

Keeping an Empire

The Roman Empire bound millions of people together under a common official language and a common rule of law. People far from Rome ended up living, thinking, and speaking Latin like Romans. What language dominates in the world today?

Each victory brought the Romans more strength and more land. But a bigger challenge for Rome was to keep its empire. Rome soon learned that it was better to embrace its former enemies than to destroy them. A destroyed city cannot become a trading partner.

Keeping Order

The Romans knew they could not rule their huge empire by force alone. Their victories usually ended with a **peace treaty**—an agreement

between two parties that want to stop fighting. Because Rome always won, the treaties always favoured Rome. For example, taxes were paid to Rome, not the other way around. Despite this, Rome ruled its conquered peoples in a way that made them feel part of the empire.

By providing the people they defeated with some of the benefits of being Roman, Rome could keep the peace. People were allowed to travel and trade anywhere within the empire. Roman laws protected their rights. Eventually, Roman citizenship was given to everyone in the empire except slaves. In return for loyalty to Rome, conquered people were allowed to keep their customs and, to a certain extent, govern themselves.

The Roman government also brought services to the people in their provinces. It provided soldiers to work as builders, engineers, and farmers. They built towns and cities connected by excellent roads. Roman soldiers drained marshes and cleared forests to make fertile farmland.

As long as the people of the empire worshipped Roman gods and goddesses, they were permitted to worship their own gods as well. Roman deities eventually included several dead emperors, such as Augustus, whose statue is shown here.



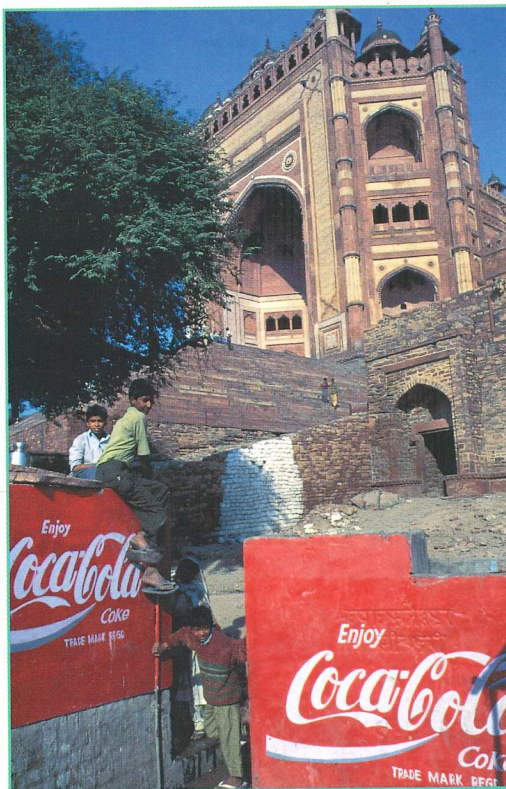
Latin, the language of the Romans, became the main language of much of the empire. French, Spanish, and Italian all evolved from Latin. Even in English, almost half the words come from Latin.

Although many conquered peoples were forced to work on these massive projects, the projects themselves were usually beneficial to all.

The Romans took Greek ideas of government and used them to shape a system of government based on laws and rules. They developed laws for almost everything—inheritance, women's rights, money dealings, treatment of slaves, and the behaviour expected of citizens. Over time, all people under Roman rule could depend on the same laws.

People in Rome's provinces were not all happy with Roman rule. After all, their way of life was changed—usually forever—after it fell under Roman rule. Languages disappeared, lands were seized and given to wealthy Romans, and people found themselves with a new government that they had not chosen. Some people merely lost their freedom to

rule themselves; others lost all their freedom because the Romans made them slaves.



Travellers today find that certain products, films, and fashions appear wherever they go. Most of these are American, like the soft drink advertised on this wall in India. What similarity do you see between modern and Roman times?

Try This

1. As a group, discuss the pros and cons that faced communities that were ruled by the Romans. Record your ideas on chart paper, using a T-chart with pros on one side and cons on the other.
2. Think about the following statement and question and jot down some of your thoughts.

"The Roman government used its power to improve the lives of its citizens. How was its use of power similar to and different from the way other ancient governments used their power?"

Read the example in the chart at right, and think of two other examples.

Similar goal

Both the Greeks and Romans increased their citizens' wealth by creating trade.

Different use of power

The Romans got new trading partners by conquering other lands, whereas the Greeks increased trade by starting colonies.



A Closer Look

Public Works

The Romans were some of the greatest builders and engineers of the ancient world. With the wealth that flowed into Rome—from trade, taxes, and conquests—it paid for huge public-works projects throughout its empire. The Roman army built bridges and roads, forts and meeting halls,

aqueducts and public baths.

The Romans built many structures from concrete. They were the first people to combine sand, stone, cement (lime and clay), and water to make concrete. These ingredients were cheaper and easier to transport than stone and made long-lasting structures.



Though they had no bulldozers, dynamite, or power tools, the Romans connected their empire with thousands of kilometres of bridges and roads. This road in Italy is called the Via Appia. Many like it are still in use today. Do you think the road in front of your school will last for 2000 years?

Water was brought into Roman towns and cities through aqueducts like this one in Spain (at right). This one was built of stones, with no mortar (cement). It still carries water today.



Romans built many public baths like this one in England. Every day, they would go to the bath, get their skin oiled and scraped by their servants, and then relax in a series of hot and cold pools. It was a great place to chat with friends.

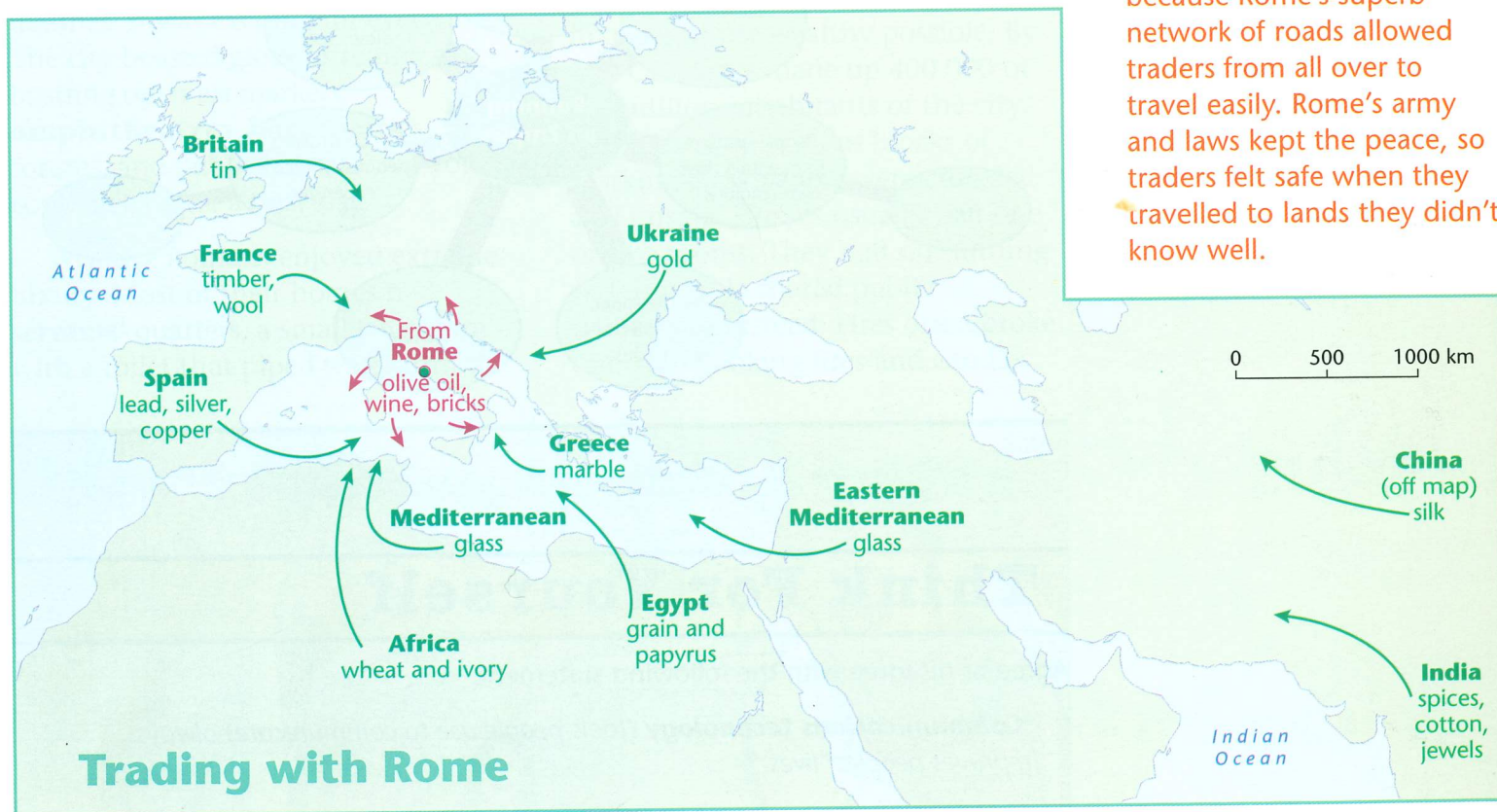
Economic Opportunities for All

Rome gained enormous economic power through its position as the largest centre of trade in the ancient world. Goods poured into the city from the lands of the empire and beyond. With each new province, Rome gained another trading partner. The new province also gained trading partners, so everyone enjoyed a better standard of living.

The Roman army and laws eventually brought peace to many countries. Around 100 CE, Emperor Hadrian halted the conquest of new lands. He concentrated instead on keeping peace and order throughout the empire. This period of peace lasted about 200 years. The Roman soldiers made it safe to travel long distances over good roads. Roman towns became centres where people travelled to buy and sell goods.

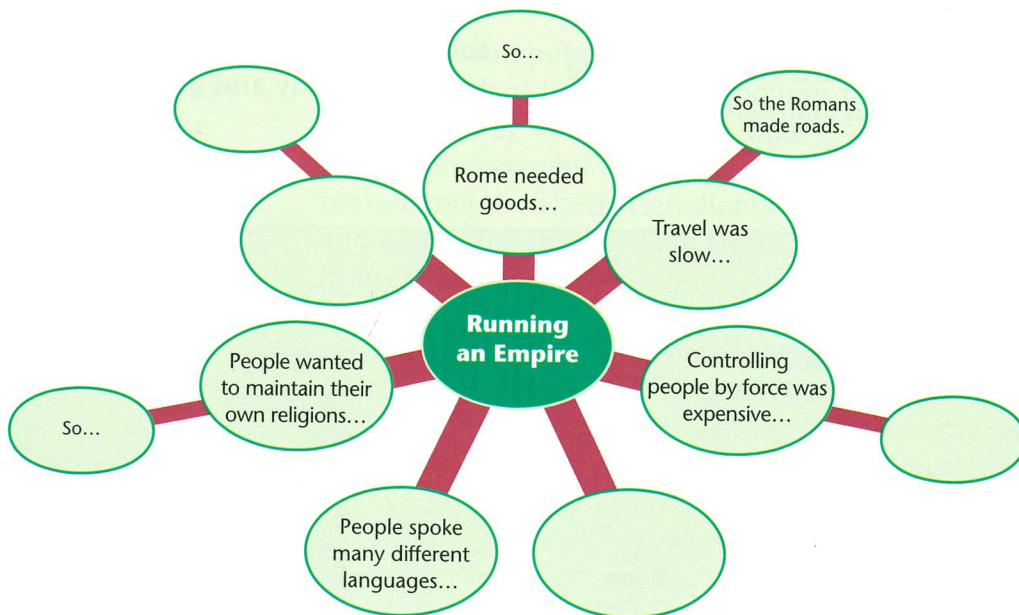
Ever heard the saying, "All roads lead to Rome"? Now you know why they do.

Rome was rich in everything the world had to offer because Rome's superb network of roads allowed traders from all over to travel easily. Rome's army and laws kept the peace, so traders felt safe when they travelled to lands they didn't know well.



Try This

The Romans maintained a vast empire for over a thousand years. Running an empire, however, is a task riddled with problems. Make a web with "Running an Empire" at the centre. List various problems in bubbles at the next level, and Roman solutions at the third level. Copy the one below, and enlarge it.



Think For Yourself

Agree or disagree with the following statement.

"Communications technology (tools people use to communicate) always improves peoples' lives."

Give reasons for your opinion, using an example from Roman times and an example from modern times. Meet with another person to share your thinking.