

# Civil War in Rome and the End of the Roman Republic

## I. Tiberius Gracchus and land reform

- a. The lower classes (plebeians) were suffering
  - i. 133 BCE – Tiberius Gracchus was elected as tribune of the plebeians
  - ii. He promised land reform
- b. Tiberius Gracchus told the people: “You fight and die to give luxury to other men...but you have not a foot of ground to call your own.”
  - i. Wanted to limit the amount of land each person could own
  - ii. Wanted to rebuild the farming class by redistributing land
  - iii. The patricians were not pleased with Tiberius Gracchus
  - iv. Tiberius Gracchus and hundreds of his followers were murdered

## II. Gaius Gracchus and reform

- a. Gaius was elected tribune in 122 BCE, about ten years after his brother was murdered
- b. He also wanted land reform
- c. Gaius wanted even more than land reform
- d. Gaius wanted the government to sell grain to the poor at reduced prices (subsidization)
- e. Gaius proposed that landless Romans be settled in the provinces
- f. Gaius wanted a public works program to employ the poor
- g. Gaius wanted to reform the way that taxes were collected by publicans in the provinces
- h. Gaius wanted to decrease the Senate’s power
- i. Riots erupted – in 121 BCE, he was killed along with thousands of his supporters

## III. Differing parties continued to argue

- a. Optimates
  - i. Senatorial party
  - ii. Wanted to maintain the position and power of the wealthy patrician class
- b. Populares
  - i. People’s party
  - ii. Had its strength in the Comitia (Assembly)
  - iii. Wanted reforms

## IV. Military dictators come to power

- a. Why did military dictators come to power?
  - i. Constant fighting in Rome between the rich and poor
  - ii. Restlessness in the provinces
  - iii. Slave rebellions (e.g., Spartacus)
  - iv. Barbarian invasions (though not as serious as they became during the era of the Roman empire)
  - v. The people needed strong leadership

## V. Gaius Marius (circa 157-86 BCE)

- a. A leader of the Populares
  - i. Elected consul in 107 BCE
- b. Successful military victories
  - i. North Africa (106 BCE) against a rebellious chieftain
  - ii. North Italy (102-101 BCE) against Germanic invaders
- c. Elected consul seven times

- d. Army reform
  - i. Formed a paid, volunteer, professional army staffed by Rome's landless people (no more property qualifications)
  - ii. Soldiers shared in the spoils of war and earned pensions upon completion of their service
- e. Struggled with Lucius Sulla for power

## VI. Lucius Sulla (circa 138-78 BCE)

- a. Patrician member of the Senate
- b. Military victories
  - i. 91 BCE – revolt of Roman allies who wanted full citizenship rights
    - 1. These people eventually won Roman citizenship, but not before Sulla had secured his reputation as a leader
  - ii. 87 BCE – revolt by King Mithridates in Asia Minor
    - 1. Assembly chose Gaius Marius for the same job
    - 2. Armies fought in Rome – Sulla won and marched off to Asia Minor
- c. Marius and his supporters came to power in Rome while Sulla was away
  - i. Killed many leaders in the Senate
  - ii. Sulla came back to Rome in 82 BCE
  - iii. Sulla killed thousands of Marius' followers and confiscated their property as booty for his troops
- d. Sulla ruled as dictator for three years
  - i. Gave the Senate back control of the government
  - ii. Then he retired

## VII. The First Triumvirate

- a. The First Triumvirate was an unofficial (and at first secret) pact to control Rome
- b. From 60 to 53 BCE
- c. Members:
  - i. Pompey
  - ii. Marcus Crassus
  - iii. Julius Caesar

## VIII. Pompey (106-48 BCE)

- a. A general under Sulla
- b. Military victories
  - i. Cleared pirates out of the Mediterranean
  - ii. Put down a revolt in Iberia (Spain)
  - iii. Finished Sulla's fight against King Mithridates
  - iv. Conquered Palestine (Israel and Judea) and Syria for Rome
- c. Became angry with the Senate
  - i. Senate did not give him full recognition for his achievements
  - ii. Senate refused to pay his soldiers

## IX. Marcus Crassus (115-53 BCE)

- a. General who defeated Spartacus
- b. Became wealthy by devious means
  - i. Abusing the proscription system
    - 1. Proscription was the legal confiscation of property of those who had fought against those now in power
    - 2. Crassus repeatedly had at least one person, whose fortune he coveted, added to the proscription list
  - ii. Bought burning buildings
    - 1. Heard a building was on fire, then ran to buy it as it was burning
    - 2. After buying it, he'd have his people put out the fire before too much damage was done

- a. The traditional Roman firefighting method was to destroy a burning building in order to save the structures surrounding it

#### X. Julius Caesar (100-44 BCE)

- a. Elected consul in 59 BCE
- b. Military victories
  - i. 59-51 BCE – brought the Gauls (in modern-day France) under Roman rule
    1. He wrote the famous *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars*

#### XI. The First Triumvirate

- a. Pompey
  - i. His perk – soldiers
  - ii. Became leader of Italy
- b. Marcus Crassus
  - i. His perk – money
  - ii. Became leader of Rome's eastern provinces
- c. Julius Caesar
  - i. His perk – popularity
  - ii. Became proconsul of Gaul (modern France)

#### XII. Trouble in paradise

- a. 53 BCE – Crassus killed in battle against the Parthians
  - i. This ended the First Triumvirate
- b. Pompey was jealous of the successes Caesar was having in Gaul
  - i. Pompey talked the Senate into demanding that Caesar return to Rome as a private citizen (without his troops)

#### XIII. Crossing the Rubicon

- a. Caesar had a decision to make
  - i. Following the Senate's orders = powerlessness before Pompey
  - ii. Disobeying the Senate's orders = violating Roman law
- b. Rubicon River
  - i. River in northern Italy
  - ii. Tradition and law said that soldiers had to disband before crossing this river into Italy
- c. "The die is cast. I have crossed the Rubicon." – Julius Caesar
  - i. He led his troops across the Rubicon River
  - ii. Once he crossed the river, he could not take back his decision to face (and fight) Pompey

#### XIV. Caesar chases Pompey to Egypt

- a. Pompey fled to Greece
  - i. Pompey, who had more soldiers, made serious military blunders
  - ii. Caesar said of Pompey: "Today the enemy would have won, if they had a commander who was a winner," and, "That man does not know how to win a war."
  - iii. Caesar went after him, defeating Pompey at Pharsalus in 48 BCE
- b. Pompey fled to Egypt
  - i. Ptolemy XIII, knowing Caesar's army was in pursuit of Pompey, killed Pompey rather than give him shelter
  - ii. Ptolemy later presented Pompey's severed head to Julius Caesar
- c. Julius Caesar met Cleopatra VII of Egypt
  - i. She was a co-ruler, alongside her husband/younger brother, Ptolemy XIII
  - ii. Caesar restored Cleopatra to her throne
  - iii. He also had a son with Cleopatra, Caesarion, born in 47 BCE

#### XV. "Veni, vidi, vici!"

- a. Julius Caesar left and won victories in the east
  - i. Mocked Pompey's previous efforts in the region
  - ii. Sent word to Rome: "Veni, vidi, vici!" ("I came, I saw, I conquered!")
- b. Military victories left Julius Caesar as sole ruler of Rome

- i. Defeated remnants of the senatorial party in north Africa
- ii. Defeated Pompey's sons in Spain
- c. Julius Caesar returned to Rome in 45 BCE
  - i. Aided by his close friend, Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony)

**XVI. Julius Caesar's reforms**

- a. Adopted a program of public works
- b. Distributed public lands to Roman citizens
- c. Granted Roman citizenship to many people in Rome's provinces
- d. Reformed provincial governments
- e. Reformed the calendar (the "Julian" calendar with 365 days and an extra day during leap years)
- f. Reorganized the Roman system of coinage

**XVII. Dictator for life**

- a. The Senate disliked many of Caesar's reforms and feared his popularity and power
- b. Ides of March (March 15, 44 BCE)
  - i. Senators conspired to assassinate Caesar
  - ii. Mark Antony tried to stop Caesar from entering the Senate, but a group of senators intercepted Caesar and got him to enter the building using a side entrance
  - iii. Caesar was stabbed to death (at least 23 times) on the floor of the Senate house
  - iv. Among the conspirators was Marcus Junius Brutus, a descendent of the traditional founder of the Roman Republic

**XVIII. Chaos and more civil war**

- a. Caesar left his grandnephew, Octavian, as his heir
- b. Second Triumvirate
  - i. Octavian allied himself with Mark Antony and a politician named Lepidus
  - ii. Went after Caesar's enemies
  - iii. 42 BCE – defeated the forces of two of Caesar's assassins, Brutus and Cassius, at Philippi, Macedonia
- c. Split the rule of the empire
  - i. Octavian took Rome and the west
  - ii. Mark Antony took the east

**XIX. Octavian *versus* Mark Antony**

- a. Octavian was a smart, capable ruler of Rome
- b. Mark Antony made problematic alliances and ignored Rome's dictates for the east
  - i. Mark Antony formed a relationship with Cleopatra VII in Egypt
  - ii. Antony and Cleopatra had three children together
  - iii. Mark Antony divorced Octavia, Octavian's sister
  - iv. Mark Antony offended Rome by "going native"
  - v. Mark Antony offended Octavian by publicly suggesting that Caesarion was a legal and rightful heir of Julius Caesar
- c. 32 BCE – Octavian's forces attacked Egypt
  - i. 31 BCE – Battle of Actium – Mark Antony's fleet was destroyed
  - ii. 30 BCE – Mark Antony committed suicide
  - iii. Cleopatra committed suicide a few weeks later
- d. Octavian was left as ruler of Rome

**XX. Review questions**

- a. How and why were the Gracchi brothers killed?
- b. How and why did military dictators come to power in Rome?
- c. Who were the members of the First Triumvirate, and what did each member bring to the equation?
- d. What steps led to Julius Caesar being Rome's sole ruler?
- e. Describe Caesar's assassination, including its causes and effects.
- f. Explain how and why Mark Antony and Octavian came into conflict.