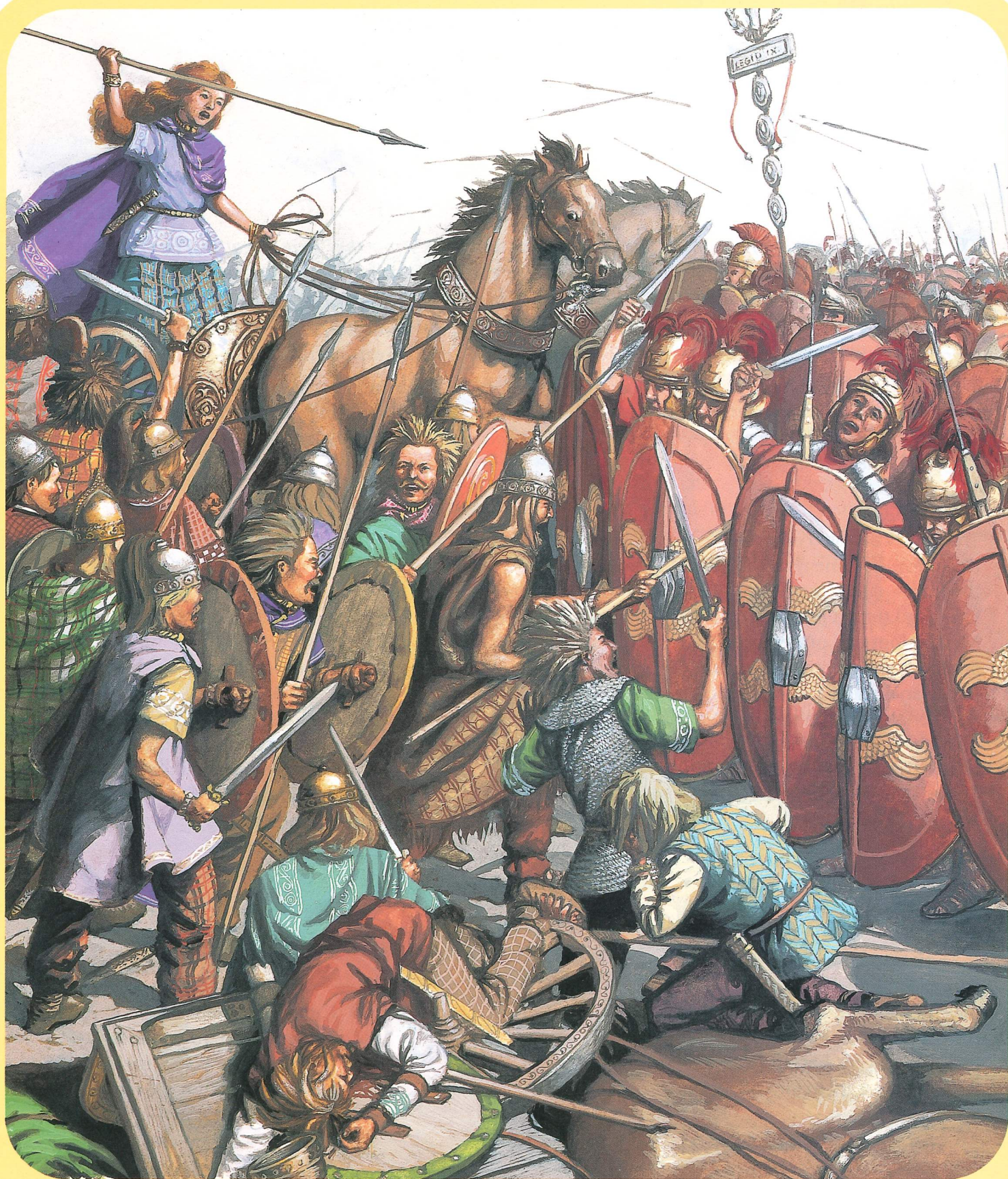
Over their long history as warriors, the Romans became masters of warfare. Their army grew into the most organized and efficient in the ancient world. The strength of the Roman army came from tough discipline, effective weaponry, and skillful military strategy. Here are some examples of the advantages the Romans took into battle.

Armour: Roman soldiers wore curved plates of iron or steel to protect themselves from their enemies' swords.

Shields: The oblong, curved shields gave excellent protection. In battle, the Roman soldiers would use their shields to make a wall.

Troop Formation: The army was organized into **legions** of 4000 to 6000 soldiers. Each legion was made up of about ten units. Each of these was made up of six groups of 80 men and a commander. In battle, each group of 80 moved as a unit. The legion commander gave orders through trumpet signals.

Cavalry: The **cavalry**—soldiers on horseback—rode on both sides of the foot soldiers. Unlike soldiers in chariots, the cavalry soldiers could move quickly to any spot.



[A flurry of spears had hailed down upon the War Host, stopping the best warriors in their tracks.] Horses were down ... dragging their chariots with them; and the second wave of chariots, too close to pull clear, went crashing headlong into them, making a still more hideous confusion ... suddenly the shape of the enemy was changing ... it was becoming a wedge. A vast, terrible shield-flanked wedge, fanged and taloned with ripping sword-blades, driving into the gap that their spears had torn open for them, and thrusting on—and on.

The Red Crests' trumpets were screaming like angry hawks above the battle-roar; the shouted war cries and the shrieks of horses and the crash of splintering chariots.

The Queen ... sprang into her chariot, and screamed something ... was waving up the last reserves of chariots. I saw them hurtling forward like a winter skein of wild geese....

My throat was full of the smell of blood and sweat and the choking dust-cloud out of which men and horses reeled to and fro ... Fresh waves of the enemy pressing in on us from the wings, cavalry bursting in upon our close-

packed foot warriors, hacking their way through....

Our battle mass was being cut to rags—separate, desperate bands of men gathered about a chieftain ... dying where they fell among the still-thrashing legs of wounded chariot ponies ... Suddenly all around me men were running, with wide eyes and open mouths, some even flinging their spears away ... And then I understood ... It was not the Red Crests, but we, who were in the trap.

From Rosemary Sutcliff, *Song for a Dark Queen*, (London: Pelham Books Ltd. 1978), pp.150–57

Think For Yourself

Review the section on page 178 that describes some of the advantages the Roman army had over its opponents. Then reread the story above. As you read, jot down some notes under each of the following headings to explain how each influenced the outcome of the battle.

- The Roman spears
- The Celtic chariots
- The Roman cavalry
- The formation of the Roman foot soldiers

Use your jot notes to discuss with a partner the Roman Red Crests' advantages over the Celtic War Host.

To make a list of jot-notes, write down important points, not necessarily in sentence form, nor in order of importance. Jot-notes help when you want to summarize something or write a paragraph.