

## The Punic Wars (264-146 BCE) – Outline

### I. What was Carthage?

- a. Powerful city located near present-day Tunis, Tunisia, along the Mediterranean coast of Africa
  - i. Phoenician colony founded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE
  - ii. *Punic* is Latin for *Phoenician*
- b. Carthage had a large commercial empire
  - i. Great harbor at Carthage
  - ii. Phoenician tradition of sailing and trading
  - iii. Controlled trade in the western Mediterranean
  - iv. Carthaginian trading empire spread to islands of Corsica, Sardinia, and western Sicily, along with southern Iberian peninsula (modern-day Spain)
- c. Major rival of Rome

### II. Where did Carthaginian power lie?

- a. Navy
  - i. Very large
  - ii. Phoenician sailing tradition
- b. Army
  - i. Mercenaries (hired soldiers)
- c. Government
  - i. Oligarchy – ruled by the wealthy elites (those made rich through trade)

### III. How many Punic wars were there?

- a. First (264-241 BCE)
  - i. Fought over Sicily
  - ii. Rome won
- b. Second (218-201 BCE)
  - i. Rome challenged Carthaginian expansion in Iberia (Spain)
  - ii. Rome won
- c. Third (149-146 BCE)
  - i. Rome feared Carthage was again becoming a threat
  - ii. Rome attacked Carthage and obliterated the threat for good

### IV. First Punic War (264-241 BCE)

- a. Carthage and Rome fought for 23 years over control of Sicily
- b. Strengths
  - i. Roman strength – army
  - ii. Carthaginian strength – navy
- c. Rome's solution – build up its navy
  - i. Built four fleets, each destroyed in turn, before mastering naval warfare
- d. Rome's new weapon – grappling hook
  - i. Lashed ships together
  - ii. Forced ship crews to fight one another on deck

1. Hand-to-hand fighting was a Roman strength
- e. Rome won – Sicily became a province of Rome

#### **V. In the meantime...**

- a. Rome
  - i. Rome came to control Corsica and Sardinia
  - ii. Rome conquered the Gauls of the Po River Valley
- b. Carthage
  - i. Carthage recovered from its defeat by Rome
  - ii. Carthage started expanding in Iberia (Spain)

#### **VI. Second Punic War (218-201 BCE)**

- a. Carthage: General Hannibal
  - i. Led 60,000 men and dozens of elephants through Spain, along the Mediterranean coast, through Gaul, and across the Alps to Italy
  - ii. Fought in Italy for 15 years, winning many battles
    1. Battle of Cannae (216 BCE)
      - a. Romans lost over 50,000 soldiers
    2. But Hannibal could not capture the city of Rome
- b. Rome: General Scipio
  - i. Led an army against Carthaginian Iberia (modern-day Spain)
  - ii. Then led an army against Carthage itself
  - iii. Then returned to Italy to defend the city of Rome
  - iv. Battle of Zama (202 BCE)
    1. Hannibal's first and only defeat
      - a. Hannibal escaped and returned to Carthage
  - v. Carthage lost its fleet, Iberia, and the larger part of its territory in northern Africa
- c. Battle of the Metaurus (207 BCE)
  - i. Pivotal battle of the Second Punic War
  - ii. Hannibal's brother, Hasdrubal, was bringing supplies and equipment to his brother for the siege against Rome
  - iii. Consul Marcus Livius was reinforced when Consul Gaius Claudius Nero brought troops via a forced march
  - iv. Carthaginians were outnumbered and Hasdrubal was defeated
  - v. Consul Gaius Claudius Nero severed the head of Hasdrubal and had it thrown into Hannibal's camp as a threat

#### **VII. In the meantime...**

- a. Carthage
  - i. Carthage rebuilt its trading networks and commercial power
- b. Rome
  - i. Rome felt threatened by competition from Carthage
  - ii. Senator Cato ended all of his speeches with the warning: "*Carthago delenda est!*" ("Carthage must be destroyed!")

#### **VIII. Third Punic War (149-146 BCE)**

- a. Rome made ridiculous demands of Carthage
  - i. 300 noble children to be given to Rome as hostages
  - ii. Carthage to be destroyed and rebuilt away from the coast
- b. Carthage refused
  - i. Carthage had no mercenaries

- ii. Forced to defend their own city
- c. Romans laid siege to Carthage
  - i. Roman siege was successful
  - ii. Romans burnt Carthage to the ground – became a Roman province
  - iii. Men killed; women and children sold into slavery

#### **IX. Results of the Punic Wars – during and after**

- a. Rome and Carthage had been what you might call the “superpowers” of the Mediterranean at the time
  - i. Rome’s defeat of Carthage left Rome as the only remaining “superpower”
  - ii. It was much easier for Rome to conquer the rest of the Mediterranean once Carthage was out of the way
- b. Roman control of Macedonia
  - i. Hannibal had made an alliance with the Macedonian king
  - ii. Rome attacked and defeated Macedonia in 197 BCE
- c. Rome went on to conquer the remnants of Alexander the Great’s empire in Eurasia
  - i. Fighting among the Greek city-states
    - 1. Rome took over, ending Greek independence (146 BCE)
  - ii. Kingdom of Pergamum
    - 1. In modern-day Turkey
    - 2. Under Roman rule in 133 BCE

#### **X. Provincial governments**

- a. Each conquered area was a province of Rome
- b. Proconsuls
  - i. Each province was governed by a Roman proconsul
  - ii. Typically a member of the patrician (noble) class
  - iii. More often than not these were corrupt
- c. Publicans
  - i. Publicans were tax collectors
  - ii. Became a publican by auctioning for the job
  - iii. Squeezed as much money out of conquered peoples as they could

#### **XI. Rome grows wealthy**

- a. Money (from taxes and war booty) and cheap goods flooded Rome
  - i. Africa and Sicily – wheat
  - ii. Spain – silver and tin
  - iii. East – gems and luxury goods
  - iv. Upper classes grew wealthier, and new class of wealthy merchants and traders emerged
- b. Government had more money than ever before
  - i. Whoever controlled the government could use this money for its own needs (e.g., government contracts)
  - ii. This caused tension in the struggle for control of the government

#### **XII. Old Roman values diminish**

- a. Roman army
  - i. Originally, it was staffed by volunteers
  - ii. Professional army lacked the former volunteer fighting spirit
- b. Morals and values
  - i. Corruption replaced dedication to public service
  - ii. Pursuit of luxury, pleasure, and soft living replaced hard work, patriotism, and simplicity

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- #### XIV. Rich get richer, poor get poorer

- ## XV. Review questions

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